THE AGRICULTURAL HISTORY REVIEW



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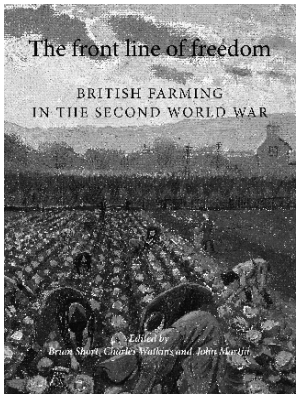
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co-authored an article on 'King William's Ill Years: new evidence on the impact of scarcity and harvest failure during the crisis of the 1690s on Tayside' (*Scottish Historical Rev.*, 85, 2006) and a chapter, 'Battered but unbowed: Dundee, *c.*1603–1727', which will appear in *Dundee 1600–1800*, edited by C. A. McKean (forthcoming, 2007). She is currently working on a social history, incorporating oral testimony, of the Lowland Scottish rural community of Abernyte, *c.*1900–1950. Address: Archives, Records Management and Museum Services, University of Dundee, Dundee, DD1 4HN, email m.z.young@dundee.ac.uk.

AGRICULTURAL HISTORY REVIEW

Announcing Supplement 4



The front line of freedom
British Farming in the Second World War

edited by Brian Short, Charles Watkins and John Martin

In the 1930s farming was in the doldrums, unable to cope with the weight of cheap imports into the United Kingdom. By the end of the war, farming had been transformed and farmers were heroes who, albeit with the aid of rationing, had maintained food supplies so well that major shortages – and certainly starvation – had been entirely avoided. So successfully had agriculture performed that the reputation established in wartime came to determine the fortunes of the industry for the following forty years.

This pioneering collection of sixteen essays ranges widely, discussing such varied issues as labour supply, mechanization, organic farming, wartime planning and the requisition of land. It asks, for the first time, pertinent questions of agriculture in the Second World War, sometimes arriving at answers which are uncomfortable and revisionist. It points the way to a new understanding of a crucial industry's performance in wartime and sheds new light on the origins of its post-war fortunes.

Agricultural History Review Supplement Series 4, publication 1 February 2007, 256pp, 28 Figs including 14 illustrations, ISBN 0-903269-04-x : price £17.50 (€30.00) post free from the Society, or from booksellers. Private individuals taking out a new subscription to the Society for the year 1 February 2007–31 January 2008 (£15.00, €25.00) will receive a copy as part of their 2007–08 subscription package. Please direct all enquiries to the Society's Exeter office or to BAHS@Exeter.ac.uk.

Also available: *People, landscape and alternative agriculture. Essays for Joan Thirsk* edited by R. W. Hoyle (*Agricultural History Review* Supp. Ser. 3, 160pp, 2004, £17.50) and *Roots of Change: farming and the landscape in East Anglia, c.1700–1870* by Susanna Wade Martins and Tom Williamson (*Agricultural History Review* Supp. Ser. 2, 256pp, 1999, £17.50).

CALL FOR PAPERS

Land, Landscape and Environment, 1500–1750
Early Modern Research Centre, University of Reading
14–16 July 2008

Current debates over the environment – and in particular over the exploitation or management of natural resources – find their origin in early modern discourses of mastery and stewardship. Whilst a pervasive argument saw it as man's responsibility to exploit the Earth, to what extent were those who made their living from the countryside, and those who wrote about it, ambivalent about landscape change in the name of progress and improvement, both in England, Scotland and Ireland and in the American colonies? To what extent was land, landscape and environment the subject of struggles between those who were the subjects of agrarian capitalism and those who lived off its profits at first or secondhand? How did representations of land and environment develop in this period? Landscapes are lived environments that find expression through buildings and patterns of behaviour, and bring into focus questions of belonging and the relationship between nature and civilisation. What connection can we draw between literary and visual depictions of land and environment – whether as map, image, or text – and these ideas of mastery and control? And what does the recent turn towards 'green politics' in early modern literary studies suggest about the usefulness of twenty-first century political imperatives for an interrogation of the early modern past?

Papers are invited on the following areas:

> plantation and colonisation as civilising process; agrarian capitalism and sustainable agriculture in theory and practice; topography and poetry, pastoral and georgic, the chorographical and country-house poem; enclosure, disafforestation and drainage: their advocates, opponents, practice and consequences; law, property rights and tenure; husbandry and husbandry manuals; the country house and its landscapes; horticulture and gardens; rivers; writing the land; artistic representations of landscape; cartography, maps and signs; the country and the city; parks; urban pastoral; travel, travel-writing, walking tours and sight-seeing.

Proposals (max. 300 words) for 30 minute papers and a brief CV should be sent via email attachment by 1 February 2008 to Dr Adam Smyth, School of English and American Literature, University of Reading, a.smyth@reading.ac.uk

Forthcoming Conferences

Winter Conference 15 December 2005

Approaches to the history of the rural landscape

The Winter Conference will be held at the Institute of Historical Research, London, on **15 December 2007**. Papers will include Dr Sam Turner on medieval Devon landscapes, Dr Tom Williamson on water meadows, Prof Matthew Cragoe and Ian Waite on post-enclosure Midland landscapes, and Prof David Jeremian on cars in the twentieth-century landscape.

Details and a booking form will be found inserted in this issue of the Review or can be downloaded from the Society's website, BAHS.org.uk.

Spring Conference 2008

Details of the Spring Conference will be circulated later in the year. Anyone wishing to propose a paper for the conference should contact the Society's secretary, Dr John Broad, j.broad@londonmet.ac.uk.

The Review

'Regional agricultural wage variations in early nineteenth-century England'

Colour copies of the figures in Dr Lyle's article may be downloaded fron the Review's pages on the Society's website.

A Suffolk farmer in the fifteenth century*

by Christopher Dyer

Abstract

This article explores the impact of farmers on rural society in the fifteenth century, when they represented a new tendency in agricultural production. The farmer of Chevington in Suffolk was a forceful and dominant figure, who established a close relationship with his lords, the abbots of Bury St Edmunds, and ruled in his village by buying land and promoting his family. This example shows the potential for change that farmers represented, and the shift in initiative from lord to tenants in the fifteenth century. Although the Parman family continued to be prosperous landholders in their village, their founder's towering fortune and powers of manipulation were not perpetuated.

Everyone knows that farmers played a vital part in English agrarian history. The word 'farmer' was originally used to describe a tenant paying a leasehold rent (a farm), often for holding a lord's manorial demesne. The use of the word was eventually extended to mean any tenant or owner of a large holding, though when Gregory King estimated that that there were 150,000 farmers in the late seventeenth century he evidently defined them by their tenure, as freeholders were counted separately. Much is known about farmers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and recent research has revealed their tendency to remain on their farms, the acreage under their management, the number of their employees and their distribution over the country, with higher densities of large commercial farms in the south and east.[1] Farmers in general are so well documented in the age of the agricultural revolution that it would be a luxury to devote space to a single individual, but this article explores the life and activities of a farmer of the first generation, when information is usually sparse. The farmers of the period 1380–1500 have been researched in the context of an estate, a county or a region, but often our knowledge of them is limited to a name, a sum paid as rent, and the term of years for which they would hold the land. They participated in a general growth in holding size which

* I am grateful to Michael Angold of the University of Edinburgh for inviting me to contribute to a conference on historical biography in honour of Anthony Goodman, for which a version of this paper was originally written. I thank David Dymond for advice on local matters, and Helen Geake, Edward Martin and Colin Pendleton of Suffolk County Council for information on the historic landscape. Help on literature came from Valerie Edden of the University of Birmingham and on art from Miriam Gill of the University of Leicester. Robert Swanson advised me on church careers. Mark Bailey and a referee suggested useful improvements. The staff of the County Record Office at Bury St Edmunds were consistently helpful.

[1] W. A. Armstrong, 'Labour I: rural population growth, systems of employment and incomes', in G. E. Mingay (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, VI, *1750–1850* (1989), p. 669; D. R. Stead, 'The mobility of English tenant farmers, *c.*1700–1850', *AgHR* 51 (2003), pp. 173–89; L. Shaw-Taylor, 'Family farms and capitalist farms in mid-nineteenth century England', *AgHR* 53 (2005), pp. 158–91.

gave many tenants accumulations of land amounting to 50–90 acres in the fifteenth century, but the farmers of demesnes were not uncommonly acquiring on lease 200, 300 or 400 acres in a single transaction.[2]

The new breed of farmers became more numerous when the lords, after about 1375, decided to lease out their demesnes in the face of falling grain prices and high production costs. Arable lands tended to go first, and pastures later. Some demesnes were leased in parcels, but many tenants took on large blocks of land, or a single unit. In the long term leasing transferred a substantial proportion of the agricultural land, a fifth in some regions, from the management of lords' officials into the hands of farmers. The social background of the new tenants varied from region to region and from estate to estate: most emerged out of the peasantry, though a fair number came from the gentry, merchants, artisans and clergy. We do not know a great deal about how they used these potentially valuable assets, which challenged them because of the low profit margins which had forced lords to relinquish direct management of the land in the first place. Farmers might specialize in production, for example by converting as much land as possible to pasture. Some were enclosers. We can occasionally glimpse their employment of labour, and the arrangements that they made to market their produce.[3]

This article will enquire into a farmer's origins, and how he managed his lands. It will also ask how this emergent type of entrepreneur fitted into rural society, in relation to the lord, and to his neighbours and subordinates in the village. Did the pioneers have a lasting impact on their communities and establish future generations of wealthy landholders? A farmer in Suffolk is the subject of this enquiry, and we naturally ask if the county's commercialized environment encouraged production for the market in the fifteenth century as it did in modern times.

The sources available for research into the early farmers cannot be compared with the wealth

[2] For the general trends in fifteenth-century landholding, see E. Miller, 'Introduction: land and people'; id., 'Tenant farming and farmers: Yorkshire and Lancashire'; R. H. Britnell, 'Tenant farming and farmers: eastern England'; E. King, 'Tenant farming and farmers: the east Midlands'; P. D. A. Harvey, 'Tenant farming and farmers: the Home Counties'; M. Mate, 'Tenant farming and farmers: Kent and Sussex'; E. Miller, 'Tenant farming and farmers: the southern counties'; H. S. A. Fox, 'Tenant farming and farmers: Devon and Cornwall', all in E. Miller (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, III, *1348–1500* (1991), pp. 13–15, 25–6, 601–2, 614–17, 624–31, 662–6, 698–9, 723–5; R. Faith, 'Berkshire: fourteenth and fifteenth centuries'; T. Lomas, 'South-east Durham: late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries', both in P. D. A. Harvey (ed.), *The peasant land market in medieval England* (1984), pp. 121–58, 309–10; J. Whittle, *The development of agrarian capitalism: land and labour in Norfolk 1440–1580* (2000).

[3] Works on farmers include F. R. H. Du Boulay, 'Who were farming the English demesnes at the end of the middle ages?', *EcHR* 17 (1965), pp. 443–55; B. F. Harvey, 'The leasing of the abbot of Westminster's demesnes in the late middle ages', *EcHR* 22 (1969), pp. 17–27; id., *Westminster Abbey and its estates in the middle ages* (1977), pp. 148–63; R. A. Lomas, 'The priory of Durham and its demesnes in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries', *EcHR* 31 (1978), pp. 339–53; C. Dyer, *Lords and peasants in a changing society. The estates of the bishopric of Worcester, 680–1540* (1980), pp. 209–17; J. N. Hare, 'The demesne lessees of fifteenth-century Wiltshire', *AgHR* 29 (1981), pp. 1–15; C. Dyer, *Warwickshire farming. Preparations for agricultural revolution, 1349–1520* (Dugdale Soc. Occ. Paper 27, 1981), pp. 4–5, 16–22; G. Draper, 'The farmers of Canterbury Cathedral Priory and All Souls College on Romney Marsh, *c.*1443–1545', in J. Eddison, M. Gardiner and A. Long (eds), *Romney Marsh: environmental change and human occupation in a coastal lowland* (Oxford Univ. Committee for Archaeology, monograph, 46, 1998), pp. 109–28; C. Dyer, *An age of transition? Economy and society in England in the later middle ages* (2005), pp. 194–210.

of material available for their successors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We have to make do with lists of tenants, manorial accounts and court rolls, but if used in conjunction with leases, wills, deeds and tax records we can begin to reconstruct in outline the lives of individuals. In this case, the survival of a considerable part of the archive of the abbey of Bury St Edmunds, together with will registers, gives us an opportunity to build a fuller picture than is normally possible. This biographical approach serves a wider purpose: one man's story can throw light on general patterns of economic and social change.

I

Robert Parman of Chevington (Suffolk) lived between *c*.1405 and 1475. He was born a serf on the estate of the abbey of Bury St Edmunds, and became a local administrator for the monastery and farmer of two of its demesnes.

Chevington, and the group of contiguous villages associated with Parman, particularly Ickworth, Great Saxham, Hargrave and Depden, lie a few miles to the south-west of Bury St Edmunds (see Figure 1). This western part of Suffolk, like the centre of the county, was covered with heavy clay soils, and in the fifteenth century had a mixed agrarian economy, judging from the records of the demesne on which wheat, barley, peas and oats were grown, and sheep and cattle were grazed. The tenants, unlike their lords, kept many pigs. Chevington's resources of clay and wood fuel, within easy carting distance of a large town, encouraged some tile and brick making. Suffolk as a whole was an urbanized and commercially developed county compared with other parts of England. In the early sixteenth century near to a quarter of its people lived in towns, and at least a third gained most of their living from non-agricultural activities. The figures would still have been relatively high in the depression of the mid-fifteenth century.[4] The landholders of Chevington and its neighbourhood would have sent produce to Bury market, and could supply the high levels of demand from the cloth-making centres such as Long Melford ten miles to the south. This advantage is reflected in the value of land, which in the fifteenth century yielded relatively high rents, even in the 'depression' of the 1450s and 1460s (see below, p. 11–12).

For a fifteenth-century visitor the dominant feature of Chevington's landscape would have been the manor house of the abbots of Bury. This establishment, which was called a palace in mid-century, lay to the north of the village, and was in regular use as a summer residence for the successive abbots, where they could enjoy hunting in the park which occupied the north-west corner of the parish. The high status of the house, and its pleasurable function, was evident from its moats and ponds: visitors approached between two pools, which no doubt formed

[4] For the soils and landscape see D. Dymond and E. Martin (eds), *An historical atlas of Suffolk* (third edn, 1999), pp. 18–21: N. Scarfe, *The Suffolk landscape* (1972). The generalizations about crops and animals are based on Suffolk Records Office (Bury St Edmunds Branch) [hereafter SROB], E3/15.3/2.29; E3/15.3/2.35; E3/15.52/2.1(a). For Suffolk's commercial and industrial economy see A. Betterton and D. Dymond, *Lavenham: industrial town* (1989); R. Smith, 'A periodic market and its impact on a manorial community: Botesdale, Suffolk, and the manor of Redgrave, 1280–1300', in Z. Razi and R. Smith (eds), *Medieval society and the manor court* (1996), pp. 450–81. I have benefited from reading parts of Mark Bailey's forthcoming book on medieval Suffolk.

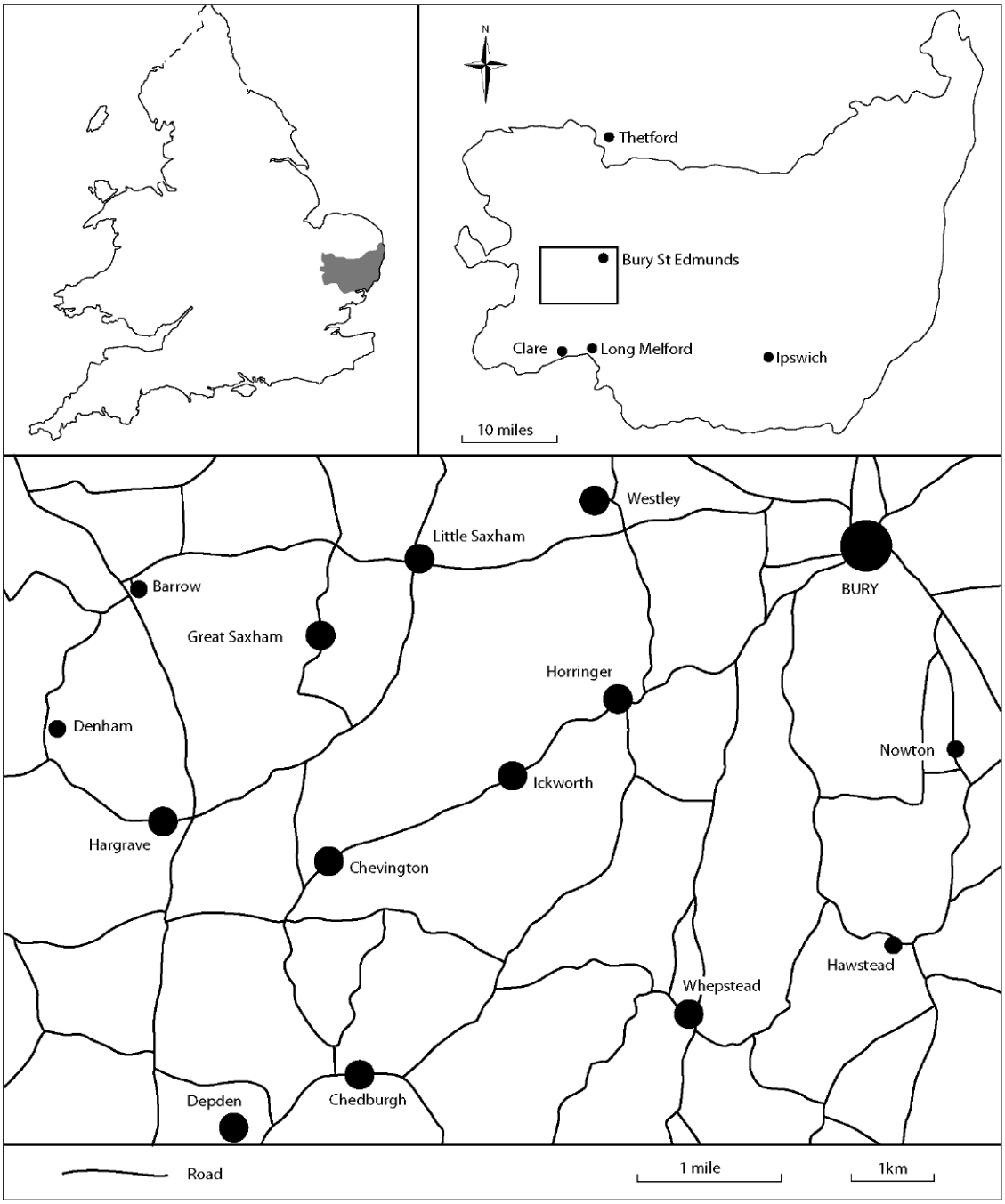


FIGURE 1. The location of Chevington, and nearby villages.

part of an elaborate garden. The water features provided both ornament and more practical functions, as they were stocked with fish for the abbots' table.[5]

With the lord's house and park dominating the north-west of Chevington's territory, and woods growing in the north-east, the agricultural land and the peasant settlements lay to the south and east (see Figure 2). The dispersed settlement pattern meant that the peasant houses were strung out on the edges of greens, such as Little Green and Broad Green. At least four houses in the parish were provided with moats, but on a much smaller scale than the manor house. The buildings which acted as the ceremonial and social foci of the community, the parish church and the guild hall, lay to the south of the manor house.[6]

The arable land was sometimes to be found in numerous enclosed crofts, and also in small pieces of one and two acres (or fractions of an acre) in at least ten 'fields' containing intermixed parcels. Animals were fed from extensive meadows, and grazed the areas of common pasture on the greens, as well as on the stubbles and fallows of the fields. Numerous trees grew in the hedgerows around the crofts and closes, and a few tenants held small groves as part of their tenements. The early modern topographers described the claylands of west and central Suffolk as 'woodland'. The combination of dispersed settlement, moated houses, 'old enclosure', irregular open fields, and relatively abundant pasture and wood accords with the woodlands found in both eastern and western counties.[7] The modern visitor is struck by the narrow winding lanes, the isolated houses at the roadside, and the banked hedges.

Chevington was not very densely populated. In a large parish of 2,445 acres, 66 holdings were listed in 1389. Of these, 25 exceeded 15 acres, and another 11 had between 5 and 14 acres, so a sizeable but not overwhelming minority contained less than 5 acres. This shows that a middling peasantry dominated landholding in the generation after the Black Death: the manor, even before 1349, had evidently not seen the extreme fragmentation of holdings found in some parts of East Anglia. Inhabitants and tenants declined in number during the fifteenth century, and the population in 1524, on the basis of 35 taxpayers, can be estimated at between 200 and 250.[8]

Villages and parishes were not as separate and distinct in Suffolk as in other parts of England. The inhabitants knew that territorial boundaries existed, but often crossed them. The wealthier tenants acquired land in more than one village, and in the late fifteenth century Parman's neighbours held land in Boyden, Chedburgh, Hargrave, Hessett, Ickworth and Whepstead. These tenurial links may well have originated through migration and marriage. From day to day people from neighbouring villages such as Chedburgh, Depden and Horringer invaded Chevington

[5] Suffolk County Council, Sites and Monuments Record [hereafter SMR], CHV SF6125; E. Martin, 'The discovery of early gardens in Suffolk', in Anon., *Pastimes of pleasure: a celebration of Suffolk gardens from the seventeenth century to the present* (2000), pp. 11–12. For a parallel see C. Taylor, 'Somersham Palace, Cambridgeshire: a medieval landscape for pleasure?', in M. Bowden, D. Mackay and P. Topping (eds), *From Cornwall to Caithness* (British Archaeological Reports, British Ser., 209, 1989), pp. 211–24. The fish (26 pike and pickerel, 27 tench and 254 roach and perch) are listed in SROB, E3/15.3/2.35.

[6] Suffolk CC, SMR, CHV 007, SF 10497; SF 18036, SF 6155, SF 61511; F. Cooper, *Chevington: a social chronicle of a Suffolk village* (1984), p. 14.

[7] SROB, E3/15.3/3.2 is a list of leaseholdings compiled in 1478, which is rich in topographical detail about greens, crofts, fields, meadows and lanes. On the general character of woodlands throughout England see various authors in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The English rural landscape* (2000), pp. 106–12, 123–31, 224–7, 269–72.

[8] SROB, E3/15.3/3.1; S. H. A. H[ervey] (ed.), *Suffolk in 1524, being the return for a subsidy granted in 1523* (Suffolk Green Books, 10, 1910), pp. 343–4.

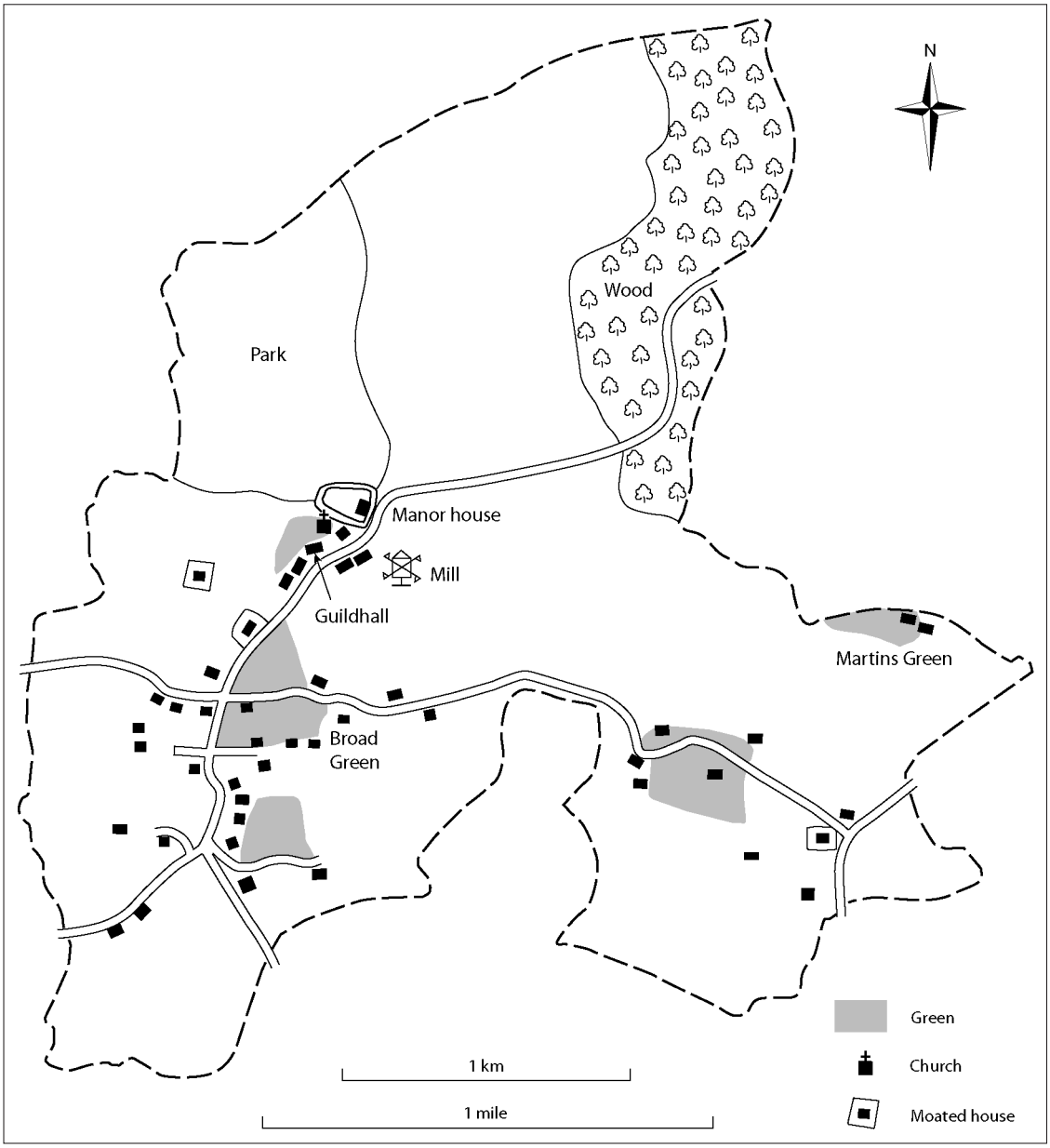


FIGURE 2. Chevington parish, showing main topographical features, and houses built before 1839, many of which occupied the sites of messuages and cottages standing in Parman's day.

Source: Chevington tithe map, SROB, T112/1 and 2.

by putting their animals to graze on the common pastures, 'making unjust roads' (driving carts over the fields) and hunting small game. The inhabitants of Chevington also encroached across their borders in the other direction.[9]

Chevington lay on the estate of the monks of Bury, renowned as exceptionally wealthy and assertive lords. They protected their rights and privileges, and their hand was strengthened by the compact nature of the estate and their extensive powers of jurisdiction. At Chevington the weight of lordship is reflected in the numbers of customary tenants, who made up two-thirds of the total. Labour service survived as late as 1427, and the word *neif* (servile) was being used to describe tenures in 1480.[10] The hundreds of tenants who held land in the concentration of manors around the monastery in west Suffolk felt themselves to be under the constant surveillance of their lord, and none more so than those at Chevington, where the abbots were regular visitors to a favoured residence. All Bury manors were subject to the efficient and almost obsessive record keeping of the monks, who as well as the routine annual accounts and court rolls, compiled a series of registers which preserved the texts of surveys, deeds, leases, court records and other materials. The abbey's archive disadvantaged the tenants, whose obligations were never forgotten, but they give much help to the historian.[11]

II

Robert Parman migrated (like so many of his contemporaries) and moved into Chevington in the late 1430s. Described as the son of the serf John Parman in 1435, he was living at Great Saxham, a manor of the abbey of Bury, and he was himself a serf of the abbey by birth, from which condition he was granted manumission in that year.[12] Two years later he appears as bailiff of Chevington manor.[13] He was then probably in his thirties, putting his birth in *c.*1405, as in 1458 he had two sons old enough to acquire land, which (assuming that many tenants began their landholding and married lives around the age of twenty-five) might date his marriage to *c.*1430.[14] He had probably gained experience of agricultural management at Great Saxham, if only on his own or his father's holding, and there is a hint that he was literate and capable of keeping accounts. He must have attracted the attention of the abbey's officials, who judged that he was a safe pair of hands to serve as bailiff of Chevington. This was a responsible job, as the manor generated annual income for the abbey in excess of £30 per annum, and the rewards of office reflected its value, with a wage of 52*s.* per annum, and an annual livery of clothing.[15] He

[9] SROB, IC500/2/9, fos. 64, 288 (wills of Robert Somerton, 1444, and John Cok, 1462), and E3/15.3/1.36 for trespasses etc.

[10] SROB, E3/15.3/1.35 (a tenant amerced for failing to do a boon work); E3/15.3/1.36 records in May 1480 a surrender by Robert Parman, parson of the church, of a croft of *terre native* (servile land).

[11] R. M. Thomson, *The archives of the abbey of Bury St Edmunds* (Suffolk Records Soc., 21, 1980), pp. 16–40.

[12] On rural migration in this period, see C. Dyer, 'Were late medieval English villages "self-contained?"', and J. Whittle, 'Population mobility in rural Norfolk among landholders and others, *c.*1440-*c.*1600', in C. Dyer (ed.), *The self-contained village? The social history of rural communities, 1250–1900* (2007), pp. 6–27; 28–45. On Parman's origins, BL, Add. MS. 14,848, fo. 173r.

[13] SROB, E3/15.3/2.34.

[14] SROB, E3/15.3/1.35 (Henry and Robert Parman, sons of Robert Parman senior, acquired land). Age at marriage at this time is a knotty problem: L. Poos, *A rural society after the Black Death. Essex, 1350–1525* (1991), pp. 141–58.

[15] SROB, E3/15.3/2.34; E3/15.3/2.35. The 'profit' in 1419–20 was calculated as £30: E3/15.3/2.29.

evidently decided to live in Chevington soon after being appointed bailiff, as he acquired two holdings of land there in 1440, and his wife Joan makes her appearance in that year in the court records for brewing and selling ale.[16]

One imagines Robert and Joan and their growing family occupying a house larger than those of the other villagers towards the north of the settlement, a conveniently short distance from the manorial buildings where his work as bailiff was based, but accessible for neighbours wishing to buy Joan's ale. Parman had moved from one village to another, but unlike many other country dwellers of the period, did not move on again, and members of his family remained in Chevington long after his death.[17]

In the 1430s the bailiff's role at Chevington as manager of the lord's demesne was coming to an end. The main profit of the manor came from rents, so the rent collector, who worked alongside the bailiff, was responsible for gathering the bulk of the manorial income.[18] The principal problem for the abbot, as for all other lords around this time, lay in making a profit from the demesne. The abbey had been moving away from direct management and towards the leasing out of its demesnes, but hesitantly. In the case of Chevington large sections had been let piecemeal to tenants, and by Parman's time as bailiff the original 667 arable acres recorded in 1389 had been reduced to a core of little more than 200 acres, 141 of which were planted in 1438–9, with the rest lying fallow that year.[19] This truncated demesne had been leased in 1428 to Robert Preston for five years. The shortness of the term suggests that the abbot was reluctant to let go, and the demesne had been brought back under the direct control of the bailiff by 1437. The sale of corn and livestock, and the revenue from the dairy brought in £15 11*s*. 11*d*. in 1437–8, and some corn and fleeces went to the abbot, but the bill for regular wages came near to £7, harvest and threshing costs amounted to more than £6, and the lord paid £3 for repairs to buildings and equipment. The purchase of livestock for £3 13*s*. 6*d*. must have come near to pushing the whole husbandry operation into loss. The contract with Robert Preston for 1428–33 produced a rent of £8 6*s*. 8*d*. per annum (with some items in kind) which must have dissatisfied the administration, and when they came to negotiate a new lease with Robert Parman in 1443 they agreed with him an annual rent of £10, with 96 doves.[20]

Parman therefore was changing roles from bailiff to farmer. Instead of being a mere employee, he was managing the land, labour and livestock on his own account. From the late fourteenth century thousands of individuals throughout England had taken on leases of demesnes, and a significant minority had previously served as reeve or bailiff.[21] Parman was not alone, therefore, but he was still exposing himself to a risk by taking responsibility for a potentially loss-making operation. He must have calculated that he could make enough money to pay the rent to Bury, and to earn a surplus for himself. The abbot had the advantage that one of his demesnes was being put in the hands of someone he knew and trusted. From his experience as bailiff Parman was fully aware of the opportunities and problems, and he must have entered into the negotiation for the lease with open eyes. We know from letters in the Paston collection about the

[16] SROB, E3/15.3/1.35.

[17] Cooper, *Chevington*, p. 13; below p. 21.

[18] In 1438–9 John Parker, the rent collector, was responsible for at least £34 out of the £46 accounted as income in that year: SROB, E3/15.3/2.35.

[19] SROB, E3/15.3/3.1; E3/15.3/2.35.

[20] BL, Add. MS. 14,848, fos. 56r-v (lease to Preston); BL, Add. MS 7096, fos. 144v–5v (lease to Parman).

[21] Hare, 'Demesne lessees', pp. 4–6.

bargaining that led to a lease being agreed, in which farmers drew attention to the poor state of the land or buildings, and pleaded their own commitments elsewhere, while the landlords painted a glowing picture of the profits that might be made.[22] In the case of Chevington our evidence comes mainly from the lease itself, which was, in keeping with Bury's bureaucratic practice, longer and more detailed than most documents of this type.

The 1443 lease gives a strong impression that the abbot and his advisers prevailed in the negotiation.[23] Admittedly Parman retained some benefits of office, as he was to serve throughout his term as reeve (a continuation of his previous office as bailiff), with a wage of 13*s*. 4*d*. and the livery of clothing appropriate for a yeoman (a high ranking servant), worth 10*s*. So the abbot was returning to him more than a tenth of his rent, and was removing the possibility that the new farmer would be exposed to the critical scrutiny of a reeve. In addition the lease was extended a little, from five years to seven, suggesting that the abbot was beginning to accept that the farming out of demesnes was to continue in the long term. The farmer was receiving very substantial assets, including a farmyard well provided with buildings, such as barns, a shippen, a stable and a dairy, which the abbot would maintain, together with about 200 acres of arable and extensive grazing land.[24] Unlike many farmers at this time he did not need to raise a great deal of capital at the beginning of the lease, as the lord provided him with livestock, including five cart horses, six plough horses (stotts), a bull, 20 cows, four rams and 120 ewes. The deadstock included a cart, three ploughs, a pair of harrows and many smaller items.

On the other hand, the farmer may not have welcomed taking on the troublesome office of reeve, which involved such chores as collecting from his neighbours the sums of money imposed on them as amercements in the manor court. The abbot's grants of animals and equipment acted as a constraint, because the farmer was expected to return them or the equivalent at the end of his term, so he was committed to regular expenditure to replace old and diseased livestock, and to maintain carts and ploughs. The inventory of stock also bound him to keep to the same pattern of mixed farming previously followed by the monastic estate. This was reinforced by a clause requiring him to return at the end of the term 65½ acres in tillage in *Tylhousfeld*, all of which should have been ploughed twice, and with 19 acres manured, four 'by the cart' and fifteen 'by the fold'. Although the abbot agreed to repair farm buildings, Robert would carry the materials (timber, straw, stubble and clay) to the site. He was also expected to cart firewood every year to the abbot's palace. All of the manure produced on the manor was to be put on the demesne land. The lease prevented him from subletting land without the abbot's permission and he was not allowed to take timber or firewood. If timber was needed for repairs to ploughs, carts or harrows, it could only be obtained after consultation with a high ranking estate official. The farmer was forbidden to hunt on the manor. A final clause, suggesting the abbot's underlying lack of trust, required Parman to enter into a bond of £40 to keep the agreement.

The lease constrained Parman in so many ways that he had little opportunity for initiatives or changes in agricultural methods, and he could not profit from all of the resources of the

[22] C. Richmond, 'Landlord and tenant: the Paston evidence', in J. Kermode (ed.), *Enterprise and individuals in fifteenth-century England* (1991), pp. 32–6; Dyer, *Age of transition*, p. 200.

[23] BL, Add. MS 7096, fos. 144v–5v.

[24] SROB, E3/15.3/2.34; E3/15.3/2.37(b).

manor, such as the woods and park. One might expect that he would have given up this restrictive lease when the term was completed in 1450, but he continued to farm Chevington: he was still leasing it in 1461, and probably went on into the 1470s. Between 1449 and 1461 he was also farmer of Great Saxham, the neighbouring manor where he had once lived, but that was a different type of bargain where, for a rent that varied between £20 and £22 per annum, he received the tenants' rents as well as the profits of the demesne.[25] Perhaps the later Chevington leases (the texts of which have not survived) permitted him more freedom, or the abbots turned a blind eye if he ran the demesne in his own way. We know that the rent rose to £11 by 1460.[26] We can imagine that he would have shifted the balance of husbandry from arable toward pasture, like so many agricultural managers, to benefit from the better prices and lower wage costs. In 1449–50, perhaps because of the difficulties of selling grain, the abbot allowed Parman to pay part of his rent with five quarters of wheat. When the efficient William Curteys became abbot in 1429 he had surveyed the potential of Chevington for improvement, and estimated that 134 cattle and between 200 and 300 sheep could be kept on the enclosed pastures, on the fallows and in the park.[27] Parman was excluded from the park, but he may have expanded the pastoral side of the demesne. The villagers complained in the year of his first lease that he was overburdening the commons with cattle, and the severity of the amercement (3*s*. 4*d*.) suggests the large scale of the offence.[28] Parman, like other farmers, must have constantly considered ways of reducing costs and raising returns. By 1458 he was leasing out the dairy cattle to Reginald Ostyler.[29] We know that he was familiar with towns at some distance from Chevington, such as Clare and Thetford, so he may have pursued a more adventurous marketing strategy than simply disposing of his surplus grain, wool and livestock in Bury.[30] A clue to the careful management of his business affairs comes from his will, where he refers to 'a certain book of debts', which would have revealed so much about his dealings had it survived. This implies that Parman was literate: he may have received at least some schooling at Bury.[31]

He diversified his operations in the late 1440s when he took over the lease of the Chevington tile kiln, in partnership with John Parker (who had served as rent collector when Parman had been bailiff in the late 1430s), but this may not have been very profitable and the venture was short-lived.[32]

He was able to pay his rent on time and balance his accounts: he had no arrears in 1449–50, and his arrears of £7 in 1457–8 were entirely due to the failure of the tenant of the tile kiln (no longer held by Parman) to produce its rent. At this time manorial officials and farmers throughout England were commonly falling behind in payments and accumulating arrears to the tune

[25] SROB, E3/15.3/2.37(a); E3/15.3/2.37(b); E3/15.3/2.42.

[26] SROB, E3/15.3/2.42.

[27] Cooper, *Chevington*, p. 7

[28] SROB, E3/15.3/1.35.

[29] SROB, E3/15.3/1.36 (Ostyler is recorded as the lessee of the cows because the miller and his wife were breaking the close of the manor, milking the cows, and carrying the milk outside the manor).

[30] These more distant towns are mentioned in his will: SROB, IC500/2/11, fos. 92–3; on the tendency of farmers of demesnes to visit more distant markets, Dyer, *Age of transition*, p. 203.

[31] N. Orme, *English schools in the middle ages* (1973), p. 248 shows that the school at Bury was quite large, and that the tuition was partly free.

[32] SROB, E3/15.3/2.37(a).

of £20 and more.[33] His long tenure of the Chevington demesne, and his acquisition of Great Saxham suggests both Parman's own confidence in his ability to manage his affairs as a farmer, and his lord's recognition that he was doing a good job.

III

The leaseholds of the demesnes were Parman's largest units of land, but he acquired many additional holdings through the land market. His accumulations must be seen against a background of economic depression in Chevington and its district. Chevington had its tax assessment for the king's lay subsidy in 1449 reduced more than the county as a whole, by 40 per cent rather than by 16 per cent, and it was exceeded in decline amongst its neighbours only by Great Saxham, the other manor in which Parman was most active.[34]

Many houses in Chevington had fallen into ruin: when holdings on customary tenure were conveyed in the court rolls, those called 'tofts' or 'vacant' were almost as numerous as those described as 'built'. In 1478, when a list of holdings held on lease was compiled, 12 were said to be built, and 10 empty.[35] The lord was aware of the problem, and was anxious to maintain or renew the stock of buildings as holdings would be more attractive to tenants if there were houses on them. New tenants were required to carry out repairs. In 1468 two holdings were so decayed that their tenants were ordered to put them right or face a swingeing penalty for each holding of 40*s*. In 1462 the lord offered to supply timber to a tenant, and to let him off 10*s*. rent if he rebuilt.[36] The lord spent 35*s*. 4½*d*. on repairs to tenant buildings – barns and a cart 'shedde' as well as dwellings – at Chevington in 1437–8, and at Great Saxham £6 in 1449–50 and £4 in 1457–8.[37]

The deterioration of houses should not be seen in wholly negative terms. The population of the whole country, and at Chevington also, had halved since 1348, and many messuages and cottages were no longer needed. The great majority of Chevington's holdings had tenants, but were held alongside other lands, as individuals accumulated two or more previously separate tenements. Tenants with multiple holdings maintained and rebuilt the house in which they lived, and the adjacent barn and animal houses that they needed, and left the buildings on their other acquisitions to fall into disrepair. Sometimes they moved buildings from one holding to another, like the barn in 1446 which was taken from Chevington to be re-erected at Great Saxham. Two fifteenth-century houses now survive in the village, which show that the story was not entirely one of decay.[38] The rents paid at Chevington suggest that demand for land was not falling as much as elsewhere. Leasehold land between 1440 and 1476 was usually being rented

[33] The tenant of the tile kiln who failed to pay his rent was Thomas Warde: SROB, E3/15.52/2.1(a); on the problem of arrears, M. Bailey, *A marginal economy? East Anglian Breckland in the later middle ages* (1989), pp. 269–76.

[34] D. Dymond and R. Virgoe, 'The reduced population and wealth of early fifteenth-century Suffolk', *Proc. Suffolk Institute of History and Archaeology* 36 (1988), pp. 73–100.

[35] SROB, E3/15.3/3.2.

[36] SROB, E3/15.3/1.36.

[37] SROB, E3/15.3/2.34; E3/15.3/2.37(a); E3/15.52/2.1(a).

[38] On the mobile barn, SROB, E3/15.3/1.35; on the general problem of dilapidations, P. Hargreaves, 'Seigniorial reaction and peasant responses: Worcester Priory and its peasants after the Black Death', *Midland Hist*. 24 (1999), pp. 63–71; the medieval houses are recorded in the English Heritage listed buildings register.

for between 8*d*. and 18*d*. per acre, with a median of 10*d*.–12*d*. per acre. This is higher than is recorded in the breckland of north-west Suffolk, and considerably higher than the 6*d*. per acre or even less found in other regions. Similarly entry fines on customary land elsewhere often fell below 6*d*. per acre, while in Chevington fines of 2*s*. per acre were still being paid in the 1450s and 1460s, which often marked a low point in the land market. The sale price paid by one tenant to another for a messuage and acre of 26*s*. 8*d*. in 1428 was comparable with sums paid for land in prosperous parts of Norfolk in the early fifteenth century.[39]

Evidently the problems of making a profit from the land was not sufficient to depress rents and fines at Chevington, and Parman saw the advantage of expanding the size of his operation by acquiring an unusual number of tenements. In the incomplete series of court rolls he can be observed gaining a series of holdings between 1440 and 1471. He had six separate leaseholds in 1457. Just before he died in 1475 he held 11 tenements in Chevington, and seven in other villages, including Great Saxham and Hargrave.[40] His tenements exceeded 100 acres in total by a large margin. Added to Parman's 200 acres on lease, over 300 acres were in his tenancy by the mid-1470s.

As is commonly found among late medieval engrossers, Parman picked up land as it became available, and was willing to take it on a variety of tenures, so simultaneously he was a freeholder, customary tenant and lessee. One of his customary tenements was converted to leasehold in 1450, suggesting his preference for that form of tenure.[41]

How he made use of his collection of land is not known. He allowed the house attached to one of his Chevington holdings to fall into ruin, which could mean that he was managing some of the land directly, perhaps alongside the demesne. In his will he left money to three churches of parishes adjoining Chevington, 'for tithes forgotten', which implies that at some stage he had his holdings in those parishes in cultivation.[42] He is likely to have sublet some of the holdings in more distant villages, such as Westley (see Figure 1). His motives for acquiring this impressive array of holdings was not simply to increase his wealth by maximizing his acreage, or collecting rents to add to his profits from agriculture. From the perspective of his standing in society, and the durability of his wealth, his leased demesne lands, though profitable, were temporary acquisitions on fixed terms. The other tenements, even those held on customary tenure, were heritable possessions. The holdings' other great advantage was that they could be used to provide for his numerous children, and leave future generations of the Parman family with secure landed endowments.

[39] Bailey, *Marginal economy*, pp. 268–9. On entry fines, see C. Dyer, 'Seigniorial profits on the landmarket in late medieval England', in L. Feller and C. Wickham (eds), *Le marché de la terre au moyen âge* (Collection de l'Ecole Francaise de Rome 350, 2005), pp. 219–36. For the sale price, SROB, E3/15.3/1.35, and for comparison see Whittle, *Agrarian capitalism*, p. 112, and Dyer, *Age of transition*, pp. 182–3.

[40] SROB, E3/15.3/1.35; SROB, E3/15.3/1.36; E3/15.52/2.1(a); SROB, IC500/2/11, fos. 92–3.

[41] The combination of land held by different tenures is often reported, e.g. M. Mate, 'The east Sussex land market and agrarian class structure in the late middle ages', *Past and Present* 139 (1993), pp. 55–6; for the conversion to leasehold, SROB, E3/15.3/1.35.

[42] SROB, IC500/2/11, fos. 92–3.

IV

Robert Parman, in his roles of farmer and tenant of multiple holdings, can be regarded as typical of his age. As the paterfamilias, promoting the interests of his children, he seems to be out of tune with many contemporaries because the fifteenth century saw a loosening of family bonds and a reduction in the inheritance of land.[43] Robert looked after his family, and they appear to have reciprocated by supporting him, for example, in his remarkable domination of the affairs of Chevington. This family solidarity can be noted on his first arrival in Chevington as bailiff in 1438, when Simon Parman was employed as a ploughman on the demesne, and Thomas Parman threshed grain for wages.[44] Their precise relationship to Robert is not known but they may well have been a cousin or nephew. The scarcity of labour at this time made it advantageous to be able to call on relatives to help.

During the next three decades members of the family were acquiring land in Chevington. Simon (perhaps the same person who had worked as a ploughman in 1438) took a holding in 1446, and Henry and Robert, who were almost certainly Robert senior's sons, received the reversion of a lease in 1458. By the late 1460s tenants called Henry, John, Robert junior, Simon and William Parman were established in the village, and at least three of these were the older Robert's sons.[45] Such a concentration of land holders from the same family in one village is so unusual at this time that it probably reflects Robert's encouragement and help to the next generation to buy land at Chevington. His will of 1475 certainly supports that supposition in its careful allocation of his own land among his three sons then living, Robert junior, Henry and William.[46]

At the time of the writing of his will on 15 September 1475, shortly before his death, Parman had recently lost his wife, Joan. Just before he died he used a device widespread in eastern England to surrender 18 acres of land 'on his mortal bed' to be divided among his three sons.[47] In his will he distributed most of his land among the same three heirs, with two holdings going to Henry, five (and additional parcels) to Robert, and two holdings and various pieces to William. Katherine Motte his daughter and John Parman his brother both received some land. He also left cash for his two daughters, Margery and Margaret, and to two grandchildren, Robert and Robert [sic], the sons of Henry. They were also his godchildren, clearly named after him, and the fact that both were given their grandfather's name shows that the family were determined to keep the name Robert Parman alive in the next generation. The bequests of land were burdened with various financial responsibilities, as Robert senior expected a sizeable proportion of their profits to be used to pay for 'a suitable priest' to say masses for his soul and that of his wife, parents and relatives for ten years at a stipend of £5 6*s*. 8*d*. Another chantry priest was also to be supported from Parman's lands in four villages adjacent to Chevington, and in Bury. Two of the daughters received money rather than land, Margery £5 as a lump sum, and 33*s*. 4*d*. per annum for five years, and Margaret £13 6*s*. 8*d*. for her marriage. These bequests helped to ensure

[43] Z. Razi, 'The myth of the immutable English family', *Past and Present* 140 (1993), pp. 27–42; Whittle, *Agrarian capitalism*, pp. 120–77.

[44] SROB, E3/15.3/2.35.

[45] SROB, E3/15.3/1.35; E3/15.3/1.36.

[46] SROB, IC500/2/11, fos. 92–3.

[47] SROB, E3/15.3/1.36; on these transfers see L. Bonfield and L. R. Poos, 'The development of the deathbed transfer in medieval English manorial courts', *Cambridge Law J.* 47 (1988), pp. 403–27.

that the family remained active in the village. For example, a holding which Robert senior had bought from John Somerton was left to his son William in 1475. William in turn sold it to his brother Henry, whose heir on his death in 1500 was his son John.[48]

The most remarkable example of advancement among the Parman family is provided by the farmer's son, Robert junior, a clergyman. He was probably younger than his brother Henry, and must have been sent to school at Bury, and from there to Cambridge, where he had gained his MA by 1468/9.[49] He was ordained a priest in 1469, and had become rector of Chevington by 1475, when he was given a licence to receive two benefices.[50] The second benefice was the rectory of neighbouring Ickworth, to which he was instituted in 1477.[51] In spite of his considerable wealth from these two sources, which together were worth £24 per annum, and his inevitable lack of heirs, Robert senior left him substantial quantities of land in his will, and indeed he had acquired land in Chevington long before in 1458.[52] Before he became rector he was known as Robert Parman the clerk and seems to have functioned as a landholding villager, but no doubt having some employment in his clerical capacity elsewhere. He died in 1503.[53]

Robert Parman junior's career was advanced through the support of the successive abbots of Bury St Edmunds, and particularly John Boone (1453–69), Robert Ickworth (1469–74) and Richard of Hengham (1474–9) who presented him for ordination, used their patronage of the living at Chevington, and presumably wielded influence over the layman who held the patronage of Ickworth. Robert Parman senior was able to help his son also, by paying for his education, and perhaps by putting in a good word for him when the living at Chevington became vacant.

V

The relationship between Robert Parman and the monks of Bury is well documented in the formal sense, but how did they regard one another? Robert's life developed within a framework created by the abbey: he was born a serf, and received his manumission in 1435.[54] The grant was preparatory to his move to become bailiff of Chevington, but we do not know if he paid for his freedom. He would never have forgotten his servile birth, which was generally resented.[55] He still had unfree relatives at Great Saxham, where in 1461 we find a reference to another Robert Parman, 'son of Richard Parman, the lord's serf by blood', and a John Parman received his manumission there in 1472.[56]

Robert Parman of Chevington, as bailiff, and then as farmer and major tenant of the abbots, stood at the very apex of village society; he was probably known as a yeoman. He was however subject to the lord's jurisdiction in the court of Chevington, and in the other manors where he held land. His lease restricted him in many ways. His lord prohibited him from hunting even

[48] SROB, IC500/2/13, fo. 218.

[49] A. B Emden, *A biographical register of the University of Cambridge to 1500* (1963), p. 245.

[50] Norfolk Record Office [hereafter NRO], DN/REG/6/book 11, fo. 172r; *Calendar of Papal Registers, Papal Letters, 1471–84* (1955), p. 405.

[51] NRO, DN/REG/7, book 12, fo. 56r.

[52] Record Commission, *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (7 Vols, 1810–34), III, pp. 467, 468; SROB, E3/15.3/1.35.

[53] NRO, DN/REG/8, book 13, fos. 21v–22r.

[54] BL, Add. MS. 14,848, fo. 173r.

[55] R. H. Hilton, *The decline of serfdom in medieval England* (1969), pp. 50–6.

[56] SROB, E3/15.3/1.36; Thomson, *Archives*, p. 57.

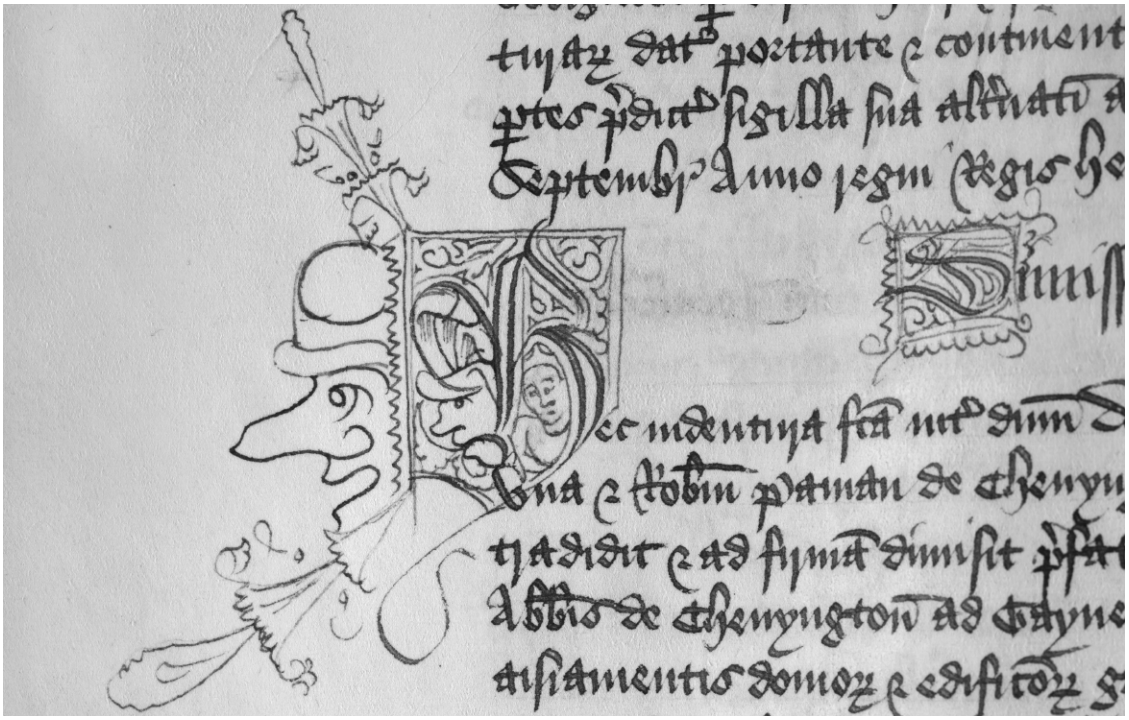


FIGURE 3. The entry of Robert Parman's lease of 1443 in the register of Abbot Curteys, with an elaborate initial which apparently caricatures peasants or farmers. The balloon crown hat was popular in 1430–60.

Source: BL, Add. Ms 7096, fo. 144v. Reproduced with the permission of the British Library.

hares and partridges on the demesne, reminding him of his non-gentle status.[57] The abbot gave him each year a yeoman's livery, that worn by the abbey's high ranking servants, such as the cook and the porter.[58] In an age acutely attuned to status, and its outward signs, his neighbours and associates would have known the meaning of this. When the clerk entered the Chevington lease into Abbot Curteys's register, he drew a caricature on the initial letter (Figure 3). Recent studies have shown that marginal drawings, even in such functional documents as registers, had a meaning closely related to the text.[59] This did not represent Parman himself, but was probably intended to show the characteristics of a social type, and reflected the attitude of a monastic administrator towards inferior laymen. The big nose and cunning eyes, and the general coarseness of the features accord with known prejudices about peasants.[60]

[57] BL, Add. MS. 7096, fos 144v–5v. The lower orders had been prohibited from hunting even small game by a statute of 1390: A. J. Pollard, *Imagining Robin Hood* (2004), pp. 88–9.

[58] C. M. Woolgar, *The great household in late medieval England* (1999), pp. 20, 189; B. Harvey, *Living and dying in England, 1100–1540. The monastic experience* (1993), pp. 148–78.

[59] M. Camille, 'At the edge of the law: an illustrated register of writs in the Pierpoint Morgan Library', in N. Rogers (ed.), *England in the fourteenth century. Proceedings of the 1991 Harlaxton Symposium* (Harlaxton Medieval Studies, III, 1993), pp. 1–14; BL, Add. MS. 7096, fo. 144v.

[60] P. Freedman, *Images of the medieval peasant* (1999), pp. 139–41, 157–8.

The abbey could not be too dismissive. Farmers like Parman were needed and appreciated, because both lord and farmer had a common goal of running the demesne profitably, to give the lord a flow of rent, and the farmer a surplus. The abbot's officials' appreciation of his qualities shows in the account for 1457–8 when his debt to the abbot for 8*s*. 8½*d*. was cancelled 'for his good service'.[61] Farmers who failed to perform well were sometimes disciplined in the lord's court, like John atte Hill, who was amerced £18 12*s*. 0*d*. in 1406–7 in the Hargrave manor court for 'waste and other trespasses'.[62] There was no danger that Parman would encounter such sanctions. He showed his gratitude to his lord by leaving 10 marks (£6 13*s*. 4*d*.) in his will to the monastery, which was an unusually generous sum at a time when large Benedictine monasteries did not feature high on laymen's list of deserving causes.[63]

Was this a simple case of the lord's patronage being reciprocated by the tenant's deference? The recognition fines reveal a more complicated story. These occasional payments were owed by the tenants of all of the monastic manors to each new abbot on his election, and were heartily disliked by the peasants, who saw them as an unpredictable and degrading imposition.[64] The 'whole homage of the vill of Chevington' were supposed to pay a collective fine of 40s., and the tenants were expected to assess each other and collect the sum. In 1446, when abbot William Babington was elected, three assessors were appointed, but the jury refused to make the collection. The bailiff (presumably Robert Parman), was ordered to collect the money by distraint, which would have involved seizing goods and causing general ill-feeling.[65] In 1470, after Robert Ickworth became abbot, 'the whole homage, with one voice, said that they refused to elect the collectors'. This was done 'before the steward, receiver and surveyor … in grave contempt of the lord'. The bailiff was again ordered to raise the money by seizing goods and chattels, but had not done so a year later.[66] Parman must have been torn between the two sides. As a major tenant he should have made a large contribution to the payment, and as a former serf he understood the objection to this imposition. At the same time he felt a duty to the lord. His compromise was to delay action, and perhaps to hope that the payment would be forgotten.[67] Other manors on the Bury estate were also refusing to pay the recognition fine and it lapsed on many estates around this time.

In other ways Parman did not entirely play the role of the model tenant, as in 1460 he was detected secretly buying a customary holding from Cristiana Lely, which meant that no record of the transfer was made in the court roll, and no entry fine paid.[68] The discovery of his wrongdoing shows that the cunning farmer could not always manipulate the manor court in his own favour, but one suspects that other self-interested activities (for example, piecemeal enclosure) escaped the notice of the court.

[61] SROB, E3/15.52/2.1(a).

[62] SROB, E3/15.10/2.21.

[63] N. P. Tanner, *The church in late medieval Norwich, 1370–1532* (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, Studies and Texts 66, 1984), pp. 120–1.

[64] C. Dyer, 'A redistribution of incomes in fifteenth-century England?', *Past and Present* 39 (1968), pp. 19–20, 31–2.

[65] SROB, E3/15.3/1.35.

[66] SROB, E3/15.3/1.36.

[67] On the dilemma of manorial officials see C. Dyer, 'The social and economic background to the rural revolt of 1381', in id., *Everyday life in medieval England* (1994), pp. 211–12. The tenants of Hargrave refused payment in 1446: SROB, E3/15.10/1.24.

[68] SROB, E3/15.3/1.36.

VI

Robert Parman's relationship with his Chevington neighbours throws into focus the general tendency in late medieval villages for the gap between rich and poor to widen, and for peasant communities to change their character. Usually fifteenth-century villages might contain a handful of wealthy tenants with holdings of perhaps 60 acres, whereas before 1349 very few had more than 30 acres. Chevington experienced the peculiar phenomenon of a farmer who held, not just the demesne of more than 200 acres, but also about a fifth of the tenant holdings amounting to at least 100 acres. Five of his relatives had acquired another substantial share of the land in the village, and towards the end of his life, Robert Parman junior became rector, and profited from the glebe land and the tithes.

The Parman family had a strong influence in the manor court through their occupation of the office of chief pledge. Robert Parman himself appears as chief pledge in 1445, a few years after his arrival. After 1453 he was being put consistently at the head of the list in the court roll. He appeared repeatedly in that position until his death. Gradually other members of the family joined the group of chief pledges, Simon in 1460, Henry in 1468 and Robert junior in 1474, so in the last year of Robert the farmer's life there were four of them.[69]

In addition a group of Parman allies can be detected, notably John Motte, whose son Robert married Katherine Parman, and Nicholas Cok and John Gooday, who served as chief pledges and were trusted sufficiently to act as witnesses of Robert Parman's will. In 1472, of 12 chief pledges, three were members of the Parman family, and four were their friends.[70]

We must suspect that the court might not notice much wrongdoing by the Parman family, and that if they did come before the court their punishment would be influenced by the custom that the chief pledges acted as affeerors who helped to fix the level of the amercements. Robert Parman senior as bailiff performed a number of functions in the court, including acting as pledge when those who owed suit of court were essoined, or gave excuses for non-attendance. We have noted the custom by which land was surrendered on a tenant's deathbed, which avoided restrictions on inheritance. As bailiff, Robert Parman officiated at these 'mortal bed' procedures, and sometimes acted as witness when tenants who were not dying wished to make land transfers out of court.[71]

A considerable section of the village economy was in the hands of Robert Parman and his family. In the late fourteenth century four brewers were commonly amerced in the court for offences against the assize of ale, which regulated price and quality.[72] As was often the case by the mid-fifteenth century, brewing was concentrated in fewer hands, and of the two most frequent brewers, one was Joan Parman, Robert's wife. She appears in the court records breaking the assize of ale continuously between 1440 and 1467. Robert and other members of the family acted as ale tasters, with the duty of reporting offenders to the court, including Joan. After 1467 Robert paid the fines, but one supposes that she managed the ale house until her death

[69] SROB, E3/15.3/1.35; E3/15.3/1.36.

[70] SROB, E3/15.3/1.36.

[71] For example in 1473 Robert Parman represented William Brown, who surrendered out of court an acre, messuage and curtilage for the benefit of Robert Parman junior: SROB, E3/15.3/1.36.

[72] SROB/E15.3/1.19.

in 1474.[73] She was disposing of some of her husband's surplus of grain, cartloads of which otherwise went to market in Bury and other towns. As Parman was responsible for a sizeable proportion of Chevington's output of corn, smaller producers must have felt themselves at a disadvantage when they came to sell their crops.

The Parman family would have employed a high proportion of the labour in the village, and many of the smallholders and other labourers would have been hired by them at seasonal peaks such as the harvest. Some of the labourers may have been subtenants on the numerous holdings engrossed by Robert Parman, and therefore under some obligation to work for him.[74] Robert Parman needed regular workers on the demesne and his wife required help in brewing, and in consequence their house would have contained a good number of both male and female servants. The large pot and pan that he mentioned in his will were essential equipment for feeding a crowd of household members, both family and servants. In the harvest season, before the demesne was leased, in 1419–20, the lord paid for meals for 424 man (and woman) days of work spread over four weeks and three days, which required (among much else) at least 300 gallons of ale and the meat of nine sheep.[75] Such large-scale feeding of harvest workers would have continued on the demesne when it was held on lease.

We know about Parman's great pot and pan (and also a spit) because he bequeathed them to the parish fraternity of St John the Baptist for use in preparing the feasts and ales which were held in the guild hall.[76] In the wording of his will he reveals that he identified the fraternity very closely with the village community, as he prefaced the bequest with the phrase 'for the common profit of the vill of Chevington'. In the early sixteenth century, when the fraternity contained 47 brothers and sisters, or a third of the adult population of the village, the Parman family played a prominent role in its management, and it would be surprising if Robert had not served as alderman, or 'held the guild' to use the local phrase.[77] His other contribution to the well-being of the village was to leave £5 to mend 'Newe Lane'. He was clearly an enthusiastic supporter of the parish church, leaving £20 for three new bells, £5 for a window and buttress, and £5 for a missal. He remembered other churches and clergy too, with cash for the friars, and 'for tithes forgotten' at four parish churches beside his home parish, and cows to fund lights in six churches, but his first commitment was to Chevington, where he expected to be buried in the privileged space of the chancel. By this time his son was installed as rector, and again Robert senior is likely to have served as churchwarden, as his descendants were to do in the early sixteenth century.[78]

In his will, in conventional style, Robert Parman senior left grain to the needy and poor of Chevington and Great Saxham, but the quantity was not very great, two quarters of wheat and

[73] On the general tendency for brewing to become more professionalized, see J. Bennett, *Ale, beer and brewsters in England. Women's work in a changing world, 1300–1600* (1996), pp. 49–51. The same source (p. 103) notes the tendency for men to pay the brewing fines even when women were doing the work or managing the business.

[74] H. S. A. Fox, ' Servants, cottagers and tied cottages during the later middle ages: towards a regional dimension', *Rural Hist*. 6 (1995), pp. 125–54 suggests that tenants of large multiple holdings sublet cottages in order to gain guarantees of wage labour.

[75] SROB, E3/15.3/2.29.

[76] SROB, IC500/2/11, fos. 92–3. On the role of fraternities in eastern England, see V. Bainbridge, *Gilds in the medieval countryside. Social and religious change in Cambridgeshire, c.1350–1558* (1996); K. Farnhill, *Guilds and the parish community in late medieval East Anglia, c.1470–1550* (2001).

[77] Cambridge University Library [hereafter CUL], Hengrave MSS, 17(1) Thingoe Hundred.

[78] Ibid.

two quarters of malt, with a total cash value of below 20*s*. It was sufficient to keep no more than two individuals in bread and ale for a year. His only other nod to charity was to pay 1*d*. to every pauper attending his funeral. If his daughter Margaret died before marrying, half of the money set aside for her marriage, a sum of £6 13*s*. 4*d*., was to be divided among the poor – not the neediest in the village, but his poor relatives. He looked after his own to the very end. Parman must have had considerable influence over the informal arrangements for poor relief in his village, just as he would have had a large say in the distribution of the village's payments to the lay subsidy.[79] In his private finances one supposes that he, and members of the family, would have lent money to less wealthy villagers, and credit arrangements may lie behind the sale of land to members of the Parman family, like a deathbed transfer to Robert Parman junior in 1473 by William Brown.[80] It is often remarked that bequests in wills contain only the last charitable acts at the end of a long life of giving, but one fears that Parman's lack of enthusiasm for charity on his deathbed may well indicate a lifetime's niggardliness towards the village poor.

The only evidence that Parman's domination of his village caused friction with his neighbours emerges from a court case in 1472, when John Trolle assaulted Robert and drew blood, and Robert (then aged about 70) reciprocated. The occasion for the violent quarrel may have been a dispute over an illicit land transfer, in which Trolle had bought a *neif* (servile) holding without permission. The court had ordered that the land be seized.[81]

VII

How can we sum up the life of this remarkable man? Robert Parman seems at first sight to have lived a rather narrow, local existence, as most of his land lay within a three-mile radius of his home, and his landlord and the principal market for his produce, were located at Bury St Edmunds, within walking distance. He was very closely attached to the community life of Chevington, which he dominated, and to its parish church, through which he expressed his conventional piety. We should not, however, underestimate his breadth of contacts. He was probably literate; he sent his son to Cambridge; he left provision in his will for a priest to go on pilgrimage to Rome; he knew two Dutchmen (or Flemings), Johannes Arnold and Herman Reymond, who made bricks in Chevington in 1439–42.[82] Just as fourteenth-century Suffolk peasants were informed about national political events – and took sides and even tried (in 1381) to intervene – we can be confident that Parman was well aware of the later phases of the Hundred Years War, and the factional rivalries that led to the Wars of the Roses.[83]

He made himself wealthy. We have no inventory, so we can only glimpse the possessions he mentioned in his will: his large brass pot, pan and spit, his best table cloth (suitable to place

[79] On the functions and influence of the village elite, see C. Dyer, 'The political life of the fifteenth-century English village', *The Fifteenth Century* 4 (2004), pp. 135–57.

[80] SROB, E3/15.3/1.36.

[81] SROB, E3/15.3/1.36.

[82] BL, Add. MS 14,848, fos. 345v–346r; Add. MS 7096, fos. 150v–151r.

[83] Fourteenth-century Suffolk peasants' political consciousness is discussed in P. Schofield, *Peasant and community in medieval England, 1200–1500* (2003), pp. 207–8, 213–14, and C. Dyer, 'The rising of 1381 in Suffolk: its origins and participants' in id., *Everyday life*, pp. 230–2. For an overview of popular politics in the fifteenth century, see J. Watts, 'The pressure of the public on later medieval politics', *The Fifteenth Century* 4 (2004), pp. 159–80.

on the high altar of his parish church), two large candle sticks, and eight cows. We can be sure that there were many more goods and livestock than these in his house, yard and fields. We can attempt to calculate his income. People like Parman would not usually have large accumulations of cash, but would be involved in a network of credit, in which they owed a great deal, and were owed as much. The annual income from the sale of produce and rents supported a whole edifice of loans. His bequests of sums as great as £20 to pay for church bells were based on the assumption that his executors would be able to borrow the sum initially, and sell livestock or other assets. He could not bequeath £53 6*s*. 8*d*. to pay a priest for ten years, but he could expect that income from his lands would produce £5 6*s*. 8*d*. per annum for that purpose. The same group of holdings would enable his grandchildren to receive a total of £8 over twenty years, or 8*s*. per annum, and his daughter Margery was to be given 33*s*. 4*d*. each year for five years. Another group of lands would apparently support another priest for ten years, and he expected their subsequent sale to fetch at least £27. It would be reasonable to set the annual expenditure that he planned immediately after his death at about £13, which therefore indicates the minimum amount he received from the land before 1475. Most likely his income exceeded that sum by a considerable margin, as it is highly unlikely that he burdened his land so heavily in his will that it would yield no revenue for his relatives receiving the bequests. If Parman was worth about £20 per annum at the end of his life, which seems a reasonable deduction, this would make him the financial equal of the lowest rank of esquires among the landed gentry.[84] The difference between a farmer and an esquire lay in the latter's secure income from rents, at least part of which came to him as a manorial lord, while Parman depended on making profits from the sale of produce in the market. Contemporaries made an equation sometimes between the income of an esquire and that of a merchant of modest rank, and an urban trader, with his precarious living, would make a more appropriate comparison with our prosperous farmer.[85]

The barrier that separated farmers and yeomen from the gentry was a commonplace of the time. When a clerk was writing the accounts of the Chevington fraternity in the early sixteenth century he tried out his pen by writing four lines of unpretentious verse:

> The hare love the harde waye
> The harte love the hyll
> A gentyllman lovet a good brown sword
> A yeman lovet a byll.[86]

This ditty refers to the differences in military roles, as yeomen foot soldiers were equipped with bills and bows. The characteristic of Parman's life, especially compared with the rent collecting and consequent leisure of the gentry, must have been the necessity for sheer hard work and skill. To turn the husbandry of a demesne from meagre profit to an operation capable of yielding £10 in rent and an income for the farmer required an acute business mind, as did the welding of

[84] C. Dyer, *Standards of living in the later middle ages. Social change in England, c.1200–1520* (revised edn, 1998), p. 31.

[85] Ibid., pp. 14, 193.

[86] CUL, Hengrave MSS, 17(1) Thingoe Hundred; a similar verse is in L. Toulmin Smith (ed.), *A commonplace book of the fifteenth century* (1886), p. 11 which is a Suffolk compilation, perhaps by another farmer. This verse compares the knight and the carl.

[87] [Hervey] (ed.), *Suffolk in 1524*, pp. 343–4.

an accumulation of peasant holdings into an effective generator of income. This achievement would have been impossible without a tough, single-minded purpose, which can be detected in Parman's will. In its more distrustful passages this instructed his executors to enfeoff his daughter's bequest of land so that her husband could not sell it, and he also arranged that if his brother failed to maintain buildings on a holding, his grandson should take it over.

In planning the future of his own family, Robert evidently decided not to favour one son over the others, but gave all three a chance to succeed by assigning to each of them a substantial share of his many holdings. Neither his sons, nor their subsequent descendants, reconstructed Robert's dominant position, and none of them is known to have acted as farmer of the demesne, but depended on the land traditionally held by tenants. The family, however, remained a strong presence in Chevington for almost two centuries after 1475. A number of households at any one time were headed by a Parman, and among them in each generation an individual often stood out by owning a good deal of wealth and land. The 1524 lay subsidy tells us that nine members of the family were living at Chevington, and the richest, Robert Parman (probably the original Robert's grandson) was assessed on goods worth £25.[87] A rental of 1551–2 records five Parman tenants, among whom Harry Parman had eight holdings. Three of the twelve Chevington taxpayers in 1568 belonged to the Parman family, and they provided five out of fourteen in 1575–6. In 1593 a third of the village's subsidy assessment was paid by six contributors called Parman. The rental of c.1590 reveals the prominence of Clement Parman among nine tenants bearing the name, with his eleven holdings.[88] Another Robert Parman was known in the early seventeenth century as gentleman and esquire, and his son Henry (1623–95) embarked on an academic career at Cambridge, becoming a fellow of St John's College, Professor of Physic at Gresham College in London, and in 1679 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.[89] Back in Chevington the last member of the family with a land holding of any substance seems to have been William, a yeoman, who died in 1662 with an inventory worth £100. By 1674 the family had disappeared from Chevington, and indeed no-one bearing the name appears anywhere in the Suffolk hearth tax of that year.[90]

The life of the farmer Robert Parman teaches us general lessons about the opportunities, and some of the problems, in operating as a major landholder in the fifteenth century. Seen in long-term perspective, the main story is not that of the rise of one man, but the transformation of a section of the English rural economy. Like many other village territories, Chevington was cultivated at the end of the fourteenth century by a magnate landlord and many peasants. During Parman's lifetime the monastic lord retreated into the background, and the former subordinates rose to prominence, until most of the land was in the hands of a handful of tenants, including one super-tenant. Parman's life shows the farmer becoming increasingly independent of his lord, and the village reordering its relationships as the lord weakened and tenants accumulated

[88] SROB, E3/15.3/3.4; S. H. A. H[ervey] (ed.), *Suffolk in 1568, being the return to a subsidy granted in 1566* (Suffolk Green Books, 12, 1909), p. 256; SROB, 449/7/17; E3/15.3/3.5.

[89] S. H. A. H[ervey], *Biographical list of boys educated at King Edward VI Free Grammar School, Bury St Edmunds* (Suffolk Green Books, 13, 1908), pp. 292–3; Cooper, *Chevington*, pp. 24–5; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, *sub* Paman [*sic*], Henry.

[90] Cooper, *Chevington*, p. 135; S. H. A. H[ervey] (ed.), *Suffolk in 1674, being the Hearth Tax return* (Suffolk Green Books, 11, 1905), p. 73.

more land. Parman's lands were divided on his death, a common occurrence. Yeomen elsewhere often lasted for only one generation.[91] The Parman dynasty continued to play a prominent role in Chevington, though the richest members tended to be yeomen with accumulations of tenant holdings rather than farmers of the demesne. More important than lines of heredity, however, the demesne lessees of the fifteenth century as a social and economic phenomenon can be regarded as the antecedents of the tenant farmers of later centuries. Parman's acquisitions of land, presumably financed from agricultural profits, with the aim of expanding his income, may have been especially characteristic of the eastern and southern counties in England, where 'capitalist agriculture took root earliest and developed furthest'.[92]

[91] Faith, 'Berkshire', pp. 165–8; 173–4.

[92] Shaw-Taylor, 'Family farms', p. 191.

The design for the initial drainage of the Great Level of the Fens: an historical whodunit in three parts

by Margaret Albright Knittl

Abstract

This article challenges the received view that it was the Dutchman, Sir Cornelius Vermuyden, who designed and oversaw the draining work done in the Great Level of the fens when Francis, fourth Earl of Bedford became its Undertaker in January 1631. It first shows that Vermuyden did not become Director of Works under the Earl or a partner in the undertaking before arguing that the design employed was not the one offered by Vermuyden the previous year. The final part demonstrates that the work done while the Earl of Bedford was Undertaker responded to the long held aspirations of local landowners, the group from which Commissioners of Sewers were drawn. Finally it suggests what the grounds may have been for depriving the Bedford group of the reward for which they had invested so heavily.

It has long been accepted that it was Sir Cornelius Vermuyden who designed the drainage scheme carried out by Francis, fourth Earl of Bedford when, in 1631, the latter undertook 'to do his best endeavor' to make the fen grounds to the south of the Welland 'fairly fit for arable, meadow or pasture'. Samuel Wells, the nineteenth-century historian of the Bedford Level Corporation, tells us that 'Strange as it may seem, the Earl was induced to take into his service the very person (Sir Cornelius Vermuyden) to whom the Country had always shown the greatest aversion, and with whom they had declined to enter into any contract whatever'.[1] Wells gives no reference to substantiate this assertion, and what is more, the second point is patently false: in September 1630 the Country *had* contracted with Vermuyden, as Sir William Dugdale (a contemporary) tells us, adding that the latter was to receive 95,000 acres for his pains and charges.[2] Nevertheless, since then, historians of the man and of the Level have accepted Wells' statement at face value, and repeated it with varying emphasis.[3] Yet, so far as I have found, no

[1] S. Wells, *The History of the Drainage of the Great Level of the Fens called Bedford Level* (2 vols, 1830), I, p. 120.

[2] Sir William Dugdale, *The history of imbanking and drayning* (1662), pp. 408–9.

[3] See the following: S. R. Gardiner, *History of England, 1603–42* (10 vols, new edn, 1894–5), VIII, p. 295; H. C. Darby, *The Draining of the Fens* (sec. edn, 1956), p. 41 and id., *The Changing Fenland* (1983), p. 65; L. E. Harris, *Vermuyden and the Fens* (1953), p. 64; D. Summers, *The Great Level* (1978), p. 68; *Dictionary of National Biography, sub* Vermuyden, Sir Cornelius (by A. F. Pollard), and c.f. the corresponding entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* by Joan Thirsk: 'Vermuyden became formally committed to the project as an "adventurer" and was made the director of the works, effectively being the undertaker'.

one who wrote about the Great Level before Wells made any such assertion. All follow closely the account given by Sir William Dugdale, and all, like him, are silent on the question of who designed the plan of draining carried out by Francis Earl of Bedford.[4]

Now while there is ample contemporary evidence that Vermuyden was employed by Charles I following the latter's assumption of the Undertakership in 1638, and again by William, fifth Earl of Bedford from 1650, I know of no direct evidence that the fourth Earl employed Vermuyden. On the contrary, there is every reason to believe that he did not. The case for this I present in the first part of this paper. I shall then explore the more difficult problem of who *was* responsible for the design followed by Bedford.

I

Contemporary records are patchy, but this much is known.[5] When the Commissioners of Sewers struck their bargain with Francis, fourth Earl of Bedford in January 1631, the idea of a general draining of the Wash fens had been contemplated since at least the 1590s and a number of determined attempts had been made by local interests, the royal government and would-be undertakers, in varying combinations, to launch such an enterprise.[6] One, headed by Chief Justice Popham, had reached so far as the cutting of a new sewer before it collapsed. No later initiative fared better. However, by the summer of 1629, interest in the idea had reached a new pitch, both on the part of those responsible for finding new sources of income for Charles I, following the dissolution of the Parliament of 1628–9, and on the part of fen landowners. A major project – Cornelius Vermuyden's undertaking in Hatfield Chase and the Isle of Axholme – had been completed with apparent success, Vermuyden had been knighted, and he and his participants were busy developing the lands they had received in return for their investment. The problems which would bedevil that enterprise over the next six years were not yet apparent, at least in England.[7]

There was intense competition for the contract to drain the vast fen grounds in the hinterland of the Wash. The front runners appeared to be a group headed by Sir Anthony Thomas, a longtime player in this field who, in association with Sir William Ayloffe, his father-in-law, had made a determined but finally unsuccessful bid for the job of Undertaker eight years earlier. This time, Sir Anthony had secured from the king a letter to the Commissioners of Sewers for Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, the Isle of Ely, Huntingdon, Northamptonshire and

[4] Dugdale, *Imbanking*, pp. 408–9; C. N. Cole, *A collection of laws which form the constitution of the Bedford Level Corporation together with an introductory history thereof* (sec. edn, 1803); W. Elstobb, *An historical account of the Great Level of the Fens* (1793); Thomas Badeslade, *The history of the ancient and present state of the navigation of the port of King's Lynn* (1725), Jonas Moore, *The history or narrative of the Great Level of the Fens called Bedford Level* (1685).

[5] The records kept in the London office of the Bedford Level Corporation were lost in 1666 in the Great Fire. Information on the first drainage may have been destroyed at that time, but presumably Dugdale had access to whatever had been there in compiling his history of 1662.

[6] See Mark E. Kennedy, 'So glorious a work as this draining of the fens' (Unpublished Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1985) for a very thorough account of these efforts up to the end of the reign of James I.

[7] The only large scale draining enterprise completed at an earlier date than Vermuyden's – that of Thomas Lovell in Deeping Fen a generation earlier – had failed to accomplish any lasting improvement.

Lincolnshire naming himself and his partners Charles' chosen agents for draining the fens 'as well on this side Boston as beyond', together with Charles' promise of every possible support to them in their enterprise and his injunction to the Commissioners to aid and assist them.[8] The Commissioners were less than enthusiastic about contracting with Thomas. Writing on 1 October they asked deferentially but firmly to be excused from dealing any further with Sir Anthony. He had, they said, asked that a tax of 10*s*. the acre be laid on every acre of the Great Level.[9] Yet he had been unwilling to disclose what works he proposed to do to effect a drainage. This, they said, made it impossible for them to impose a tax, since the Statute of Sewers required that only those who should obtain some benefit from the work might be taxed towards it. To judge who would derive benefit they must know what the plan was. Their letter also alluded to another group 'whose judgments in such works are greatly approved by us' who offered to perform the work for £35,000. The name of Francis Bedford headed the list of signatories of this letter.[10]

By 20 February 1630 a turning point had been reached. Charles himself wrote to the Commissioners of Sewers for Lincolnshire that 'we have taken into our own hands the care of the draining of the said Level of the six counties because we found from them [the Commissioners] no respect nor conformity to our pleasure signified unto them by our letters, but rather such a proceeding as could not but induce distraction, and in the end the overthrow of the whole business'.[11] What more reasonable at this juncture than for Charles or his advisers to turn to Vermuyden? Certainly the Council that spring was treating him as a man of consequence, directing that he be furnished with post horses and a guide for a journey to Boston and thence to Hatfield in Yorkshire.[12] We know that he used the occasion to resign his responsibilities as Undertaker of the Hatfield Level into the hands of the major investors in the project, of whom he, of course, was one, and that it cost him £1000 to do it.[13] He also initiated a settlement of outstanding differences between himself as Lord of Hatfield Manor and his tenants there.[14] We may guess that he was clearing his slate in preparation for a major commitment elsewhere. By July his star was clearly in the ascendant, as witness Bedford's oft-quoted letter of July 25 to Sir Harry Vane, England's ambassador at the Hague.

> And touching the fen business, I do assure your Lordship it is so feasible and may be so profitable, the quantity and extent of the drowned grounds by fresh water being three hundred and three score thousand acres makes me very willing to force you into such an Adventure, that I mean to venture some part of my own shrunk fortune for the draining of that. For

[8] TNA, SP 16/144 no. 84.

[9] A contract with an undertaker could only be made when such a tax had been laid and not paid. Such no-payment was taken to clear the way for a 'sale' to the undertaker of a portion of the lands in arrears in return for the contractor's commitment to drain the whole and keep it dry in perpetuity. See M. M. Albright, 'The entrepreneurs of fen draining under James I and Charles I: an illustration of the uses of influence', *Explorations in Entrepreneurial History* 8 (1955), p. 56.

[10] TNA, SP 16/150, no. 2.

[11] TNA, SP 16/161, no. 34.

[12] TNA, SP 16/166, no. 56.

[13] TNA, C 2/Charles I/U1/63.

[14] *Sir Cornelius Vermuyden's agreement with King Charles for draining Hatfield Chase, etc*. (1794). This title is misleading. The pamphlet is a resumé of a court case begun in 1733 and concluded in 1758. The point at issue was whether the lord of a manor retained right to the soil in that portion of land assigned to tenants and commoners as their share of a drained marsh. The Lords ruled that he did not.

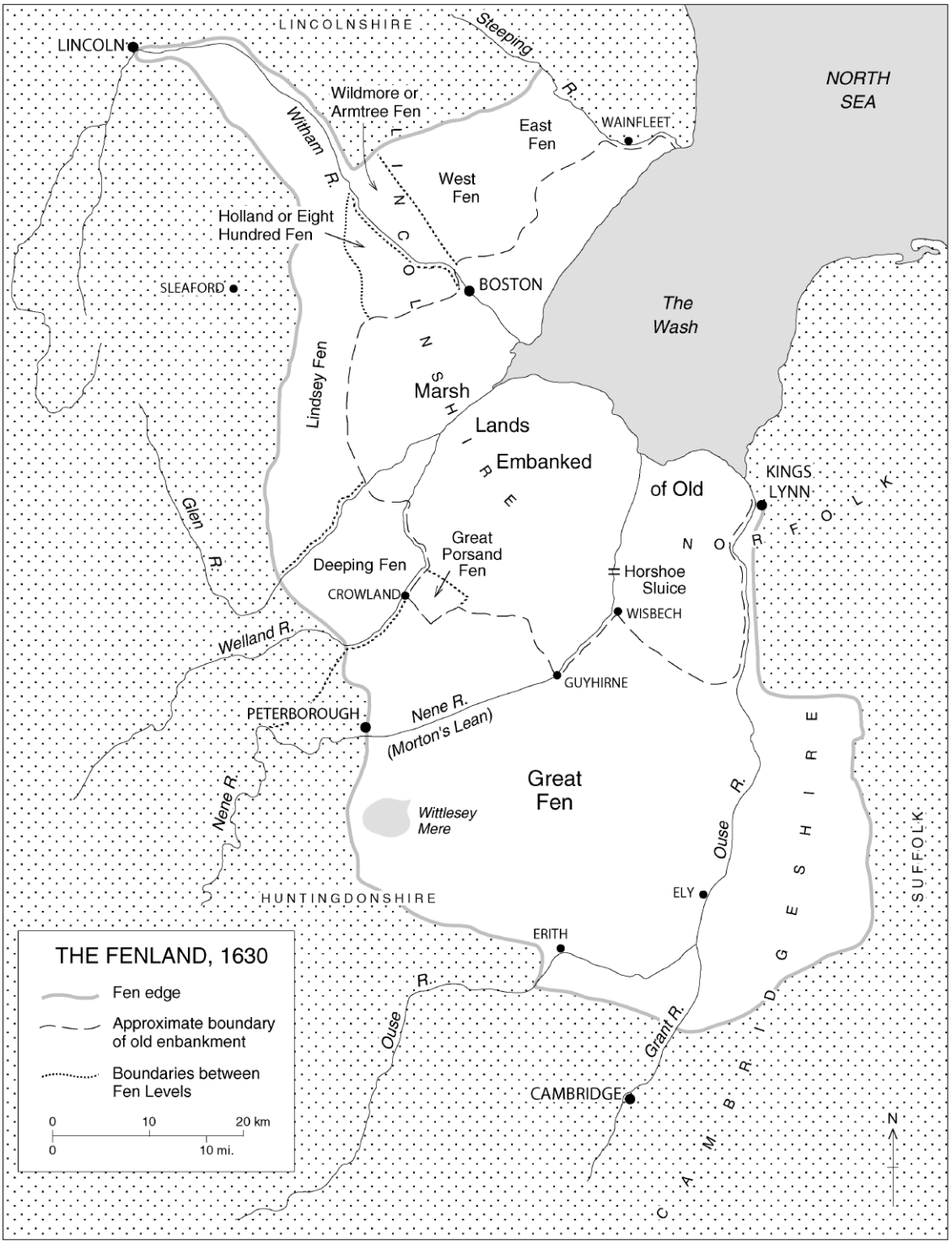


FIGURE 1. The Fenland *c.* 1630 showing main rivers only. It omits the spider's web of causeys, old river beds, boundary ditches, cuts made for ease of transport, and even drains then active.

> that purpose I expect some persons of quality and judgment to be here from you to join with Vermuden, and that to be by the 14th of our August next if it may be.[15]

Presumably that meeting went well, for, as noted above, Dugdale tells us that on 1 September the Court of Sewers contracted with Vermuyden to undertake the draining of that portion of the whole Fenland lying to the south and east of the River Glen (Figure 1 shows the fens before the commencement of Bedford's drainage scheme).[16]

Dugdale's terse mention of that meeting can now be fleshed out by the minutes of a further sitting, held the following day.[17] The record is dated 2 September 1630 and is titled 'The Acts of Sewers at the General Session at Lynn'. It begins with a list of the 43 commissioners present that day, the presiding commissioner being the Earl of Bedford. We learn that after long debate of a proposition specially commended to them by the King, they concluded that it was feasible, honourable and profitable to the whole kingdom to drain the estimated 360,000 acres of fens lying south and east of the Glen (in later terms, the Great Level plus Deeping Level), and resolved that the work should be undertaken.

> But in respect that the difficulty of doing the work appeared to be so great that it was not possible to be done by the private proprietors, much less by a popular undertaking of the Country which might breed confusion. It was therefore … resolved by this Court that some person should be found out and pitched upon who as well for his arts and skill in such business as for his other abilities in securing the Country from loss might best undertaker the work … And for that it seemed unto the Court that Sir Cornelius Vermuden was a man every way sufficient to undertake the work, therefore it was thought fit and so ordered by the Court that [he] … be the undertaker thereof.

His reward for bringing the same 'to full perfection' was set at 90,000 acres 'of an indifferent condition according to the quality of the residue of the grounds remaining to the Country'. He was also to maintain the drainage at his own charge, and for security thereof, the whole 90,000 acres were to be charged and liable 'in such sort as may be agreed upon between the Counsel of the Country and the undertaker'. The Commissioners also stipulated that landowners within the level should be admitted to adventure in due proportion with Vermuyden, and after them, other gentlemen of the Country, up to a maximum of 45,000 acres. Further, former owners of the soil should have first refusal of any land Vermuyden offered for sale.

A committee of ten headed by Sir William Russell and Sir John Carleton was established to inform themselves of the quantity and quality of the grounds within the compass of the work. Mr William Heywar and Mr Thomas Thorpe were appointed surveyors to assist the committees,[18] and these 12 were 'entreated' to meet with Vermuyden at Wisbech on 18 October to review their findings and to prepare a report to be given the rest of the commissioners at their next general session.

[15] TNA, SP 16/171, no. 30.

[16] Dugdale, *Imbanking*, p. 408.

[17] Norfolk County Archives, Hare Ms, S136 219X3. The document is a copy made and certified by William Davy, clerk of the Court. The following summary is based on it.

[18] In this context Heywar is surely a misspelling of Hayward, the well-known cartographer of the fens, associated with the Bedford group until at least 1636.

A second meeting was also set up for all commissioners who could attend at the Attorney-General's chamber in the Inner Temple on 20 November when they were to take order for the penning of a law and perfecting of a contract between the Country and the general undertaker, by the advice of the counsel for both parties, with the proviso that the particulars were not to be binding until confirmed at the next general session. That session was set for 13 January at King's Lynn. We see that (for once) Dugdale was inaccurate: it was an agreement in principle that was reached on the first and second of September, not a full contract and it allotted Vermuyden 90,000 acres, not 95,000 acres. More of that anon.

A fortnight later, Sir John Carleton, one of the Commissioners present at the September sittings, wrote to his uncle, Secretary Dorchester, to the effect that the Commissioners of Sewers had agreed with Sir Cornelius Vermuyden for the draining of the fens. The King was to have 30,000 acres for his favour and Carleton urged his uncle to seek a grant of 3,000 acres. If he did not hurry to do so, he would be prevented by others, 'for this business was never in that forwardness it is now'.[19] Still all is smooth sailing. Then something went wrong for Vermuyden. By 13 January he had been displaced as undertaker by Bedford.

The accepted explanation of this about face has been that the Country objected to contracting with an 'alien born or any other stranger'. Nothing in the minutes of the 2 September session suggests that any such objections were raised then. Quite the contrary. L. E. Harris suggested that the real difficulty was more likely to have been that the Commissioners refused to allow Vermuyden the 95,000 acres he asked for as his reward, offering him 90,000 instead.[20]

It could well be that Vermuyden did raise his demand to 95,000 acres when he learned the results of the labours of the Committee of ten and that Dugdale didn't pick his figure out of thin air. Their findings are appended to the minutes of the sitting of 2 September, and are also in the clerk's hand. There is, first, a list of the various fens within the level, a valuation of each parcel (ranging from 2*s*. per acre to 8*s*. and 10*s*. for embanked grounds), their acreages, the fraction to be surrendered for the draining, and the total number of acres. This is followed by a revised summary of the foregoing, which distinguishes four qualities, of 1*s*., 4*s*., 6*s*., and 10*s*. valuation per acre, and applies fractions of ½, ⅓, ¼ and 1/14 to the several qualities to determine how much of each is to be surrendered. In this calculation, Vermuyden was promised his 90,000 acres (out of a total now estimated at a little more than 344,500 acres). However, on my calculation, the average value of his acres came to only 4*s*. 6*d*. per acre, whereas the average value of the acres left to the Country came to 6*s*. This scarcely represented the 'indifferent' apportionment promised him, especially of the fourth category of lands worth 10*s*. an acre. He had cause to complain, and probably did. A further 5,000 acres of best quality land would not have been an unreasonable demand, but it could not have been made before 18 October, when the Committees assembled their report at Wisbech. However, there is evidence, contained in a hitherto overlooked letter among the State Papers, that Vermuyden was in serious trouble some little time before that date. Its writer was Thomas Blechynden, a cleric in the service of Sir Henry Vane, and the letter, dated from London on 2 November, was addressed to Vane at the Hague. The pertinent passages are as follows:[21]

[19] TNA, SP 16/173, no. 29.

[20] Harris, *Vermuyden*, p. 61; Dugdale, *Imbanking*, p. 408.

[21] TNA, SP 16/175, no. 8.

On the 8th of October my Lord of Bedford writ unto me to put myself in a timely readiness to wait upon your Lordship, and to crave the noble favour of so much respite from your Lordship's service as to see his two sons conveniently accommodated at Leyden. On the 17th of the same month (and before the receipt of that command) his Lordship sent a gentleman expressly unto me into the west with a countermand to his former letter and with an intimation that because my Lord Treasurer had made some alteration in the business of the fens his Honour's purpose was changed in the time of sending over his sons … Again on the 23rd of the same month I received enclosed in a despatch from his Lordship the noble command of your Honour, the trust reposed in me to receive his Lordship's clear instructions and full resolution in the affair of the fens …

Postscript: When I came to London and found not my Lord of Bedford there nor clearly understood his meaning in the letter which he sent me into the West Oct. 17 concerning the business of the fens, and conceiving that it might be a matter of much advantage to your Honour to be an adventurer in that work and therefore studious to give your Lordship some account of it by this passage. So soon as I came hither (which I was not willing to mention until I had some answer) I dispatched a messenger presently to his Honour, to crave his information how that affair stood and what should be the reason of that sudden change in so settled a serious resolution. Now the reason I find by his Lordship's letter to be because the College of Drainers on that side will not trust Sir Cornelius Vermuden with the oversight of the work, but from some misunderstanding of his former proceedings would question him before them, who is here in good esteem and that business and great work of draining now conceived so feasible and so full of hope that he shall have bearers and sharers sufficient in England to carry him through that vast undertaking. My Lord of Bedford desires to be pardoned for not answering the last dispatch from your Honour until he speak again with Vermuden, assuring me that he will reserve a considerable quantity of acres for your Honour's adventure, whosoever in the conclusion prove to be the Undertakers, so he commanded me to convey unto your Lordship these two enclosed papers being the acts of their last meeting at Wisbech and this is all the service I am able to perform in this affair who am in all other things solicitous how I may best express myself. …

Sometime between 8 and 17 October Bedford learned, to his evident surprise, that the Lord Treasurer, the Earl of Portland, had had a change of heart about the existing arrangements for draining the Great Level. Keeping in mind that under the Crown's contract with Vermuyden, the King, for his goodwill, was to have 30,000 acres out of the 90,000 Vermuyden had been allotted as payment for his services, one must suppose that only a very serious problem could have moved Portland to re-open the question of the Undertakership. That problem sprang from distrust of Vermuyden on the part of the College of Drainers 'on that side', i.e. in Holland.[22] The difficulty, we may suppose, was the unwillingness of Dutch investors to back the project. Bedford's message to Blechynden suggests that an effort was being made to raise all the capital

[22] 'College of Drainers' I take to be an English rendering of a Dutch term used for a group of the principal investors in a particular dykage, seen as the corporate entity that would govern the dykage once the initial drainage was satisfactorily completed.

in England, but that it had at least crossed Bedford's mind that Vermuyden might have to be replaced as Undertaker.

All the original investors in Vermuyden's Hatfield dykage (to use the Dutch term) had been Dutch. From 1629 on they became increasingly dissatisfied on several counts with his management of the enterprise. His personal integrity was called into question, with suggestions that he had sold to investors more land than he actually had at his disposal. He was faulted for making the Level suitable for pasture only and not for arable; that is 'summer' ground only and not 'winter' ground. This evidently fell short of what many investors had expected, even though Vermuyden's contract with Charles had only bound him 'to do his best endeavor' to make the land fit for arable, meadow, or pasture. Finally there were allegations that the basic design of the work had been inadequate.[23] Some of all this must have become known in government circles, if only because Sir Philibert Vernatti, a principal investor in the dykage, was also a Gentleman of the Bedchamber to Charles. Perhaps it was he who warned Portland of the College of Drainers' dissatisfaction with Vermuyden. Later, in response to a suit brought against him in the Court of Chancery by a group of the investors in the dykage, headed by Vernatti, Vermuyden gave a persuasive account of himself as a man who had done his best under severe difficulties not of his own making.[24] It is not necessary for present purposes to try to sort out the rights and wrongs of this quarrel. True or not, the allegations clearly had a profound impact upon Vermuyden's career. They cost him, I would suggest, not only the Undertakership of the Great Level, but also any share in the enterprise either as Adventurer or as designer of the drainage.

It can only have been in November of 1630, after Vermuyden's problems with Dutch investors had come to light, that the Country prevailed upon Bedford to assume the role of Undertaker. For him it wasn't simply a matter of acquiescing in their demand; he would have to assure himself that he would be able to draw into the enterprise a sufficient number of able investors, and even more critical, he would have to cut a deal with the Crown. Without Charles' goodwill he could not proceed, for only the king, by giving it his assent, could make the contract between Commissioners and Undertaker legally binding on all parties, including himself.

That it wasn't easy to secure the necessary commitments of capital within England is strongly suggested by the most striking difference between Bedford's contract and Vermuyden's. This lay in the drastic reduction in the acreage reserved to the King out of the Undertaker's portion: 30,000 acres under Vermuyden's contract but only 12,000 under Bedford's. It was a huge reduction, even allowing for the fact that Bedford's contract covered a smaller area than had Vermuyden's: 307,000 acres as against about 344,500.[25] Surely, the very survival of the project must have been at stake for the Crown to accept such a sacrifice. And the sacrifice had its personal as well as its state aspect: what would become now of Dorchester's hopes of getting 3,000 acres out of the King's share? The price of rounding up a group of English investors (and all but one who initially became co-adventurers with Bedford *were* English, the exception being

[23] C2/Charles I/U1/63.

[24] Ibid.

[25] The contract made with Bedford at Lynn did not cover the fens between the Glen and Welland Rivers. They were dealt with separately, and there too, Bedford became an undertaker, in partnership with Sir William Russell and Sir Robert Bevill, *Calendar of State Papers Domestic* [hereafter *CSPD*], *1631–3*, p. 296.

Vernatti, a denizen), seems to have been to leave a significantly larger part of the reward in land to the actual investors. Of course Bedford would need a drainage plan too, but that might seem to present no problem: he and his colleagues had found Vermuyden's satisfactory only a few weeks earlier.

So on 13 January 1631 the Commissioners gathered at Lynn to make a contract, not with Vermuyden, but with Bedford. That contract, the Lynn Law, includes several clauses bearing on design issues, but no specification of the major works Bedford would make to drain the Great Level. This is somewhat surprising. Bedford, it will be recalled, headed the list of those Commissioners who demurred at contracting with Sir Anthony Thomas precisely because Thomas refused to disclose what works he proposed to do to accomplish the draining.[26] Again, when the Commissioners contracted with Vermuyden, he had shown them a 'map or card (which) described the said fenny marsh, waste and surrounded grounds, and the outfalls thereof, by lines and other descriptions, and also by writing, expressed and set down to the Commissioners of Sewers, what drains, sasses, sluices, banks, cuts and other works he intended to make for the draining of the said surrounded grounds, which was well approved of by the said Commissioners now present'.[27] Note that phrase 'now present'. 'Now' was 13 January 1631. The Commissioners had accepted Vermuyden's plan the previous September, and in January they went out of their way to endorse it again, while at the same time offering reasons for rejecting Vermuyden as Undertaker: half truths at best meant to gloss over the awkward situation he and they found themselves in. It does seem that both Bedford and the Commissioners were expecting Bedford to adopt Vermuyden's plan and that Vermuyden would remain associated with the project under its new head.

If there were discussions between Bedford and Vermuyden about the latter's further role in the enterprise, they have left no trace in contemporary records. All Dugdale says is that 'The said Earl and his participants … began the work and caused these several channels to be made'. He then lists them, together with other works in the nature of sluices and sasses, and concludes 'But above all, that great stone sluice below Wisbech at the Horshoe to hold the tides out of Morton's Leam, which cost above eight thousand pounds'.[28] But equally, Dugdale says nothing about who directed the work accomplished after 1638 while Charles was the Undertaker. Yet in that case there is clear evidence from other sources that the engineer then in charge was Vermuyden.[29] We must look further.

Throughout his career Vermuyden was as much a speculator in drainable land as he was an engineer. Even for his very first job in England, the closing up of a breach in the seabank on the Thames estuary at Dagenham, a job he carried out none too successfully, he eventually received payment in land.[30] Then, when in 1649 Francis' son, William fifth Earl of Bedford and his associates recommenced the draining of the Great Level, Vermuyden made a contract with them for the post of Director of Works. We know that the negotiations at that time were long and difficult; that they were broken off entirely several times; and that they took nearly nine months

[26] See above, pp. 24–5.

[27] From the preamble to Lynn Law, which rehearses the recent history of the effort to launch a general drainage of the Great Level. Wells, *History*, II, p. 101.

[28] Dugdale, *Imbanking*, p. 409.

[29] *CSPD 1639*, p. 510.

[30] Harris, *Vermuyden*, pp. 37–8.

to complete. There were sharp disagreements over what compensation Vermuyden should have and the extent of the authority to be vested in him to determine what should be done and at what cost. Throughout, his one unshakable demand was to be admitted to the enterprise as an Adventurer for one share of 4,000 acres out of the land the investors were to receive as their reward. From this he did not retreat, though in the end he compromised extensively on his salary demands and also on the degree of autonomy he would have in making design and cost decisions.[31]

In the light of the priorities this reveals, it is significant that when, in February 1632, Francis Bedford and his co-adventurers drew up the Indenture of Fourteen Parts (by which they undertook to contribute to the cost of the work in proportion to the amount of land each adventured for), Vermuyden was not one of the parties to the contract.[32] However, only nineteen of the twenty 4,000 acre shares of adventure land were accounted for among the fourteen adventurers. Had the remaining share been held in reserve for Vermuyden on the assumption that he was to become an Adventurer once his contract as Director of Works had been settled? There is one piece of evidence which points in this direction. When the Dutch cartographer Hondius published a revised edition of Mercator's atlas in 1632, he included in it a map of the Great Level which carried on its face the names of the Bedford Adventurers, with Vermuyden's name among the rest. Hondius may have been working from information he received while it was still assumed that Vermuyden would become both engineer and sharetaker in the undertaking. However, no other listing of the Adventurers includes Vermuyden, not even those showing secondary investors who had bought shares or part-shares from one or another of the original fourteen. There is, in the British Library, a near-contemporary and very detailed printed schedule of the allocation of the 80,000 acres which made up the 20 shares, accompanied by manuscript maps, but no land is shown as allocated to Vermuyden.[33] Nor is Vermuyden included as a participant in the charter of incorporation of 13 March 1635 which created the Company of Conservators of the Fens.[34] To be the drainage engineer on a project and not acquire a stake in the land to be won is out of character for Vermuyden. If Vermuyden was not an Adventurer in the Bedford undertaking, it is a good bet he was not the engineer either.

Work in the Great Level began in the summer of 1631, for a document of December reports that Bedford and his partners have made 'a fair and hopeful beginning of the said work with the expense of many thousand pounds'.[35] Of the work in progress we catch rare glimpses only. In testimony before the Commons Committee for the Fens, given in 1646, Andrewes Burrell, local gentleman and Adventurer, reported that the head of the Bedford River had been set out in 1632 or 1633.[36] Some travellers journeying from Norwich to Wisbech and Spalding in August 1634 noted with interest small armies of men at work on the Wisbech and Welland Rivers; and Burrell tells us that in 1635 he was directing the deepening of the Wisbech river, and

[31] See the well-documented account in Harris, *Vermuyden*, pp. 92–111. It is noteworthy that throughout these negotiations no one mentioned any earlier contract between Vermuyden and Francis. Had there been one, it might have served as a useful precedent in dealing with the thorny issue of the proper powers of Adventurers and Director of Works, respectively, in managing an enterprise of this kind.

[32] Wells, *History*, II, pp. 111–12.

[33] BL, 290.b.43, item 3. This book contains four disparate items bound together.

[34] Wells, *History*, II, p. 126.

[35] TNA, SP 16/204, no. 39.

[36] Harris, *Vermuyden*, p. 88.

the building of the Horshoe Sluice.[37] In June 1636 the Commissioners adjudged the contract fulfilled.[38] So the critical years are 1631 to 1636. Let us see what we can learn of Vermuyden's whereabouts in those years.

Sightings of Vermuyden in contemporary sources are numerous for these six years. The Privy Council registers show that the Council dealt with Vermuyden and his affairs on no less than 37 occasions, 20 of them in 1633 alone! The great majority of these interventions had to do with disputes arising out of the Hatfield project. None related to events in the Great Level. What the man *was* doing is harder to pinpoint. By an agreement with his tenants ratified in court in November 1630 he undertook to complete a vaguely specified piece of work in the Hatfield Level by 24 August 1631. In 1633, in the dispute over debts he owed as a member of the group or 'college' of investors in the Hatfield Level, he referred to costs he had incurred for work done there, so we may suppose that he spent part of the working season of 1631 and perhaps 1632 too in Yorkshire.[39] We know that in May 1631 he began work on the embanking and draining of Sutton Marsh, outside the seabank of the township of Sutton, Lincolnshire, and that in the following year he was referred to as a landowner there.[40] In the autumn of 1631 he was presumably living in Abingdon Magna, Cambridgeshire, since the church register there records the baptism of a Gyles Vermuyden on 30 September.[41] In October of the same year Sir Robert Heath, Chief Justice of Common Pleas, took Vermuyden into partnership in his lead mines in Derbyshire.[42]

Most interesting of all, on 24 May 1633, at the height of the legal difficulties arising from the drainage of the Hatfield Level, Vermuyden was committed to the Fleet by the Star Chamber and again for good measure on 31 May by the Privy Council, for refusing to cooperate in the Court's and councillors' efforts to resolve the complex disputes between Vermuyden, the participants, and the local landowners and commoners.[43] In September Sir Robert Heath wrote to Secretary Coke that 'his restraint hath fallen out unseasonably for our mines in Derbyshire where he should have been long since'.[44] But Heath was also, for a time, a shareholder in the Bedford undertaking[45] and might have been expected to be concerned at the inconvenience to the latter enterprise of having its chief engineer – if such Vermuyden was – confined to the Fleet. Yet on 25 September Vermuyden was still in prison, though allowed a fourteen day

[37] BL, Lansdowne Ms 213, fo. 316; Andrewes Burrell, *A briefe relation discovering plainely the true causes why the Great Level of Fenns … have been drowned …* (1642), p. 8 and id., *Exceptions against Sir Cornelius Virmudens discourse for the draining of the great Fennes, &c: which in January 1638 he presented to the King for his designe, wherein His Majesty was mis-informed and abused, in regard it wanteth all the essentiall parts of a designe, and the great and advantagious workes made by the late Earle of Bedford, slighted, and the whole adventure disparaged* (1642), p. 8.

[38] The date of the decree of draining is sometimes given as 12 Oct. 1637, but a careful reading of the Law of that date shows that the decree of draining had been made on 13 June 1636 at Peterborough, and that the Law of October 1637 amended and confirmed an award of 95,000 acres to Bedford originally made on 11 Aug. 1636.

[39] *Vermuyden's agreement*, p. 13.

[40] TNA, C 2/Charles I/U3/66, U5/59, U58/48; PC2/42, p. 21.

[41] *Fenland Notes and Queries*, 3, p. 258.

[42] F. H. Fisher, 'Sir Cornelius Vermuyden and the Dovegang Lead Mine', *J. Derbyshire Arch. and Natural History Society*, 25 (1952), p. 93.

[43] TNA, PC 2/43, 31 May 1633.

[44] TNA, PC 2/43, 5 Sept. 1633.

[45] Heath disposed of his share sometime between 20 Feb. 1632, when he signed the Indenture of Fourteen Parts, and 13 Mar. 1635, when his name fails to appear as a participant in the Company of Conservators of the Fens. Wells, *History*, II, p. 126.

leave to raise security for debts he allegedly owed in respect of the Hatfield enterprise.[46] Is it to be believed that Vermuyden could have spent a full working season under restraint in London and no notice have been taken of that fact by Bedford and his fellow Adventurers if Vermuyden had been their Director of Works? It is equally hard to believe that the Privy Council would have put the project in such jeopardy, given the interest of the Crown in the enterprise, both as a fen landowner and as the prospective recipient of 12,000 acres, once the work was completed.

Most important of all, Vermuyden himself made no claim in his *Discourse* of 1639, or at any later time, to have been employed by the fourth earl.[47] Indeed he was quite condescending about what Francis had accomplished. Did it give him some quiet satisfaction, one wonders, to fault Bedford, as he himself had been faulted in 1630, for making 'summer grounds' only? Nor does Vermuyden's severest contemporary critic, Andrewes Burrell, take exception to any of the works constructed while Bedford was Undertaker, but only to the ideas put forward in Vermuyden's *Discourse*, and with work Vermuyden directed while employed by Charles.

Let me summarize the argument so far. The only contemporary evidence connecting Vermuyden with Bedford's undertaking is Hondius' map. The unassigned twentieth share in the co-partnership may or may not be a clue to why Hondius believed Vermuyden to be an Adventurer with Bedford, but his belief, however he came by it, was mistaken: Vermuyden was not a share-taker in the enterprise. There is *no* evidence that Vermuyden was employed by the Bedford group in any capacity. Moreover, Vermuyden never claimed to have been so employed, and he is known to have been engaged on other projects in the years 1631 to 1636: embanking Sutton Marsh, working in Hatfield Chase, draining a lead mine in Derbyshire and cooling his heels in the Fleet. None of the numerous references to him and his affairs in the Privy Council registers or the State Papers relate to events in the Great Level. We may safely conclude that Vermuyden was not directing work in the Bedford Level while Francis was Undertaker.

II

That leaves two questions unanswered. If Vermuyden was not directing the work, who was? And, might it be that, though others were in charge, it was Vermuyden's design that was used? He had explained his intentions very fully to the Commissioners in September 1630. They accepted his plan and reiterated their approval of it at the session which struck the contract with Bedford. Might Bedford have employed the design if not the designer?

The assertion that Vermuyden was Bedford's engineer was first made by Samuel Wells two hundred years later. Perhaps it gave him someone other than a Russell to blame for the anger the draining inevitably provoked in some quarters, and its less than perfect success. Or perhaps he misread what Badeslade wrote in 1725:

> And indeed many arguments were printed against Vermuyden's scheme, and against setting

[46] TNA, PC 2/43, p. 249, 25 Sept. 1633.

[47] C. Vermuyden, *A discourse touching the drayning of the Fennes*, presented to the King in Jan. 1639 and published in 1642.

> banks of rivers at a great distance asunder, about the time of the undertaking for draining: I shall enumerate a few out of a piece written by Edmund Scotten (in answer to Vermuyden) who had been employed by the Earl of Bedford.[48]

A hasty reading may have turned this rather awkward sentence into evidence of Vermuyden's employment by Francis. However, in his pamphlet of 1642 Scotten states very simply and clearly that he, Scotten, had been employed by Francis Earl of Bedford and his friends (though in what capacity he doesn't say), and his criticisms were leveled not at what *had* been done up to that time (Francis had made no washes) but against what Vermuyden was proposing should be done in his recently published *Discourse*. 'If I should now be silent, I should not know how to frame myself an excuse; having heretofore been a servant to the Right Honourable, the Earl of Bedford and his honourable friends in the draining'.[49]

Andrewes Burrell also tells us that he was employed by Bedford 'from the first day to the last of the late Earl's undertaking'.[50] He also tells us how he was employed. Reading his second and third pamphlets together, we learn that in 1634 and 1635 he was at work deepening the Nene outfall and building the sluice at the Horshoe which so impressed Dugdale. Well it might; a sluice over a major tidal river was the most challenging task confronting a draining engineer of that era. One of such fame as Humphrey Bradley, the Brabanter, lost a sluice he built at about the same place.[51] Vermuyden lost the one he placed in Tydd Marsh[52] and no less than four he built to drain Sutton Marsh – if Burrell is to be believed![53] Burrell's sluice still stood in 1649: 'that gallant sluice' Dodson called it.[54] Burrell was evidently no amateur engineer; yet he made no claim to have had oversight of the work as a whole. In the preface to his second pamphlet he wrote: 'I offer this the rather, to show you that a work of so great consequence ought not to be led by any one man's design …'.[55] It was a principle he took seriously, for after putting forward what he considered his single most important proposal – the placing of a sluice on the Ouse to keep the tides out of that river – he added: 'but the making of that sluice is a work of so great consequence, that of myself I dare not absolutely resolve it'.[56]

Burrell's comments are those of a man bred up in the traditions of the Courts of Sewers. Commissioners had always made their decisions collectively, usually relying on information and advice provided by juries of local landholders as well as on their own knowledge and experience. They usually left it to local township officers to enforce routine orders for repairs, but more recently had hired surveyors and other officers to carry out their more ambitious decrees. Always

[48] Badeslade, *Navigation*, p. 44.

[49] Edmund Scotten, *A desperate and dangerous designe discovered* (1642), p. 1.

[50] Andrewes Burrell, *An explanation of the drayning workes which have been lately made for the King … by the direction of Sir Cornelius Virmuden* (1641), p. 11.

[51] A. Mary Kirkus and A. E. B. Owen (eds), *The records of the commissioners of sewers in the parts of Holland, 1547–1603* (3 vols, Lincoln Record Ser., 54, 63, 71, 1959–77), II, pp. 113–4. This source tells us that Bradley was engaged on building a sluice at the Horshoe in June 1589 – a sluice never heard of again, unless it was the one, mentioned in Sir Clement Edmondes' report of 1618 to the Privy Council (pr. *Acts of the Privy Council, 1618–19*, pp. 292–9, hereafter 'Edmondes' Report'), which stood not seven days.

[52] Dugdale, *Imbanking*, p. 415.

[53] Burrell, *Exceptions*, p. 9.

[54] William Dodson, *A discourse concerning the draining of the Great Level of the Fens*, (1665), pr. in Wells, *History*, II, p. 432.

[55] Burrell, *Exceptions*, Introductory Epistle (unpaginated).

[56] Burrell, *A briefe relation*, p. 20.

such persons were servants, not masters, of the Courts. In drainage matters, the Commissioners spoke for that elusive entity, the Country.

The Commissioners certainly considered themselves perfectly capable of understanding what needed to be done. In their minds, all they lacked was the capital and authority to carry out the necessary works, though agreement and resolve had often eluded them too. Thus by the second decade of James' reign, they had accepted the necessity of contracting with an Undertaker,[57] but that did not mean they had surrendered their right and duty of determining what work should be done. This is plain both before and after 1631. Before the Commissioners had made their agreement with Chief Justice Popham in 1605, they had arranged for a representative group of Commissioners to receive a detailed, on-site explanation of what work John Hunt, 'the artist of this design', was proposing to do. The committees 'not knowing how far this new project will be approved by the rest of the Commissioners' submitted their report to a full sitting of the Court at Cambridge on 28 June. That sitting then decreed a nine-point plan incorporating Hunt's main proposals. Point eight is particularly interesting. 'We decree that all the fenny and surrounded grounds between the River Ouse and the upland grounds of the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridge shall be drained and cleared of inundation in such order and manner and form as shall be for that purpose hereafter set down by the Commissioners of Sewers'.[58] Further, the making of the agreement in principle with Popham on 13 July was followed up immediately by work on a bill for presentation to Parliament which also included provisions related to the work Popham should do as Undertaker.[59]

The same care to preserve the powers of the Courts of Sewers is shown in the Act of 1607 for the draining of the Ring of Waldersey and Coldham. It gave power to the undertakers 'to make of new or to repair in all places needful the necessary drains, etc. (not being in Marshland within the Old Podike), with this proviso, that the authority given them … shall not extend to give any power to cut or drain through any other grounds in any other manner than by the laws and statutes of this realm heretofore made they may lawfully do'.[60] Thus, before work could begin, a Court of Sewers had to be convened to lay out in minute detail the new course by which the undertakers were to do the draining.[61] We have already noted the unwillingness of Commissioners to deal with would-be undertakers who refused to divulge their plans.[62] In 1630 Vermuyden had provided a full account of what he proposed to do before the Commissioners made their agreement with him. In the Lynn Law, as already noted, no plan is specified, though a clause is included which requires that the division dikes needed to separate off the new severals in the drained level should be made with the advice of Bedford but at the direction of Commissioners of Sewers.[63] Even when Charles superceded Bedford as Undertaker in the Levels south of Glen, the Commissioners, respectfully, reaffirmed their responsibility: they advised the Privy Council that

[57] See above pp. 24–5.

[58] Cambridge University Library, Ely Diocesan Records [hereafter CUL, EDR] A/8. This is not a single document, but a large box of sewer records, including an incomplete register, loose sheets once a part of the register and other related papers variously numbered.

[59] Dugdale, *Imbanking*, p. 386; Badeslade, *Navigation*, p. 23.

[60] Statutes of the Realm, 4 Jac. I, c.13.

[61] CUL, EDR, A/8, Session of Sewers held 20 May 1611 at Stowbrink.

[62] See above, p. 25.

[63] Dugdale, *Imbanking*, p. 409.

> it might not be left to the power of the Adventurers, or any others that should undertake the same draining, under his Majesty, to perform it by any ways or designs, other than such as his Majesty or the Commissioners should approve, and direct by new Acts of Sewers in that behalf, as the best and most convenient for the perfect draining of their fens, and the benefit of other the fens and parts of the Great Level thereunto adjoining; in regard otherwise the draining of these might prove very prejudicial to the general work.[64]

The Commissioners were well aware of the inter-relatedness of the several projects then afoot in the Fenland as a whole, and clearly considered themselves best-fitted to exercise overall control. Nor did they hesitate to act on their convictions. When, at the Session of 5 August 1640 at Peterborough which considered 'the published design of the present intended draining by his Majesty's Agent, Sir Cornelius Vermuyden', the Court learned that 'the river of Ouse should now be wholly diverted from its former ancient course from Erith and so to be conveyed to Salter's Load', it at once took alarm. Judging that navigation between Lynn, Cambridge and other towns along the Ouse 'must of necessity be made worse', the Court ruled that Vermuyden must not proceed with this part of his design until he had satisfied the committee's representative of the interests at risk 'that the said navigation shall not be hurt or impaired'. 'And it is ordered likewise that the said Cornelius nor any other Agent for the work of draining shall not put that part of the said design of diverting the said River of Ouse into execution or begin *any other work* until this Court by the report of the said committees be satisfied of the preservation of navigation to the said University and towns in all respects as is aforesaid.'[65] As for Vermuyden's plan to divert most of the waters of the Welland to the Wisbech outfall, it may have been vetoed outright. Andrewes Burrell, one of the commissioners sitting on 5 August, wrote the following year of Vermuyden's *Discourse* that 'Whereas it *was intended* that part of Glen and all Welland should be conveyed in a new channel to Morton's Leam, and so to Wisbech Outfall', which suggests that that part of his plan had not been approved; certainly we hear of it no more.[66]

In this context, it should now be apparent that at Lynn the Commissioners chose to treat their meeting of 13 January as the normal next step in the process of contract-making begun the previous September. The adjustment in the undertakership and the area to be drained were details that did not necessitate starting the process all over again from scratch; in short, that Vermuyden would continue to participate in the Adventure and supervise the implementation of his design. It didn't work out that way, for reasons still obscure. I incline to think that Vermuyden refused to participate in the undertaking on the terms Bedford was prepared to offered; that is, that Bedford would not agree to allow Vermuyden the authority as director of works the latter believed it essential to have. However, two of the men who did become Adventurers, Sir Philibert Vernatti and Sir William Russell, were also major investors in the troubled Hatfield Level, and may have been averse to associating with Vermuyden on any terms. It piques one's curiosity to find that the unassigned twentieth share soon shows up in Vernatti's hands, giving him two shares as against his original one, and that a long list of Dutchmen became investors

[64] Dugdale, *Imbanking*, p. 205, dated 24 July 1639. Note: Acts (or Laws, Ordinances or Decrees) of Sewers were made by a Court of Sewers and in some cases needed royal assent to be enforceable. By insisting that design decisions be embodied in Acts of Sewers, the Commissioners were claiming power to approve them.

[65] CUL, CUR 3.1 (emphasis added).

[66] Burrell, *Exceptions*, p. 5; again, emphasis added.

in the project as subcontractors to him.[67] He and Sir William Russell each held two shares. Did it perhaps came down to a choice for Bedford between them and Vermuyden?

Be that as it may, Vermuyden's withdrawal, however it came about, would have posed dual problems of direction and design. As for direction, experience of the difficulty of defining a role for a Chief Engineer or Director of Works within the framework of their Undertaking might well have led Bedford and his associates to revert to the familiar practice of hiring a surveyor to carry out each major piece of work. After all, a core group of them – Bedford himself, Sir Miles Sandys, Sir Robert Bevill, Dr William Sames, Andrewes Burrell – were seasoned Commissioners and local landholders as well as Adventurers. What evidence there is points to the adoption of this solution. Burrell is a case in point. It is suggestive that two of the new cuts – Bevill's Leam and Sam's Cut – bear names of Commissioner/Adventurers. Each lies in the part of the Level where the Adventurer memorialized held his lands. As Undertaker, Bedford would of course carry most weight within the partnership, and he was certainly very active personally, but he seems to have chosen to work with a group of his associates rather than rely on a hired general manager. The notion that such a person must have existed is anachronistic for this period. Of the other Undertakings of this time – and there were five of them – only the Earl of Lindsey's seems to have had one. The very difficulty with which agreement was reached between Vermuyden and William, fifth Earl of Bedford and his partners in 1650 suggests that the role of such an officer was being hammered out then for the first time.

We may surmise that by July 1631 the design had been settled. In that month, Sir Christopher Hatton wrote to Bedford wishing him to take notice that the Earl of Exeter was willing that the Royal assent (for Lynn Law) should pass the Great Seal and be delivered to him, Bedford.[68] Exeter was the major landholder in the Deeping Level to the north of Welland, an area liable to be profoundly affected by measures taken to drain the Great Level (Figure 1). For example, the diversion of some of Welland's water to the Wisbech outfall (one of Vermuyden's recommendations of 1639) could scarcely fail to damage the Welland outfall, and impair navigation on the Welland to Spalding and Stamford. Bedford, we may suppose, had had to satisfy Exeter that he did not intend to drain Thorney fens by drowning Deeping's! Only then would Exeter give the go ahead. We may conclude that by July 1631 Bedford's plan was known to and accepted by the Country. As we saw, work began that summer.[69]

Was the design Vermuyden's? If we knew what Vermuyden's plan of 1630 had been, we could probably reach a ready answer by comparing it with the work done under Bedford. Unfortunately, no trace of that plan has been found. Still, some of the work done before 1636 and shown in Figure 2, in particular the new straight cut from Erith Bridge to Salter's Lode, is perfectly compatible with Vermuyden's style both before and after this period, and a case can be made that washes[70] (which Bedford didn't use) were not part of Vermuyden's design of 1630, despite his later devotion to them. The argument goes like this. The Commissioners had twice approved the plan of 1630 and seemed to expect that Bedford would follow it. Yet they included

[67] Earl of Bedford's answer to Vernatti's Bill, TNA, SP 16/257/23 (6 May 1638); petitions by Vernatti, SP 16/373, no. 20; 406 no. 43

[68] TNA, SP 16/196, no. 70.

[69] TNA, SP 16/204, no. 39.

[70] A wash is created by setting the banks along a river or drain far apart, leaving room between them for sudden surges of water to bed upon.

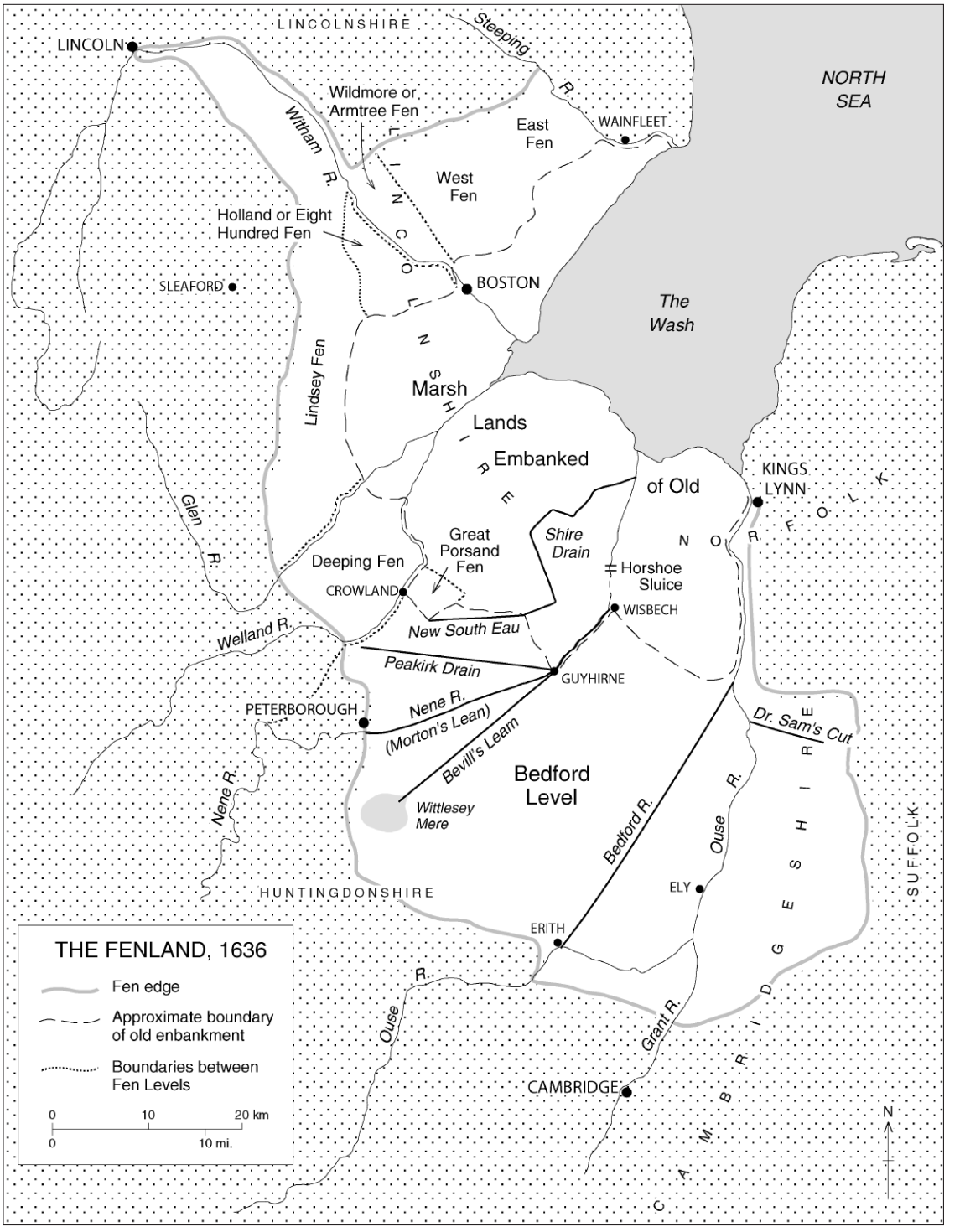


FIGURE 2. The Fenland *c.*1636 showing new cuts of six miles or more. Shorter cuts connecting existing drains are omitted. It also cannot show the rehabilitation of the Morton's Leam portion of the Nene or the deepening of Nene by eight feet from Guy Herne to its outfall or the like deepening of the Welland by six feet.

in their contract with Bedford a clause limiting to 50 or 60 feet at most the forelands he could leave between rivers and their banks,[71] thus effectively ruling out use of washes in the form in which they became the hallmark of Vermuyden's later work. The outcry against them when Vermuyden proposed to use them as Agent to Charles in itself suggests they were a novelty at that time. So the fact that Bedford used no washes need not mean that the design he followed was not Vermuyden's. So far only can one go on present evidence in comparing Bedford's work with Vermuyden's plan.

An alternative is to compare the work done to 1636 with the advice Vermuyden gave the King in his well-known *Discourse* presented to Charles in January 1639 and published in 1642. With royal government already in crisis, Vermuyden could barely begin to carry out his plan. Dugdale provides us with lists of the works done under Bedford and under Charles.[72] It is, in fact, not difficult to show that what Bedford's workmen did was seriously at odds with Vermuyden's ideas in 1639 and with his later practice. Yet this is inconclusive, for it assumes that Vermuyden's views did not change significantly between September 1630 (when he first presented a plan to the Commissioners) and January 1639 when he submitted his *Discourse* to Charles.

Much happened in the interval. In the Hatfield Level, the participants, including Vermuyden, were forced by the Privy Council to complete a major new cut, known ever since as the Dutch River, to remedy an alleged flaw in Vermuyden's original design of the work there.[73] That experience alone may have prompted him to review his ideas about draining inland fens. There was also, it seems, a major fiasco connected with the (first) Bedford River. The incident is undated but can be assumed to have occurred in the early 1630s. It too may have given Vermuyden second thoughts. The evidence comes from a report on the South Level written by C. N. Cole in 1777. He tells how the Old Bedford River (i.e. the cut made under Francis) had been designed to take 'the surcharge of water' coming down the Ouse, and how it had been embanked on both sides 'as near the river as might be'.

> After great labour, pains and expense attended with a firm expectation of its successful operation, the first great flood that was to manifest its excellence being let into it in the presence of the Country and of Sir Miles Sandys who took a journey from London to see the experiment, that flood, to the terror and disappointment of all present, broke down the barriers intended to confine it, and overflowed the adjacent country. So satisfied were those that saw the experiment of the impracticality of such a passage for the flood waters that came down to that place (for still the passage of part of them through the Ouse was open), that it was at once abandoned, and the Old Bedford River never more made use of for that purpose.[74]

Vermuyden had not used washes in the Hatfield Level but one or both of these events may have turned his thinking in that direction.[75]

[71] Dugdale, *Imbanking*, p. 409.

[72] Ibid., p. 416.

[73] Harris, *Vermuyden*, p. 53. In fact, the intent was to turn 'summer' grounds into 'winter' grounds.

[74] Cambridgeshire RO, C. N. Cole, 'Extracts from the report of a view of the South Level, part of the Great Level of the Fenns, taken in 1777', pp. 81–2.

[75] Harris is ambivalent about whether or not Vermuyden used washes in the Hatfield level. See Harris, *Vermuyden*, pp. 45, 77. However, a copy of the map of the Hatfield drainage which Dugdale used, dated 1639, shows no washes. Land adjacent to the rivers is either labelled 'common' or shown as several. BL, Add. Ms. 5011.

Be that as it may, two other key parts of Vermuyden's *Discourse* of 1639 flew in the face of the work Bedford had carried out as Undertaker. As already noted, Vermuyden's solution to the chronic silting up of the Wisbech River was not to dig it out (again) and sluice it, but to redirect most of the Welland to the Wisbech outfall in the belief that the two together would be able to keep a channel open to the sea. He put his money on fewer but better outfalls. Bedford did the opposite. Not only did he deepen both Welland and Nene by six feet, but he also provided another outfall to the sea between these two by re-opening Clowes Cross alias Shire Drain, an ancient sewer forming part of the boundary between South Holland and Cambridgeshire. Again, on the question of whether or not principal rivers should be sluiced, the two parted company. In the debate between those who advocated sluicing rivers to defend them against silting up when they ran low in the summer, and those who believed rivers should be left tidal to provide the extra water needed to scour out their beds at each ebb, Vermuyden was firmly for leaving rivers tidal.[76] Yet Bedford had Burrell build a sluice over the Nene below Wisbech, as we have seen. As Director under William, fifth earl, Vermuyden relegated Burrell's sluice to stately uselessness by cutting a new channel for the Nene to bypass it.[77] Could there be a more dramatic expression of his disdain for this key feature of Francis' work?

III

There is a third possible way of looking at the sources of Bedford's design, and that is to compare what he did with the past efforts of the Courts of Sewers to improve the drainage of their fens. The result is quite striking. Each of the main projects Bedford carried out had been identified, discussed, wrangled over and even worked at for at least a generation before 1631, some for much longer. They were: the deepening and banking of the Welland river from Waldram Hall, where it entered the fens, to the sea; the deepening and widening of Nene from Guyhirne to the sea and its sluicing at the Horshoe below Wisbech; the reopening and remaking of Clowes Cross alias Shire Drain; and the making of a new straight cut for the western branch of the Ouse from Erith Bridge to Salter's Lode. If one asks who set the design for the work Bedford carried out, I suggest that the most reasonable answer is that the Country did. Over generations the Courts of Sewers had identified these works as crucial to the draining of the various segments of the Level. In Bedford the Commissioners had secured an Undertaker who was one of their own and would do the work for them, after their mind. So he must, for at the end of the day it was they who had the authority to judge the draining satisfactorily done – or not. Bedford implemented the collective wisdom of the fen community – or, if you prefer, its collective wish-list.

Let us look at the histories of these projects in turn. The effort to bank the Welland began as far back as the reign of Edward III, as Dugdale informs us, and the first recorded attempt to establish responsibility for scouring and repairing its lower reaches was made in the same reign.[78] In more recent times, a very complete view and presentment on the state of the river had

[76] Vermuyden, *Discourse*, p. 25.

[77] Burrell, *Exceptions*, p. 9 and William Dodson, 'The designe for the perfect draining of the Great Level of the Fens, 1665', pr. in Wells, *History*, II, p. 432.

[78] Dugdale, *Imbanking*, pp. 213–14, 216.

been made in 1552.[79] This initiative seems to have lost impetus with the death of Edward VI. A similar, though perhaps less ambitious effort to improve the river begun in 1566, and with better results, for the accounts for dyking the part of the river for which the Queen was held to be responsible have survived.[80] Ordinances for the recovery of Welland ('if it may be') were made again in May 1588, but a year later a key part of the dyking remained undone. A renewed effort in 1591 also failed to be completed.[81] In 1605, when John Hunt and a group of commissioners viewed the river, they found it in dire need of amendment.[82] So too did Sir Clement Edmondes (representing the Privy Council) and the group of commissioners who escorted him over the same terrain in August 1618. At that date the Welland below Spalding was not navigable even for small craft.[83] Little wonder that the resurrection of Welland was on Bedford's agenda.

The need to do something about the Nene and its outfall below Wisbech had an even longer history. A problem was evident as early as the reign of Edward I when Norfolk Marshlanders complained of damage to their fen and river banks from waters which had once taken the Wisbech route to the sea but were now tending to run by Well Creek to what was then known as Wiggenhale Ee but was progressively becoming the eastern branch of the Ouse. The initial reaction of the Crown's commissioners was to try to force the waters back into their old course, but in the longer run this solution proved untenable, and the Marshlanders had to accept the new role of the Ouse as the main drain of the southern fens.[84]

Moving ahead a century, a Commission of 1437/8 ordered that 'the River of Wisbech should be scoured and enlarged in all places defective from Guyhirne to the sea, as often as need requires, by all the landholders within the said Hundred, each man in proportion to his holding'.[85] How often it was actually done is another matter. Bishop Morton, at some time during his tenure of Ely (1479–86), carried out a major improvement of the Nene-Wisbech drainage system. It involved not only dyking and widening the river from Guyhirne to the sea, but also the making of a new cut from a point on the Nene a little below Peterborough directly to Guyhirne: the New Leam, alias Morton's Leam.[86] How the work was authorized or paid for, we don't know.

Under Elizabeth there were two significant developments in the struggle to keep the Wisbech outfall open. The men of Wisbech Hundred began to insist, first, that the onerous task of dyking the river should not fall on their shoulders alone, but should be shared by all who drained their waters that way, i.e. by all the fen towns of the Nene catchment area, and second, that the only long term solution lay in sluicing the river below Wisbech to keep out the tides and the silt they so abundantly deposited in the river bed. Thus, in 1571, laws were made for Wisbech Hundred based on a most comprehensive jury verdict which included, for the first time, a call for placing a sluice at the Horshoe below Wisbech.[87] A sluice was indeed built there in 1575, at a cost of

[79] Kirkus (ed.), *Records of the Commissioners of Sewers*, I, pp. 33–46.

[80] Owen (ed.), *Records of the Commissioners of Sewers*, II, pp. 17–21.

[81] Ibid, p. 116.

[82] CUL, EDR A/8.

[83] Edmondes' Report.

[84] The story is long and involved, marked by the usual clashes of interest between marshlanders and the inland fen towns, navigation interests and drainage concerns, personal profit and the common weal. Dugdale provides relatively full documentation: *Imbanking*, pp. 246, 248, 300–06.

[85] Ibid., p. 328.

[86] Richard Atkins' report to the Bishop of Ely, 1618, printed in Wells, *History*, II, pp. 71–97.

[87] Dugdale, *Imbanking*, pp. 339–47, item 32.

£1000, but faced the following year with the job of dyking the river, the Wisbech men pleaded with the Privy Council for financial help from the upstream towns. The Council wrote to the local Commissioners urging them 'to induce [their communities] by all good means that you can to contribute to so good a purpose as this is'.[88] The results were what one might expect.

The great river of Wisbech was again ordered to be dug in 1581, and in 1583 a great sluice which cost £1400 was made near to the four gotes.[89] This was overthrown by the sea after only a month.[90] As noted above, the sluice Humphrey Bradley placed at the Horshoe in 1589 was also short-lived.[91] By 1594, most of the dyking ordered five years earlier had been done, but one mile of the river, for which the Queen was responsible, remained to do. 'If the said mile … being a several fishing belonging to the See of Ely, now in her Majesty's hands, be not dyked, all the charge of the dyking already bestowed and which hereafter might be bestowed upon other rivers above Guyhirne will be utterly lost'.[92]

Well before this date, the inland fen towns of the Nene system had begun to cast about for an alternative means of suing their water to the sea. They fixed their hopes on the reopening and remaking of Shire Drain. The first moves in this direction were made in the 1570s, and after the usual false starts, objections, and cross purposes, a well articulated plan was enacted into law by Commissioners for the interested areas in September 1596.[93] Most of the necessary work was actually carried out, though with very limited success; it proved difficult to build reliably solid banks of the height required along a two mile section of its course.[94] A more fundamental problem was that many experienced commissioners doubted if the Nene carried enough water to keep open the outfalls of both the Shire Drain and the Wisbech River. Indeed, the Shire Drain had been stopped up in Bishop Morton's time, specifically to direct more water to the Wisbech outfall.[95] Nevertheless both the Hunt-Popham plan of 1605–6 and the plan expounded to Edmondes in 1618 (see below for these) called for perfecting both the Shire Drain and the Wisbech outfall – though not for a sluice at the Horshoe. Yet down to 1631 it had proved impossible to get effective action on either project. Bedford was a good politician; it is not surprising to find that he met the long cherished and long frustrated desires of the partisans of each of these project by completing both, including the sluice at the Horshoe.

The project on our list with the shortest history was the last, the proposal for a new channel for the Ouse by a straight cut from Erith Bridge (where the Ouse enters the fens) to a point on its lower reaches at the infall of Maid Lode or thereabouts. It first appears in the records as one part of the plan detailed to a representative group of Commissioners by John Hunt in June 1605.[96] Hunt, originally a London merchant, had become possessed by the challenge of marsh and fen drainage. He had bought from the estate of an earlier draining enthusiast, George Carleton, extensive properties in South Holland and the Ring of Waldersey and Coldham which stood in need of draining. He had worked at laying them dry to little effect. He had been named a Commissioner of Sewers and in 1604 had launched the first drainage proposal to take in the

[88] TNA, SP12/108, no. 36.

[89] Gote (git, goat etc.): another word for a sluice, usually not very large. It was safer to put several small gotes in a seabank than one large one.

[90] Dugdale, *Imbanking*, p. 347; BL, Add. Ms. 35,171, fo. 47v.

[91] See above, p. 11.

[92] Lansd. Ms 76, no. 56.

[93] CUL, EDR, A/8.

[94] Atkin's Report (1618), pr. Wells, *History*, II, p. 77.

[95] CUL, EDR, A/8.

[96] Ibid.

whole of what was to become known as the Great (or Bedford) Level.[97] A country gentleman, even one with London connections, would need powerful associates to carry through so ambitious a project. Whether it was Hunt who recruited Lord Chief Justice Popham, or Popham who appropriated Hunt and his plan, it is not possible now to determine, but by the summer of 1605 the project was headed by the Chief Justice and Hunt was described as 'the artist of this design'.[98]

Hunt's plan, as he described it in the course of a seven-day traverse of the fens in company with a group of commissioners representative of the areas concerned, covered both major issues and a host of lesser details. Occasionally the commissioners raised questions or objections, and received answers which seemed to satisfy them. I summarize the plan's major features here, because, as will be seen, they bear a remarkable resemblance to the work actually carried out between 1631 and 1636 by Francis and his associates. Hunt's major proposals were as follows: to deepen, straighten and bank the Welland; to remake Morton's Leam, adding new fifty-foot banked indikes to parallel it on either side; to finish work already begun on the Shire Drain and heighten its banks to match those of the South Ea; to deepen the Wisbech river from Guyhirne to the sea, provide it with indikes, and cut a new outfall channel for it through the salt marsh to direct its waters away from their existing course, so dangerously close the sea banks of Norfolk Marshland; to provide a substitute for Well Creek since that drain could not be enlarged without major damage to the towns of Upwell and Outwell; to cut a new channel, or channels, of 120 feet of waterway for the western branch of the Ouse from Erith Bridge to a place near Salter's Lode; to place a great sluice with a double set of doors on this new cut at its junction with the eastern branch of the Ouse in order to keep out the tides and retain water in the new cut in summer; to bank the lesser rivers falling into the Ouse from the east (Mildenhall, Brandon, Stoke) and to make land eas[99] along the upland edge of the whole area.[100] It was a comprehensive and ambitious plan, and deserves to be recognized as the first design for a general draining of the Great Level.

It was also a good deal more elaborate than the work Bedford actually carried out, but the basic similarity in concept between the two is very striking. The one major difference was that Bedford placed a sluice on the Nene below Wisbech, an item not included in Hunt's plan. A sluice in that location was not in any way a novel idea in the 1630s, as we have seen. In other respects, Bedford's work presents itself as a stripped down, economy version of Hunt's plan. To give one example only, Hunt called for the new cut for the Ouse to have 120 feet of waterway in one or a pair of channels. Bedford made a single 70 foot cut. The point to note here, however, is that Hunt's main innovations, the new river from Erith Bridge to 'such place between Salter's Lode and Maid Lode as the undertakers think best'; his proposal to bank the Mildenhall, Brandon and Stoke Rivers; and his plan for land eas along the upland edge of the fens were all carefully written into the draft bill drawn up immediately after the meeting at Wisbech on

[97] Kennedy, 'So glorious a work', pp. 100–1.

[98] Dugdale, *Imbanking*, p. 381. See also Kennedy, 'So glorious a work', pp. 100–31 for a carefully researched account of what is still a puzzling story.

[99] Ea (ee, eau) a drain; land ea: a drain skirting the upland edge of the fens to receive the water of springs, and rills entering the fens from the uplands.

[100] CUL, EDR, A/8. The new channel for Well Creek was actually cut, and was known ever after as Popham's Eau.

13 July 1605, the meeting which launched the project by accepting in principle the undertakers' proposals. A summary of the draft is given by Badeslade.[101] Dugdale provides a summary of the bill as presented in Parliament in 1606.[102] Both show that the work to be done was specified at some length, and Badeslade's version makes it clear that many details – of the precise placement of banks, etc. – were left to Commissioners to settle. The Commissioners did not surrender one jot of their right to determine what the Undertakers were to do.

Sir Clement Edmondes' report to the Privy Council of 20 September 1618 on what the Commissioners believed needed to be done in the Great Level reiterates long held positions. The Welland should be deepened and banked from Crowland to the sea; the work necessary to the re-opening of Shire Drain should be completed; the Nene should be deepened and banked below Guyhirne, but should be sluiced only if experience proved it necessary – this despite the fact that Wisbech men argued that experience had long since proved it necessary. Hunt's proposal for a new cut for the Ouse is passed over in silence, and the Commissioners recommended improving the Ouse system by resuscitating certain ancient but long neglected sewers and by making a number of shorter cuts to straighten particular stretches of the river. These proposals for the Ouse closely resemble plans a group of Isle of Ely commissioners had attempted to carry out in 1608–10, without success.[103] Edmondes noted that they still kindled fierce dispute in the region they purported to serve.[104]

When Vermuyden lost his footing, first as Undertaker for the Great Level, and then as engineer and Adventurer in Bedford's project, I suggest that the Earl and his good neighbours, the local Commissioners of Sewers, drew upon the experiences and proposals of the past two generations and more to put together a plan which would meet their needs as they understood them. Its basic thrust was to reclaim lost outfalls – of Welland, Nene and Shire Drain. The sluice at the Horshoe may perhaps best be understood as a sop to the Wisbech interest in return for their acceptance of the (possibly damaging) re-opening of Shire Drain. Burrell, who built the sluice, certainly believed in its efficacy, but for Bedford, its inclusion in his plan seems a political rather than an engineering decision; he didn't build its like on the Welland, a river at least equally given to 'landing up'.

At this time the Ouse outfall presented no problem;[105] what was needed in the southern fens was more efficient conveyance of water to that outfall. With two recent proposals to chose between, Bedford adopted Hunt's idea of a new straight cut for the western branch of the Ouse, eschewing the cheaper, but dangerously contentious proposals advanced in 1609 and 1618 by a small coterie of Isle of Ely commissioners despite the fact that Sir Miles Sandys, leader of that group, had become an Adventurer in his enterprise. Bedford renewed Popham's Eau, another part of the Hunt design, and a work favoured by the Ely faction.[106] However, he didn't go so far as to bank the lesser streams flowing into the Ouse from the east, or to provide the land eas along the inland edge of the fens which had also featured in Hunt's plan. The one major novelty

[101] Badeslade, *Navigation*, pp. 23–4.

[102] Dugdale, *Imbanking*, pp. 386–7.

[103] For this episode, see Kennedy, 'So glorious a work', pp. 146–68.

[104] Edmondes' Report.

[105] Except that its persistent growth in depth and breadth threatened to undermine the banks along its lower reaches.

[106] Kennedy, 'So glorious a work', p. 150.

in Bedford's work was a new cut for the South Ea (or Old Ea) from a point near Vincent's Cross on Cats Water to Clowes Cross, a cut with obvious bearing on the drainage of Bedford's own estate of Thorney (through which it passed) and of possible benefit also to the marshy fen ends of the townships of Elloe Wapentake.

We may now sum up the evidence from design. The projects Bedford carried out were those which the main factions within the Commissions for the Great Level had long believed to be crucial to the draining of their particular bailiwicks. He had added to these a number of other new cuts seen as vital to their particular regions by those Adventurers who were also local landowners and Commissioners. If this work resembled Vermuyden's proposals of 1630 – and we don't know that it did – it was not because Bedford had appropriated Vermuyden's design, but rather because Vermuyden had also chosen in 1630 to base his proposals on the known desires of the Country. The Commissioners themselves were the effective designers of the first general drainage of the Great Level.[107] Vermuyden was not the engineer in charge, and cannot be held responsible for the shortcomings of Bedford's work.

There is room, therefore, for a re-assessment of Vermuyden's thought and practice as a draining engineer which recognizes that when he became Director of Works in the Great Level in 1650, he had to work within constraints set by the 'Pretended Act' of 1649 which specifically prohibited any diversion of the waters of the Welland,[108] by the parsimony of his employers, and by the work already carried out in the Level under Bedford. In fairness to him, the question should be how well he did within these restraints, for he never had a free hand to do the work as he thought best – if the *Discourse* does indeed represent his final views on that matter.[109] There is also, I suggest, a case for reassessing the role of the Commissioners of Sewers, and especially of Bedford, first as the leading member of the Commission, and then as Undertaker in the Great Level, in shaping this most ambitious of all the drainage enterprises of the 1630s. I once held that the Commissioners' long suit lay in their ability to thwart projects for which they had no liking. However, I underestimated their commitment to the cause of a general draining, Bedford's tenacity and resourcefulness in pursuit of that goal, and above all, the Courts of Sewers' determination to maintain control of design decisions. In 1631, in the Great Level, the Country secured an undertaker of their own choosing, terms favourable to themselves as landowners and potential investors, and a design in accord with their views of what needed to be done. In the era of the personal rule, it was a notable achievement. It was also short lived. The 'why' of that is explored below.

[107] This may help to explain why the Commissioners were ready in 1636 to find that Bedford had fulfilled his contract when so much of the level was not winter ground, i.e. subject to winter flooding and so not fit to build on. See Burrell's testimony below, p. 47.

[108] C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum* (3 vols, 1911), II, pp. 133–4.

[109] Among the Bankes Ms at the Bodleian, there is a three-page holograph paper of Vermuyden's dated 1 Aug. 1639 and headed 'Further Considerations touching the worx of the fennes' (Ms 46, fos. 11–13). It doesn't seem to me to clarify or revise his ideas as given in the *Discourse* but it does give the figure of £128,000 for the total cost of the job, and suggests that the work should be done in three stages, beginning with the Deeping area. Vermuyden characteristically uses 'x' in place of 'ks', as in 'banx' and 'worx'.

Epilogue

On 13 June 1636 a Commission of Sewers found Bedford's contract satisfactorily completed; on 11 August 1636 he was awarded the 95,000 acres promised him and began to divide it out to his participants and they to their sub-participants. On 12 October 1637 that award was amended to deal with alleged unfair allocation of the 95,000 acres and the award itself was again confirmed by a Court of Sewers. However, to turn these decrees into law and make them irreversible they required the king's assent. That assent was never given. Yet many new 'owners', including the King, were already cutting the necessary division ditches to demarcate land they took to be theirs. This is when complaints, disturbances and riots bloomed, as was inevitable in a project which brought with it such profound changes to existing communities and economies. The complaints were varied. Unfair allocation of land we have noted, one such complainant being the Bishop of Ely. Especially in what had been the drier parts of the level, that is, those to the east of the Great Ouse, the commoners were loath to give up two-thirds of their fen pastures when their remaining third had gained little by the drainage. Lindley's careful study of these riots shows them as essentially enclosure riots, with commoners filling up division ditches instead of breaking up hedges.[110] He discovered no rioting in Wisbech Hundred, one of the wettest parts of the level.[111] Nor did he find any attack made on the new major cuts and sluices. Drainage in itself might be welcomed or tolerated; losing up to two-thirds of one's common pastures was quite another matter.

Some participants were disgruntled for entirely different reasons. They and their sub-contractors had been promised under Bedford's contract that they would receive land 'fairly fit for arable, meadow or pasture'. This was perfectly plain and irrefutable. However when a good number of them found their land unfit for habitation (i.e. subject to winter flooding), it became clear that they had privately assumed that *their* piece would be arable. They clamoured to have the level made 'winter' ground rather than just 'summer' ground, that is, flood free the year round and thereby fit for habitation. This it wasn't in 1636. Its condition following Bedford's work is well described by Andrewes Burrell in testimony before the Commons Committee on the Fens.

> … after the Earl of Bedford had made his works which were not finished, the main body of the Fens were not drowned in summer time for seven years together … and were usually dry about the beginning of May … with one year the first [of] April … lands of his own in Wisbech and Elm that was not worth any thing before the works were made … have been worth to him £300 [a] yeare by sowing of cole seed upon the land.[112]

Burrell was a staunch supporter of Bedford which makes all the more telling his admission that Bedford had not finished all the work he had intended to do when in June 1636 he applied

[110] Keith Lindley, *Fenland Riots and the English Revolution* (1982).

[111] Dugdale, *Imbanking*, pp. 356. Even marshlands were flooded on either side of the Wisbech outfall. Three marshland towns on the west side of the river contracted to give two-fifths of an estimated 3,000 acres to have the whole drained to keep the land dry at least one foot under the soil.

[112] Harris, *Vermuyden*, p. 88.

for and got a verdict that he had fulfilled his contract. He had six years to complete his work, so why stop in 1636 with some work still undone? He was probably finding it more and more difficult to induce participants to pay their share of costs. An old hand like Vernatti was £650 in arrears and he was not the only delinquent.[113] Already there were unpaid workmen. As treasurer of the undertaking, Bedford may have thought it prudent to stop before the problem worsened.

Burrell's success with cole seed is also worthy of remark, considering how wet that area had been. To use the fens more intensively and to reap new wealth from crops such as cole seed or wheat was the very reason d'etre of all the drainage projects of the 1630's. Burrell and his like were showing what could be done if only the drainage was more complete. Wealth so near and yet so far!

Charles saw the point. His own 12,000 acres near Whittlesey were barely fit for cultivation. He never got a penny from the duo to whom he farmed the task of fitting the land for leasing. Indeed, many lessees were willing to pay only a reduced rent or none at all.[114] What to do? Some time in September 1637 Charles approached Bedford to accept the task of making the level winter ground. Bedford declined and asked that the decrees in his favour receive royal assent. He did however agree to make specified improvements to drainage in the Whittlesey area and had that work begun.[115]

Charles was enthralled with the grandeur (and profit) of adding a whole new 'country' to his kingdom and dreamed of building a new town in mid-fen, designed by and named after himself. He was determined to see a full draining achieved. And no wonder. His 12,000 acres were but a small part of his stake in the drainage. A survey taken in 1604 of a part of the Great Level lying to the east of the Great Ouse shows that the Crown was then lord of the following fen towns: Northwold, Methwold, Brandon, Mildenhall, Soham, Fordham, Burwell (with Sir Francis Lovel), Bottisham, Waterbeach, Over, Erith, Colney and Bluntisham being part of the soke of Somersham, Wilberton, Strethem and Thetford.[116]

I cannot pinpoint the time when he or his advisers saw that the only way to proceed was to break Bedford's contract and begin again with a new one. It would not be easy to do, since Charles had approved Bedford's contract himself. Further, there must not be endless bickering over whether or not Bedford had fulfilled his contract. By 13 February 1638 a decision had been taken and a plan devised. The question of what should be done was referred to a committee of four: the Lord Treasurer, the Attorney General, the Solicitor General and the Surveyor General.[117] When they reported on 4 March 1638 it was to say that Bedford's law of tax had been illegal, and therefore all actions based on it were illegal too. Its flaw was that it had not listed every common and several fen to which the law applied.[118] This finding cut the tap root of Bedford's undertaking and of all the other five drainage projects then in being, as Bedford was not slow to point out. All began with a tax by the acre on common or several fen land and offered

[113] SP 16/413 nos 63 and 102; 415, no. 104; 420, no. 93.

[114] TNA, E 178/5970. This document includes questions to be investigated, and reports on the responses.

[115] Ibid. See also SP 16/403, p. 176 (pr. *CSPD 1640*, p. 178).

[116] BL, Add. Ms. 35,171. Some of these lordships may have been alienated by 1637/8, but at that date there were other important royal lordships, such as Whittlesey and Crowland lying to the west of the river

[117] SP 16/323, pp. 246–7, pr. *CSPD 1637–8*, pp. 252–3.

[118] Bodl., Bankes Mss, 46/5.

no formula for translating this into a tax on individuals, towns or cattle. It couldn't be paid; that was the beauty of it. The whole level could then be judged delinquent. Under marshland customary law, Commissioners of Sewers could, as a last resort, sell the land of a person who couldn't or wouldn't pay a sewer rate. This power was now imported into the fens where no such custom had existed. Ten of thousands of acres of fenland were 'sold' to various undertakers as reward for draining a level. With parliament in abeyance, how else could a level-wide drainage be set up? The finding also had the merit of avoiding any debate over whether or not Bedford had fulfilled his contract. The latter knew he could not appeal the finding; the Council had long since ruled that suits related to sewer matters could only be heard before a Court of Sewers (appointed by the Crown) or at Council Table. The ordinary courts were out of bounds.

So on 12 April 1638 a large, newly-appointed Commission (hand-picked by the Queen, no less) found the drainage incomplete (not illegal!). A second sitting revoked the grant of land to Bedford and accepted the king's 'request' that he, Charles, become the Undertaker to complete the work. This 'Huntingdon Law' also awarded 40,000 acres of their original 95,000 to Bedford and his partners. These were 'afterwards agreed on, sett out and accepted by consent'.[119] Yet as late as May 1641 Bedford and his partners were entreating the House of Lords for possession.[120]

King and Council seemed oblivious to the unsettling effect these proceedings had on the Great Level. If Bedford's undertaking had been illegal from the start and his contract was now revoked, how could Charles give away 40,000 acres before fulfilling his own commitment? And who now owned the remaining 55,000? Charles certainly acted as if he still owned his 12,000. Who would decide about the rest and when? What happened to sub-contractors? Were they left to the mercy of the participant under whom they had invested? Could manorial lords keep the land they had taken as improvement or did it revert to common pasture? Commoners saw no reason why they shouldn't reoccupy all their former commons and began to do so. The level was left a legal no man's land. What actually happened from place to place when central authority failed, and lords, gentry and commoners were left to their own devices has still to be investigated.

To return to Charles's undertaking, we may note how grand in scope his contract was. It covered the fenny parts of the marsh lands and Deeping Fen, as well as the Great Level. Despite all the talk of winter ground, his commitment was still to make land 'fit for arable, meadow or pasture' though Vermuyden insisted that his intention was to make winter ground. All this was the height of folly. At the best of times Charles could not have scraped together the £128,000 Vermuyden told him the project would cost,[121] and these were not the best of times. The Scots were organizing resistance over that most explosive issue, right religion, and the situation there was going from bad to worse. These alarms did not completely drown Charles' project but it was nearly a year and a half after he became Undertaker that, on 19 September 1639, he appointed Vermuyden his agent for the draining.[122] It was 5 August 1640 before Vermuyden secured even conditional approval of his drainage plan.[123] From the very first he worked under almost impossible conditions. He was short both of time and money. As for money, the Council could

[119] Huntingdonshire RO, DDM16/57.
[120] Ibid. (last page).
[121] n. 111 above
[122] *CSPD 1639*, p. 510.
[123] CUL, CUR, 3.1.

do no better than earmark for him such dubious sources of funding as collection of old debts. Information about what he actually received is very confused, but it may have been less than £5,000. He soon had unpaid workmen. Yet he did accomplish rather more than Dugdale gives him credit for. An undated holograph report on a year's work and a second dated 5 October 1641 show that he had widened the Nene below the Horshoe Sluice, banked Morton's Leam on the north side, and begun the same on the south side. He had also set a sluice on Shire Drain and cut half of a 200-rod channel for the Nene through the salt marshes to deep water.[124] He was not one to give up easily; he was still at work in the fens in May 1642.[125] By then he was answering to the Lords, not to Charles.

Meanwhile the Short Parliament had come and gone. Far from supporting Charles' fen project, the Commons had refused to vote him any taxes at all until grievances, such as ship money, had been dealt with. The Long Parliament tended to be of two minds about drainage projects. The Commons, left to deal with a flood of complaints, took a very cautious approach, some members seeing them as a grievance in themselves. The Lords were more open to persuasion that the King's project deserved support, but before a meeting of minds could be reached civil war consigned any hope to limbo. Not until 1649 would the draining of the Great Level be taken in hand again and Vermuyden reappear on the scene.

[124] Bodl., Bankes Mss, 4/6. No address, no date but almost certainly the fall of 1640. Also 65/75, addressed to 'Your Lordships' and dated 5 Oct. 1641.

[125] *Commons' J.*, 25 Jan. 1642 and 2 May 1642. See also SP 16/491 no. 94 (28 July 1642) re workmen inevitably unpaid.

Scottish crop yields in the second half of the seventeenth century: evidence from the Mains of Castle Lyon in the Carse of Gowrie*

by Mary Young

Abstract

In the second half of the seventeenth century, Scotland's under-developed economy struggled to recover from the Cromwellian wars and their aftermath. Although there is evidence of an expansion in cereal production in this period, the country was a marginal area for bread grains and a severe famine was experienced in the 1690s. This essay presents crop yield data recorded over a 23-year period (1673–95) on a farm in the Carse of Gowrie, one of Scotland's most favoured arable areas. It explores the nature and context of the improved agrarian practices introduced there and the considerable increase in returns achieved. However, the generally low yields obtained, together with fluctuations in their level from one harvest to the next, also reveals the threat to the supply of staple foods posed by an extended period of poor weather.

The Cromwellian Wars and their aftermath left Scotland a defeated nation, effectively bankrupt, with little more than primary products to trade and only a handful of ships in which to carry them.[1] In the third quarter of the seventeenth century her economy was still recovering from the damage it had sustained.[2] Climate and physical geography made Scotland a marginal area for bread grains with cereal production confined for the most part to the staples of oats and bere.[3] Soils were in general impoverished, having suffered environmental degradation over the course of millennia that involved a steady leakage of nitrogen.[4] Crop yields during the second half of the seventeenth century were for the most part low, surpluses were limited and any extended shortfall brought the threat of dearth. In the 1690s, severe weather conditions launched

* I would like to thank Prof. C. A. Whatley, also the *Review's* editor and its referees, for their helpful and constructive comments on early drafts of this paper.

[1] An example of the extent of the damage done to the country's trade is evident from the 1656 survey by Thomas Tucker. Only 80 ships above 25 tons burden were recorded in the whole of Scotland. J. D. Marwick (ed.), 'Report by Thomas Tucker upon the settlement of Revenues of Excise Customs in Scotland, AD 1656', *Miscellany of the Scottish Burgh Records Society* (1881), pp. 1–48.

[2] For some far from flattering contemporary descriptions of the country, see P. H. Brown (ed.), *Early Travellers in Scotland* (1891).

[3] Bere (bear, beir, beer): a hardy, primitive, four-rowed variety of barley used primarily for brewing.

[4] T. C. Smout, 'The Improvers and the Scottish Environment', in T. M. Devine and J. R. Young (eds), *Eighteenth-Century Scotland, New Perspectives* (1999), pp. 210–14.

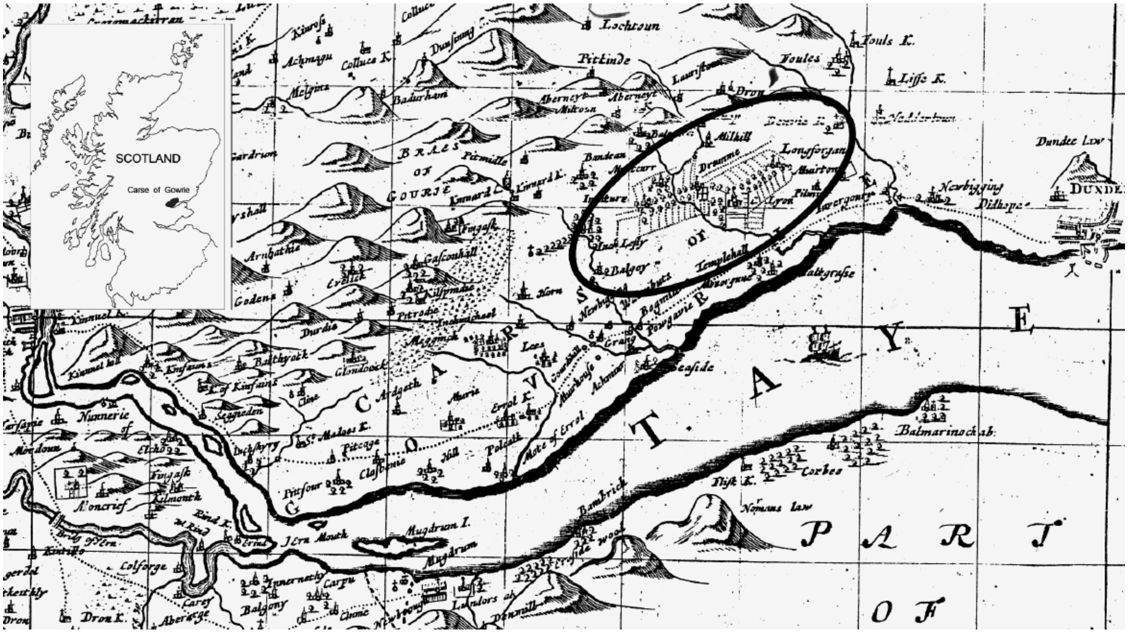


FIGURE 1. Detail from John Adair, *The Mappe of Straithern, Stormont and Cars of Gourie* (1720 imprint of the 1683 Survey). Circled is the depiction of the enclosures created by Patrick, Earl of Strathmore on the Castle Lyon estate and by Lord Kinnaird on the neighbouring estates of Drimmie and Inchture. Location map inset.

devastating famine to large areas of the country.[5] The seriousness of this famine offers evidence, superficially at least, for the backwardness of the Scots economy at this time. This paper examines crop returns for the consecutive years 1673–95 from the Mains of Castle Lyon in the Carse of Gowrie. It will show that upon the seemingly bleak landscape described above, there were real signs of improvement in agrarian practice in the years for which data is available.

The survival from this period of systematic recordings of the yields obtained on Scottish farms is extremely rare. The amount of information that is extant for Castle Lyon affords a valuable opportunity to explore the reality of crop production at this time, the systems and practices employed, the difficulties faced, the levels of the yields achieved and, not least, the nature, extent and the context of the improvements that were introduced. This, at a time when there was little growth in Scotland's urban population and the poor situation with regard to overseas trade, kept grain prices low except in times of dearth.[6] The farm's situation in the Carse of Gowrie

[5] R.E.Tyson, 'Famine in Aberdeenshire, 1695–1699: anatomy of a crisis', in D.Stevenson (ed.), *From Lairds to Louns: country and burgh life in Aberdeen, 1600–1800* (1986), pp.32–50; K.Cullen, C.A.Whatley and M.Young, 'King William's Ill Years: new evidence on the impact of scarcity and harvest failure during the crisis of the 1690s on Tayside', *Scottish Historical Rev.*, 85 (2006), pp.250–76; K.J.Cullen, 'Famine in Scotland in the 1690s: causes and consequences' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Dundee, 2004). See also R.A.Dodgshon, 'The Little Ice Age in the Scottish Highlands and Islands: documenting its human impact', *Scottish Geog. J.*, 121 (2005), pp.321–37

[6] For figures on Scotland's urban population at this time, see I.D.Whyte, 'Scottish and Irish urbanisation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: a comparative perspective', in S.J.Connolly, R.A.Houston and R.J.Morris (eds), *Conflict, identity and economic development. Ireland and Scotland, 1600–1939* (1995), pp.18–19.

adds further significance. (For its location, see Figure 1.) The district was well established as one of the premier grain producing areas in Scotland. Wheat was grown there on a commercial scale for supply to urban centres and, in good years, large quantities of oats, bere and malt were exported to Scandinavia and the Low Countries.[7]

The land on which the Mains of Castle Lyon (later renamed Castle Huntly) was situated is south-facing and relatively sheltered at an altitude of between five and twenty metres above sea level, one and a half miles to the north of the Tay estuary. The soil is predominantly a mixture of estuarine silts and clays with a capability for agriculture classified by the Soil Survey of Scotland in part as Grade 2 and in part as Grade 3_1.[8] The ground is, in general, naturally fertile, but with cropping inhibited by poor drainage in low-lying areas of heavy clay. The Sidlaw hills to the north and the Fife hills to the south effectively encircle the Tay estuary and provide shelter from extremes of weather. Rainfall is consistently less than thirty inches per annum. An above average number of frost-free days, together with the long hours of summer daylight to be found at latitude 56° 27′ North, provide a relatively long growing season.[9]

I

The data from which the run of yields have been calculated are contained in the *Papers of the Earl of Strathmore* [NRA(S) 885]. The amount of information to be found in the muniments together with comments by Patrick, first Earl of Strathmore, in the *Glamis Book of Record*, reveal much about the Castle Lyon estate during the second half of the seventeenth century.[10] The insight these records allow into the circumstances of the farm, the methods of production employed and the manner in which the estate was being developed and improved, enables the level of crop returns there to be seen in their wider context and so provide a basis for comparison with yields found elsewhere. The level at which crops yield is dependent on several factors and where only isolated instances of yields from single years are available there is no way of knowing how representative these might be, or whether they reflect a particularly good or bad harvest. In practice, even farms of a similar size and within a few miles of each other can produce very different returns in the same year. In 1695 for instance, a year of very serious dearth and in some areas famine, the corncaster measured the total cereal harvest at Dronlaw, a farm of two ploughgates to the north-west of Dundee, to be 140 bolls. In the same year, only five miles distant but in a more sheltered location, the grain and pease grown on the Mains of Castle Lyon (also a farm of two ploughgates) totalled 300 bolls.[11]

[7] I. D. Whyte, *Agriculture and society in seventeenth-century Scotland* (1979), pp. 63–4; M. Young, 'Rural society from the Restoration to the Union. Challenge and response in the Carse of Gowrie, *c.*1660–1707' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Dundee, 2004), pp. 201–3.

[8] Soil Survey of Scotland, *Land Capability for Agriculture*, Sheet 5, Eastern Scotland, (1983).

[9] A. N. L. Hodd, 'Agricultural change in the Carse of Gowrie, 1750–1875' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Dundee, 1974), pp. 22–6.

[10] A. H. Millar (ed.), *Glamis Book of Record* (1890), *passim*.

[11] National Register of Archives (Scotland [hereafter NRA(S)] 885, Papers of the Earl of Strathmore, 50/3 and 64/1/21, 1695. (The archive remains at Glamis and access may be arranged through the National Register of Archives (Scotland.)) Amongst local terms, the Corncaster was an independent assessor employed to measure and attest to the amount of grain thrashed and contained in stacks; a ploughgate was nominally the amount of land that could be ploughed by a team of eight oxen in a season.

A guide to the value of the land on the Mains of Castle Lyon, which offers the possibility of comparison with other estates and holdings in Scotland in the seventeenth century, is through its 'valued rent'. In accordance with an act of the Parliament of Scotland in 1643, the real rent of every holding was assessed by local commissioners to facilitate the raising of a land tax.[12] The rent of the arable ground on the Mains of Castle Lyon was assessed as 100 bolls (20 bolls each of wheat, bere, oats, meal and pease).[13] At the rule of thumb rate for the application of rent in the pre-Improvement era of one third of production, the expected long-term average yield of victual from the arable ground at that time would, therefore, have been in the region of 300 bolls. At 100 bolls, the valued rent was slightly more than the actual rent of 92 bolls of victual being paid in the 1670s by three Castle Lyon tenants who each farmed holdings of two ploughgates adjacent to the Mains. The proportion of ferme (rent paid in grain) being paid by these tenants in the more valuable crop of wheat was however higher, at 26 per cent, than the assessed valuation of 20 per cent in wheat for the Mains.[14]

The factory accounts that pertain to the crop years 1672 to 1695 include the amounts of the three principal grains, plus pease, sown on the Mains of Castle Lyon and the quantities harvested.[15] A 'crop year' was not a calendar year but corresponded to an accounting period that began with each harvest. Its usage was standard in Scotland's grain-growing areas throughout the early modern period. Grain harvested in the autumn of 1680, for example, was the basis for the crop year 1680 and all subsequent sales of, payments in, or use made of grain from that harvest, be it in 1680, through 1681 or even beyond, would be accounted for as 'crop 1680'. This included all debts falling due from that harvest such as stipends, wages and rents. Grain discharged as having been sown in the accounts of crop year 1680, was the seed corn for the following crop, i.e. the harvest of crop year 1681. During the period from which the records of yields survive, four different factors had the day-to-day management of the estate but Earl Patrick was resident at Castle Lyon for long periods and took a very close personal interest in its affairs and development. The account books follow for the most part a similar pattern: the nature of their contents is fairly consistent, though the level of detail varies, sometimes considerably. From 1696, the year of Earl Patrick's death, no records with comparable information on the crop yields at Castle Lyon have been located.

The extant volumes contain the summaries of the receipts (the 'charges') for the estate as a whole: they include the amounts of ferme and money received from the tenants as well as the return of the crops grown on the Mains. They include the manner of the disposal of the crops and ferme (the 'discharges'), listing the quantities sold, what was consumed on the estate by the household and livestock, the maintenance and payments made to workers and, importantly, the amounts sown as seed on the Mains' land. The yield figures include only the amount of usable grain obtained from each Mains' harvest and take no account of any losses that might have

Note 11 continued
One Perthshire boll of wheat or pease was equal to 4.21 English bushels [1.53 hectolitres]; one Perthshire boll of oats or barley was equal to 6.21 bushels [2.26 hectolitres], as calculated from the county table for Perthshire in Charles Elliot, *A Proposal for uniformity of Weights and Measures in Scotland by execution of the Laws now in force* (1779), pp. 110–11.

[12] *The Acts of the Parliament of Scotland*, VI (i), *1643–47* (1870), p. 31.

[13] NRA(S) 885, 64/1/2.

[14] NRA(S) 885, 64/1/1, Compt Book for 1671.

[15] Factory accounts: the accounts kept by the factor, ie the land steward or agent.

TABLE 1. Crop Yields on the Mains of Castle Lyon, 1672–1696 (Amounts sown and the yield are measured in bolls.)

Crop Year	*Wheat*			*Bere*			*Oats*			*Pease*		
	Sown	*Yield*	*Ratio*	*Sown*	*Yield*	*Ratio*	*Sown*	*Yield*	*Ratio*	*Sown*	*Yield*	*Ratio*
1672		73.5			53.00			168.75			49.63	
1673	14.75	65	4.41	17.75	57.75	3.25	63.00	172.00	2.73	12.00	26.00	2.17
1674	18.5	43.31	2.34	20.00	40.81	2.04	64.00	155.15	2.42	18.00	38.13	2.12
1675	16.00	60.56	3.79	21.43	60.24	2.81	56.81	148.75	2.62	12.25	35.38	2.89
1676	13.81	54.38	3.94	19.75	25.69	1.30	64.03	169.94	2.65	15.00	61.63	4.11
1677	15.88	46.56	2.93	14.13	35.72	2.53	52.63	154.25	2.93	17.09	79.63	4.66
1678	21.00	62.94	3.00	14.94	56.81	3.80	47.00	109.69	2.33	18.00	62.13	3.45
1679	18.85	19.25	1.02	18.80	59.88	3.19	43.00	91.00	2.12	11.33	28.00	2.48
1680	–	43.88	–	15.50	59.75	3.98	45.50	114.00	2.50	14.18	74.51	5.25
1681	19.38	52.86	2.73	14.00	83.88	5.99	48.31	138.88	2.87	14.38	21.14	1.47
1682	16.63	47.44	2.85	16.63	28.56	1.72	55.83	121.63	2.18	18.75	60.75	3.24
1683	16.88	64.00	3.80	17.25	59.63	3.46	65.69	219.81	3.35	15.68	122.25	7.80
1684	19.06	40.88	2.14	19.75	82.50	4.18	62.91	166.56	2.65	16.31	57.63	3.53
1685	14.19	46.94	3.31	23.50	97.44	4.15	55.75	142.53	2.56	27.13	111.06	4.09
1686	16.75	29.19	1.74	17.75	44.00	2.48	62.19	181.38	2.92	24.50	84.00	3.43
1687	14.50	88.69	6.12	21.41	72.00	3.36	56.50	187.00	3.31	20.25	71.00	3.51
1688	23.00	115.75	5.03	20.00	60.25	3.01	48.50	186.63	3.85	17.50	44.63	2.55
1689	26.75	101.75	3.80	23.00	82.25	3.58	44.75	126.25	2.82	20.44	102.32	5.01
1690	21.88	93.50	4.27	23.75	75.50	3.18	47.50	184.25	3.88	24.88	71.75	2.88
1691	25.50	82.00	3.22	21.81	96.00	4.40	46.25	202.50	4.38	29.00	119.75	4.13
1692	22.50	123.06	5.47	23.50	70.00	2.98	54.00	216.13	4.00	23.38	66.69	2.85
1693	23.75	107.25	4.50	19.50	84.25	4.32	37.19	120.93	3.25	27.88	38.50	1.38
1694	30.63	70.70	2.31	19.00	68.25	3.59	69.49	207.19	2.98	29.88	64.00	2.14
1695	26.13	27.00	1.03	22.00	67.47	3.07	50.25	83.13	1.65	56.50	123.00	2.18
1696	23.50			26.75			80.88			19.75		

Source: Papers of the Earl of Strathmore, NRA(S) 885: 1672, 190/2/8; 1673, 190/2/5; 1674, 51/1/15 and 190/2/5; 1675, 51/1/15 and 16; 1676, 51/1/16 and 190/1/9; 1677, 190/1/9 and 10; 1678, 190/1/10 and 12; 1679, 54/1/10 and 190/1/12; 1680, 54/1/10; 1681, 64/1/7 and 8; 1682, 64/1/8 and 9; 1683, 64/1/9 and 11; 1684, 64/1/11; 1685, 64/1/12; 1686, 64/1/13; 1687, 64/1/13; 1688, 64/1/14; 1689, 64/1/15; 1690, 64/1/16; 1691, 64/1/17; 1692, 64/1/18; 1693, 64/1/19; 1694, 64/1/20; 1695, 64/1/21; 1696, 64/1/22.

occurred through storm, vermin damage or theft prior to the thrashing of the corn stacks. The grain harvested on the Mains was held and accounted for separately to that received as ferme, bought in, or held over from previous years. The Mains' crop, excepting that wheat set aside for seed (which was thrashed and used almost immediately for autumn sowing), was stacked and stored unthrashed until needed. At the thrashing of each stack the grain was measured and proofed by a corncaster. Corn taken in as teind sheaves was accounted for separately. Teind was payable on the 'toun' land of Longforgan, but not across the estate as a whole or on the Mains land and none has therefore been included in the yields from the Mains.[16]

The accounts were audited with declarations as to their veracity signed by the factor and the Earl of Strathmore. The Earl contested only one figure. The very low amount recorded as the yield of bere in 1676 prompted him to write in the accounts that it was 'very presumable that there is wrong done which in due time may not only be found out but punished'.[17] However, yields in that year were generally low and, in the absence of any alternative figure being given, the yield as stated in the account book is the figure that has been employed in this study. One amount from the series is missing. At Martinmas 1679, James Ferryer took over from John Lyon as factor and no account of the wheat sown on the Mains for the following year's crop was recorded by either. The yields in 1679, with the exception of the bere crop, were extraordinarily low, with wheat particularly bad. It is possible that either the entire crop was used as seed, or that the little recovered was too poor for such use and seed wheat for the 1680 crop was brought in without proper account of the transaction being kept. A full list of the figures for wheat, bere, oats and pease for those years where records are extant are set out in Table 1.

II

Crop production on the estate of Castle Lyon was based on the traditional infield-outfield system of cultivation then found across much of Lowland Scotland. Infield land tended to be adjacent to the farmsteads and of better quality; it received as much manure as was available and was kept in perpetual cultivation. On the infield, the four principal crops of pease, wheat, bere and oats were grown in roughly equal proportions and in that order of rotation.[18] This was the preferred system in those areas of Scotland where wheat was grown on a commercial basis.[19] Planted immediately after the pease, wheat was able to derive the greatest benefit from the nitrogen fixing qualities of the legumes. Bere, the crop from which ale, the ubiquitous drink of the time was brewed, was hardier than barley, coped well with acid soils and rewarded the input of fertilizer. It was well suited to the Scottish climate in that it required only a very short growing season. In wet springs it could be sown relatively late, allowing time for the ground to dry.[20] Granary accounts from Castle Lyon show that in some years, corn was being fed to horses engaged in the harrowing for the bere crop up to the very end of May.[21] Although without the same potential for high yields as the other grains, oats were a more reliable crop and able to

[16] Teind: tithes. 'Toun' land: land possessed by tenant smallholders.

[17] NRA(S) 885, 190/1/9.

[18] NRA(S) 885, 190/1/22.

[19] Whyte, *Agriculture and society*, pp. 213–18.

[20] Ibid., p. 62.

[21] NRA(S) 885, 64/1/11, 1685 and 62/3/7, 1697.

perform more successfully in poor conditions, hence their position at the end of the rotation. The extant records do not, unfortunately, give any guidance with regard to the amounts of, or manner in which, dung or other fertilizer was applied to the individual crops. Oats were the only one of the principal crops to be grown on the outfield; this land was farmed less intensively than the infield, being grazed, cropped and rested in rotation. Livestock were herded and kept in temporary folds on the areas of outfield next to be cultivated: they fed on the grasses and herbage that grew there naturally and their manure fertilized the ground. The area was then cropped with oats for a period of three or sometimes more years, after which the ground was rested. Following this break, livestock would again be folded and the cycle of cultivation repeated.[22]

The Mains of Castle Lyon is described as being a holding of 'two strong plows'. In Scotland, a ploughgate of land is usually taken as 104 Scots acres (i.e. 130 statute acres or 53 hectares approximately) but in practice it is a far from exact measurement. It is rather an expression of the amount of land that could be kept in cultivation by one team of eight oxen. The same team of oxen would, for instance, be capable of ploughing a greater amount of level, light, sandy land in a season than it would of heavy, carse-land clay. Ian Whyte suggests that a seventeenth-century ploughgate might measure somewhere between 80 and 100 Scots acres.[23]

The actual acreage of the ground under crop on the Mains of Castle Lyon during the period for which the figures apply was not recorded and the surviving labour accounts provide little assistance towards this end. The majority of the work on the Mains was carried out by the estate's permanent farm servants who received an annual fee. Ploughmen were the highest paid, receiving £24 Scots (£2 sterling) plus 6½ bolls of livery meal per year. Most additional labour, including the shearing of the corns at harvest, was supplied by the estate's 'aikermen' (tenant smallholders possessing land in the 'toun' of Longforgan) as part of the customary labour services they bore within the terms of their leases. The extent of these labour services is described as 'unlimited'.[24] A rare reference to the number of shearers employed to cut the corns was made in regard to the harvest of 1690, when an allowance of 'supper meal' to eight shearers plus their piper was recorded, but no mention of the amount of days worked was included.[25] The system of customary labour service also clouds the issue of the actual number of ploughs used. The tenants of the large holdings on the estate were obliged to supply 'bonnage pleuchs' (bondage ploughs) to assist on the Mains when required and also to plough the rigs farmed by the aikermen. In 1691 these smallholdings extended to over 100 Scots acres of infield, plus a substantial amount of outfield land. Accounts pertaining to 1691 and 1692 record payments to only one ploughman on the Mains; in 1695 however, three permanent staff with this epithet were listed, while an inventory from 1713 indicates that there were two teams of plough oxen at that time.[26]

In the absence of other information, the best estimate of the area under cultivation can be made from the amounts of seed corn and pease that were sown in each year. The writings of

[22] A full and detailed description of the infield-outfield system of cultivation as practised in Scotland can be found in R. A. Dodgshon, *Land and society in early Scotland* (1981), pp. 229–41.

[23] Whyte, *Agriculture and society*, pp. 144–5.

[24] NRA(S) 885, 190/1/23.

[25] NRA(S) 885, 64/1/17.

[26] NRA(S) 885, 190/1/23 and 64/1/21.

contemporary commentators and the limited evidence that can be gleaned from estate records suggest that in Lowland Scotland in the later seventeenth century, it was regarded as the norm for one boll of seed corn to be sown per Scots acre.[27] From 1673 to 1696 the total seed sown each year on the Mains averaged just over 115 bolls; in the region of 20 bolls each of pease, wheat, bere and oats were sown on infield land with a further 35 bolls of oats on the outfield. On this basis, the total area of cultivated land on the infield devoted to the four main crops would have been in the region of 80 Scots acres plus an area of outfield that averaged 35 Scots acres (approximately 40 and 18 hectares respectively). It should be noted however, that sowing rates substantially above one boll per Scots acre were sometimes used. On a smallholding worked temporarily by the estate following the death of the tenant during the winter of 1680–81, the records show that six bolls of seed (comprising oats, bere and pease, the wheat being already in the ground) were sown on four Scots acres.[28] When the quality of seed-corn was poor, it was usual to sow more densely and it may be that the seed used on that occasion was inferior. Rates of sowing in excess of one boll per Scots acre would represent a proportionate reduction in the area under cultivation.

Across the period the records show a significant increase in the amounts of grain sown on the infield land. In the seven-year period 1673–9 the total amount sown averaged 67 bolls. From 1680 to 1686 this increased to 72 bolls, from 1687 to 1693 there was a further increase to 90 bolls, and for the three years 1694–6 – years of poor weather, poor yields and dearth – the total amount of the four crops sown averaged 113 bolls. On the outfield, the average of 39 bolls of oats that was sown throughout the 1670s and 1680s, fell to 22 bolls between 1690 and 1693, but was increased again to 39 bolls in the 'Ill Years' 1694–6. The larger amounts sown from 1694 were without doubt a response to the crisis and possibly represented both a heavier sowing rate as well as an extension in the area cropped. However, the amounts sown on the infield between 1686 and 1693 were on average more than a third higher than that sown in the 1670s. On the basis of seed being sown at a rate of one boll per Scots acre, a substantial increase in the acreage of the infield land is indicated, rising from possibly little more than 60 Scots acres at the start of the 1670s (31 hectares) to as much as 96 Scots acres in the early 1690s (49 hectares). These figures reflect the considerable changes and improvements that were being carried out at Castle Lyon by Earl Patrick during the period to which the crop yields pertain.

Earl Patrick took over the running of the Lyon estates in 1660 at the age of 17 on the death of his mother, his father having died of plague in the severe outbreak of 1646 when Patrick was only four years of age. Family debts, the costs of war and the heavy fines afterwards imposed by the English, the occupation of Glamis by English troops and their quartering on Castle Lyon during the Interregnum, as well as the general disruption to trade, left the young earl effectively bankrupt. His situation was further exacerbated by the stripping of money and assets from the estates by his step-father, the Earl of Linlithgow. Glamis was uninhabitable following fire damage when in the hands of the English and its lands 'wadset to the castle walls'.[29] The large estate of Belhelvie in Aberdeenshire and some lesser landholdings were sold.

[27] Whyte, *Agriculture and society*, p. 77.

[28] NRA(S) 885, 190/1/14.

[29] Wadset: a form of mortgage, subject to reversion, where the land is exchanged for a capital sum.

On his arrival at Castle Lyon from 'school' at St Andrews, the Earl found the house intact, but bare to the extent that he had to borrow a bed for himself from the local minister.[30]

Records pertaining to Castle Lyon prior to the 1670s are sparse and beyond the brief information to be extracted from a small number of rentals, offer little detail about the state of the land. The Mains itself was in the hands of tenants that Earl Patrick described as '… a race of evill doers desolate fellows and mislabourers of the ground'.[31] The extent to which the ground of the Mains was in poor heart as a consequence of over-exploitation or the inability of the tenants to work it properly through being under-capitalised, is not clear. By the 1660s, however, at the end of a lengthy period of poor management, lack of investment and general depredation, the tenants were unable to meet their rents and a number had run up considerable 'rests'.[32] All were removed from the Mains and the land taken in-hand as the Earl set about transforming the estate. His improvements may have been inspired at least in part by what he saw of English houses and estates as he rode to London in the summer of 1660 'to kiss the new king's ring'.[33]

The changes Earl Patrick effected were introduced over a period in excess of thirty years. They embraced the enclosure of the whole of the original Mains infield land and its transformation into parkland. Large areas of waste and outfield land were enclosed for the planting of woods. Orchards and a commercial tree nursery were established. By the end of the 1690s, thousands of young trees were being sold to other estates in the region.[34] As the infield land was converted into pasture, a corresponding amount of land was taken in from the outfield and brought up to infield standard to replace it. For the most part this new Mains was ground claimed from the outfield of the original Mains, but also included outfield land previously possessed by tenants.[35] At the same time as these changes were being made, a considerable amount of work was carried out on the castle, its outer offices and the farm buildings; these included a new dairy, byres, barns, and sheep houses.[36] The servicing and clearing of the debts inherited by the Earl necessitated that the building work was carried on only as and when funds allowed. Driving the enterprise was Earl Patrick's determination to improve, modernize and beautify his estates and to leave his descendants a legacy of which they could be proud, and one far more secure than that to which he had succeeded. The enclosures and the improvements to the Mains farm were an integral part of this wider scheme, part of the Earl's vision and also the more immediate need to increase his income.[37]

Earl Patrick was not alone in the Carse of Gowrie at this time in the creation of parks, policies

[30] Millar (ed.), *Glamis Book of Record*, pp. 15–33.

[31] Ibid., p. 10.

[32] Thomas Davie, tenant of the largest holding on Castle Lyon, had a debt of 1,000 Scots merks (£56 sterling) in 1660. NRA(S) 885, 190/1/20, 1688.

[33] Millar (ed.), *Glamis Book of Record*, p. 31.

[34] NRA(S) 885, 52/1/1

[35] NRA(S) 885, 190/1/22, 1690.

[36] NRA(S) 885, 190/1/18, 1685.

[37] Millar (ed.), *Glamis Book of Record*, pp. 16–40. An inventory dated Martinmas 1671 lists the debts of the Earl of Strathmore as totalling £163,565 (Scots); NRA(S) 885, 163/7/6. The equivalent purchasing power of this amount in 2002 has been put at £1,535,169 (sterling); Economic History Services http://eh.net. In 1694 the earl wrote that, in addition to the work done on his houses of Glamis and Castle Lyon, more than half the debt he inherited had been paid off. NRA(S) 885, 22/1/1. For an exploration of the workings of the internal economy of the Castle Lyon estate and the manner in which the costs of the improvements were met, see Young, 'Rural Society', pp. 168–93 and 275–9.

and enclosures, or in the extension and improvement of cultivated ground. His neighbours, Thomas Mylne of Mylnefield and Lord Kinnaird of Inchture, were both active in this way.[38] On the Murie estate in Errol, outfield land was being brought up to infield standard and new farms were being created on the Braes of the Carse.[39]

Among the first changes made by Earl Patrick was the enclosure of meadowland to ensure good pasture for the livestock and facilitate the making of hay for their winter maintenance. English travellers in the seventeenth century did not speak well of the amount or success of Scottish haymaking and contemporary Scottish commentators did not deny its shortcomings.[40] Apart from the inclemency of Scotland's climate, a major problem was the want of decent enclosures to protect grassland from the wanderings of the local populace and their livestock.[41] Castle Lyon in 1660 suffered in this way. Earl Patrick described the ground to the south of the castle (later enclosed) to be for the most part a quagmire and 'the middows an open and common pasture so that before my time it was not known what the mawing of grass or use of hay was att that place'.[42] By 1672 Earl Patrick was boasting that there were four hay meadows that amounted to fifty 'good dargs' besides the wards and new paddocks.[43] In 1687 he was able to write that the Mains

> … is marvellously accommodated with parks and inclosures in which I am stanking deer and serves not only for pasture to a great many horses, cattle and sheep but abounds with hay besides the bounds enclosed for orchards in which there is a great deal of shearing grass for stone c[ar]t horses and for cowes … .[44]

The success of the infield–outfield system was dependent on the mutual relationship that existed between livestock and crops and the maintenance of a balance between the two. Livestock were sustained by the produce of the land, while the fertility of the land and hence its productivity was dependent on the manure produced by the livestock. The weakness in the system became apparent when the area of land under cultivation was extended. This, in most cases, involved the ploughing up of land previously used for grazing livestock, which in turn curtailed the number of animals that could be kept. The amount of available manure was, therefore, reduced at a time when more was required to maintain the fertility of an increased area of cultivation. If soil fertility was not to suffer progressive depletion and a consequent decrease in production, additional sources of manure had to be found, or improved systems of land management

[38] NRA(S) 885, 198/2/3, 1692. Perth and Kinross Archive Centre [hereafter PKAC], Hunter of Glencarse Papers, 97/9. An impression of the scale of the enclosures and planting can be gained from John Adair's *Mappe of Straithern, Stormont & Cars of Gourie* (1683), Fig. 1 above.

[39] National Archives of Scotland [hereafter NAS], Matthew of Gourdiehill, GD 316/8, 1683. PKAC, Threipland of Fingask Papers, MS169/14/2/8, 1668.

[40] See for instance T. Morer, 'A short account of Scotland, 1689', in Brown (ed.), *Early travellers in Scotland*, p. 275. Also Whyte, *Agriculture and society*, p. 82.

[41] Damage by local inhabitants included the cutting of grass for their own livestock, of divots and turfs for their houses and their fires, or to add to their manure heaps, as well as simply flattening the grass as they walked through it.

[42] Millar (ed.), *Glamis Book of Record*, p. 35.

[43] Darg: the amount of meadow that could be mowed by a man in a day. NRA(S) 885, 190/1/2, 1672.

[44] NRA(S) 885, 190/1/20, 1687. Stanking: [here] feeding well. 'Shearing grass … for cowes': during the summer months grass was cut and carried to those horses pulling the stone carts and to the milking cows. This practice limited damage to the grass by trampling and its waste by fouling, and was regarded as being more energy efficient.

introduced. It has been suggested that the need to maintain and enhance the manuring of land was an important stimulus towards agricultural improvement in Lowland Scotland in the eighteenth century.[45]

The enclosing of pasture added an extra dimension to the system of infield and outfield that enabled the total area of cultivated land to be extended while soil fertility was maintained, as well as affording options and versatility in cropping and rotation. It has been argued that the key development in agricultural improvement was the integration of grass and grain and the ability to support a higher density of livestock while simultaneously extending the arable area.[46] The alternation between arable crops and pasture reduced weed establishment in crops and the build up of parasites and infections among livestock. The soil was able to rest when under grass and the ploughing in of the sward, together with the fertilising effect of animal dung, enhanced its fertility for both arable crops and grass. What the Earl created on the Mains of Castle Lyon was by no means an adoption of the sophisticated system of convertible husbandry as described by Kerridge and which he argued marked the 'Agricultural Revolution' in England.[47] No evidence, for instance, has so far been found that sown grass seed was used on the Mains of Castle Lyon to establish a ley break, but the improvements that were introduced did mark an important, if far from complete, step in that direction. Both the castle policies and the enclosures that made up the newly created Mains were designed to be capable of carrying either crop or livestock 'that they are all so divided that at pleasure they may all of them or any one of them be made corne again'.[48]

The bringing of the Mains outfield land up to infield standard would seem to have been done almost entirely by the application of dung from the large numbers of livestock kept. No inventories of livestock survive for Castle Lyon for the period of Earl Patrick's tenure. However, when the Dowager Countess Elizabeth took over the estate as part of her jointure lands in August 1713, a valuation of livestock pertaining to the Mains lists, in terms of cattle, 15 drawing oxen with their 'going gear', 12 oxen for fattening, five cows, nine 'queys' (heifers) and four calves. Sheep numbered 55 ewes, 32 wethers, 12 ewe gimmers and 56 lambs. The list does not include horses, but granary accounts from the beginning of the 1690s suggest that during the winter there were generally some ten work horses requiring corn and between five and seven brood mares with foals plus, when the Earl was in residence, six hunting horses, four coach horses and three 'journey' horses.[49] These numbers contrast with those on a tenanted holding of two ploughgates on the nearby estate of Leyes in 1693, when the following livestock were appraised: 15 oxen with their plough gear; four work horses; four cows; two young oxen, two heifers and one calf; two old and three unbroken horses.[50] That the principal means of improving the outfield land was the dung from the large number of animals kept on the Mains, was confirmed in a report concerning its valuation in 1720, which states that the land was 'dunged extraordinarily

[45] J. Shaw, 'Manuring and fertilising the Lowlands, 1650–1850', in S. Foster and T. C. Smout (eds), *The history of soils and field systems* (1994), pp. 111–18.

[46] M. Overton, *Agricultural revolution in England. The transformation of the agrarian economy, 1500–1850* (1996), p. 131.

[47] E. Kerridge, *The Agricultural Revolution* (1967), *passim*.

[48] Comment by Patrick, Earl of Strathmore, 1690. NRA(S) 885, 190/1/22.

[49] NRA(S) 885, 64/1/17, 18 and 19.

[50] St Andrews University Library, Hay of Leyes Muniments, MS3622/748.

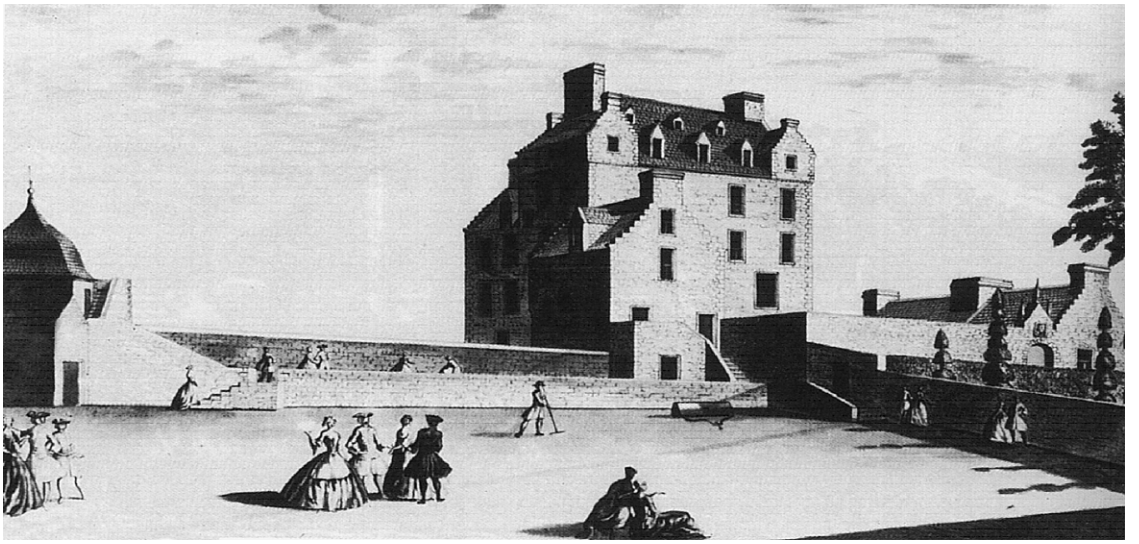


FIGURE 2. Drawing of Castle Lyon c.1720 (artist unknown). The building and its environs are as completed by Patrick, Earl of Strathmore before his death in 1696. © British Museum.

by means of the vast number of bestial he [Earl Patrick] had occasion for in the time of his building, beside his stables … it produced wonderfully'.[51]

An idea of the scale of the building works can be gauged from early views of Castle Lyon (Figure 2). A sense of the number of animals that were needed for haulage can be gained from accounts for stone purchased from the Muirtoun quarries situated more than two miles away. In 1688, when Earl Patrick was writing that a great deal of the work had already been completed, he listed 1,660 wains and 1,153 cartfuls of wall-stone, 4,087 pieces of free tailzie, 109 pieces of long stone, 167 feet tabling and 350 'slaits'. In 1690 charges were made for 1,368 wains and 1,733 carts of wall-stone, 2,112 pieces of free tailzie, 2,095 long stones and a large amount of flooring.[52] During the period of building, the Earl must have maintained a substantial stable of predominantly traction animals.

No mention of other sources of fertilizer used or brought on to the Mains has so far been found. There is ample evidence that lime was applied to land in other areas of Scotland from a much earlier date and that its use was particularly beneficial on clay-rich soils such as those of the Carse of Gowrie, where the natural level of acidity was high and reduced the effectiveness of traditional manures.[53] However, there were neither workable deposits of limestone in the vicinity of the Carse of Gowrie nor of coal with which to burn it. If it is assumed that Earl Patrick was aware of the practice of liming and its benefits, he must not have judged the heavy investment it would have required to import and apply it worthwhile, at a time when grain prices were in general low and he considered himself to be '… leaving nothing unessayd of policie & diligence to render that pairt of the Mains which is under labour as fruitful as a cotterman does to his

[51] NRA(S) 885, 148/5/62, 1720.

[52] Free tailzie: free cut rock. NRA(S) 885, 190/1/22, 1688–90.

[53] Whyte, *Agriculture and society*, pp. 198–208.

single aiker of land'.[54] The purchases of lime recorded in the estate accounts are entirely for building work. Although seaweed was used widely as a fertilizer in many of Scotland's coastal districts, the conditions that prevail within the estuary of the River Tay inhibit the types and the quantity growing there. No record from the early modern period has so far been found of the application of seaweed in the Carse of Gowrie.

III

While the yield figures obtained for the Mains of Castle Lyon are an important record of the actual amounts being produced on that farm, they also embody two additional and distinct movements: year-by-year fluctuations and the degree of improvement achieved across time. The fluctuation in yields from one harvest to the next was severe. Figures 3–6 include the ratio of yield over seed sown for the individual crops. The charts illustrate the level of fluctuation with which producers and ultimately consumers had to contend. Among the largest swings was a massive improvement in wheat yield from 1.74:1 in 1686 to 6.12:1 in 1687, representing a more than threefold increase in yield. However, drops in yield could be equally dramatic, as in 1682 when the bere yield fell to 1.72:1 from the high of 5.99:1 obtained in the previous year's harvest. Each crop reacted to the prevailing conditions more or less successfully than the others. Where one crop fared poorly, another might do relatively well and to some degree ameliorate the overall level of production. In years of general shortage, benefit could be taken by large-scale producers from the higher prices that prevailed. This was the case in 1676 when the yield from the bere on the Mains of Castle Lyon was a disastrous 1.3:1, the oat crop was a rather average 2.65:1, but the return from the wheat and pease a very sound 3.94:1 and 4.11:1 respectively. The overall yield ratio for the four crops was 2.77:1, which, while far from good, was not the catastrophe it might well have proved on farms situated on more marginal land, where the only crops grown were bere and oats. In 1693, Earl Patrick wrote that the newly created infields of the west and east wards of the Mains of Castle Lyon were to be divided equally and all the four grains sown, 'rather than hazard one graine all in one year … probably some of the four will hold better'.[55] The ability to grow successfully a range of crops was an important advantage enjoyed by the Carse of Gowrie and one denied to many wetter, colder and more exposed areas of Lowland Scotland where the failure of one crop could represent the failure of the entire harvest. In the pre-Improvement era, when yield levels were in general low, it highlights how easily and frequently the delicate line that lay between subsistence and want was liable to be breached.

Supplies of victual to the market were therefore uneven, a situation exacerbated by the poverty of on-farm storage facilities at this time. Abundant crops resulted in surplus and low prices, but their retention in any quantity until prices might improve was not feasible for most farmers. Well-built barns were expensive and even they, in the longer term, provided only an

[54] NRA(S) 885, 190/1/22, 1690. A tenant in the neighbouring parish of Inchture described the cost of liming land *c.*1740, as being in the region of £60 Scots [£5 sterling] an acre. PKAC, Kinnaird Papers, MS100/54. For comments on the low price of grain, see Millar (ed.), *Glamis Book of Record*, p. 91. A cottarman was a farm labourer whose payment consisted of, or included, the possession of a cottage with an area (usually an acre) of land for the subsistence of his family.

[55] NRA(S) 885, 190/1/25.

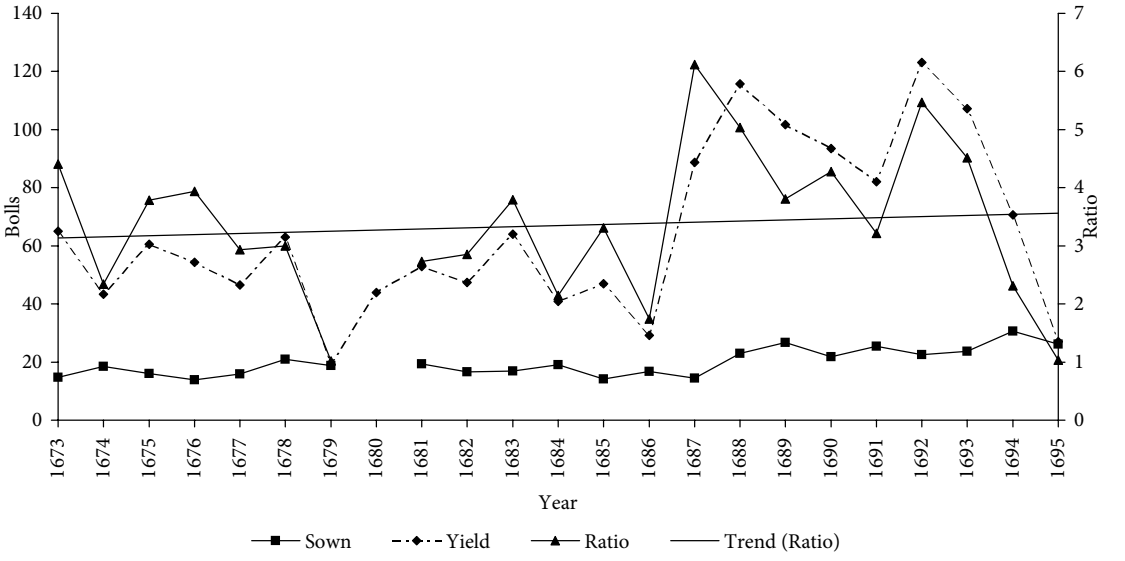


FIGURE 3. Wheat crop, Mains of Castle Lyon, 1673–1695

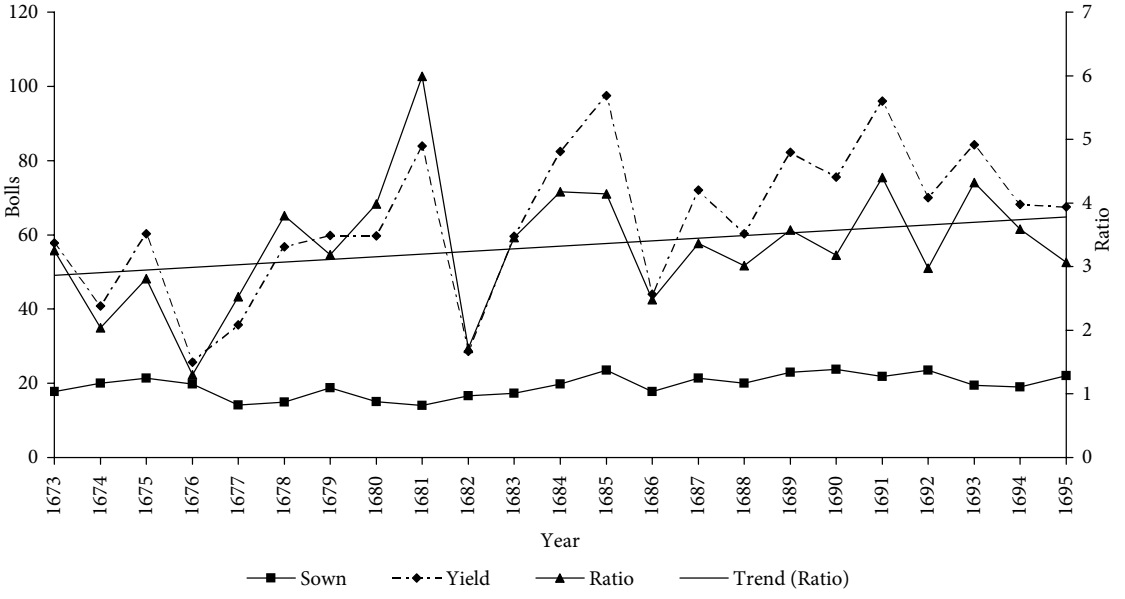


FIGURE 4. Bere crop, Mains of Castle Lyon, 1673–1695

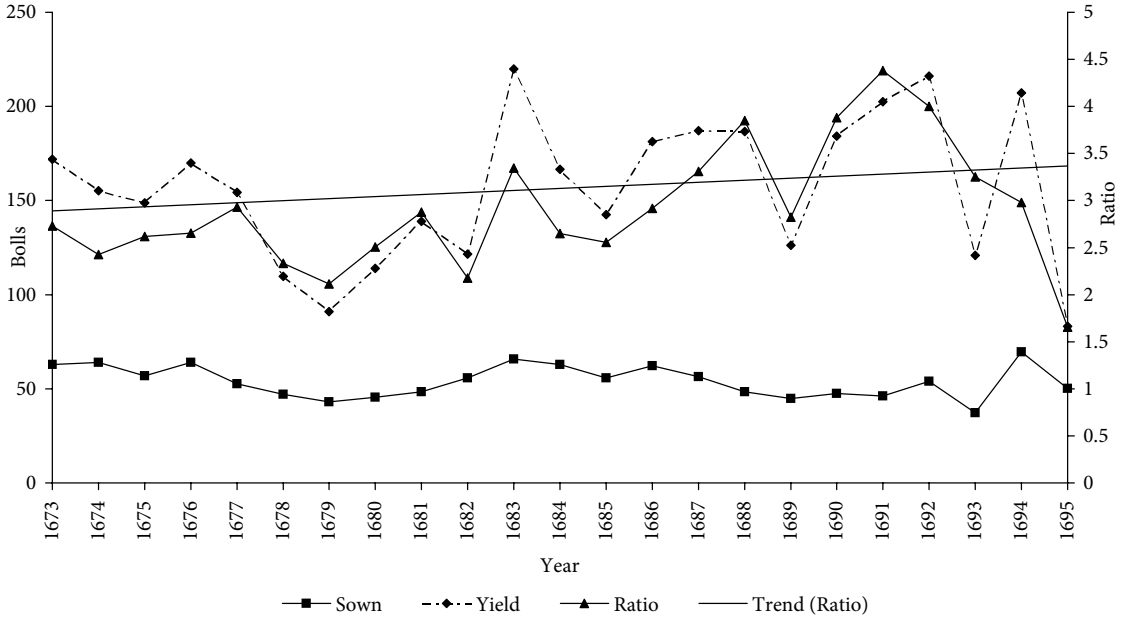


FIGURE 5. Oat crop, Mains of Castle Lyon, 1673–1695

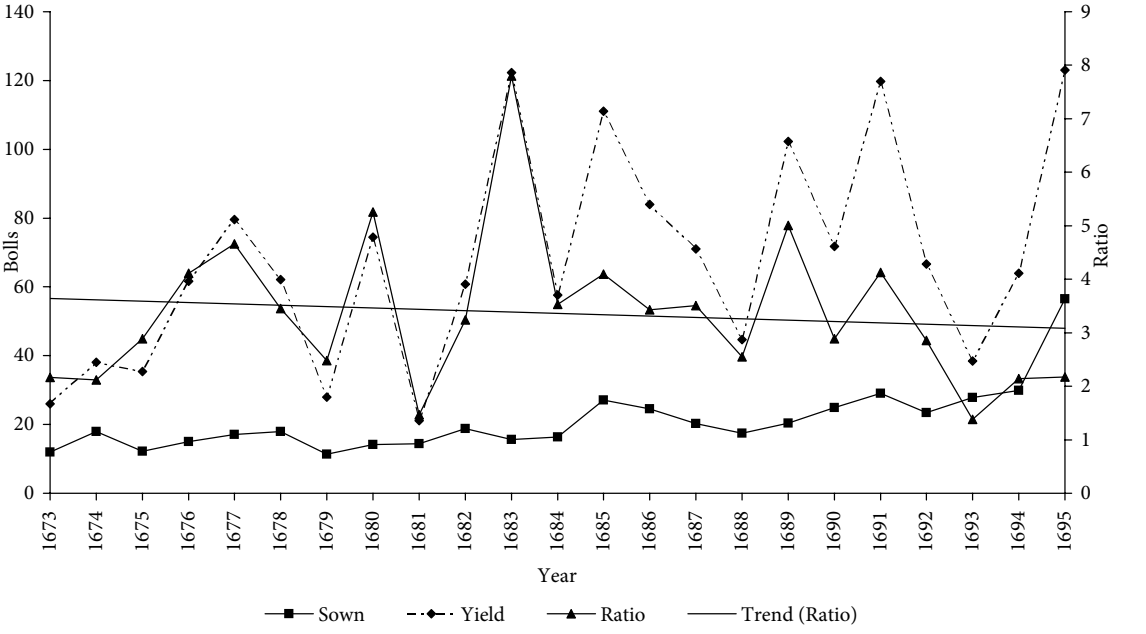


FIGURE 6. Pease crop, Mains of Castle Lyon, 1673–1695

imperfect defence against loss to damp and vermin. For practical purposes as well as the need for income, the majority of grain had to be disposed of before the next harvest. Even at Castle Lyon where barns were among the extensive building works begun by his father and carried on with industry by Earl Patrick, it was rare for any substantial amount of crop to be carried long beyond the following harvest, the thrashing of the new corns normally having begun by December.[56]

The Mains of Castle Lyon was, of course, only one holding, but if the fluctuations experienced there were felt across a wide area, then the consequences for the supply of grain and its price had the potential to be immense.[57] Of the many factors that can affect grain yields, climate and weather have by far the most immediate impact, be it a wet season when grain sown in water-logged ground rots rather than grows, a hot dry summer when plants wither, or when storms just before harvest flatten crops and knock the ripening grain from the heads. The limited amount of reserves held on farms meant that even an apparently small dip in yields resulted in prices being driven upward. The very close relationship between yield levels and wholesale prices can be seen when the average yield of the four crops grown on the Mains of Castle Lyon is compared with the average of the fiars prices struck at Perth for the same grains (Figure 7).

The grain grown on land farmed in-hand together with that received as ferme formed a very large proportion of the gross income on most Lowland Scottish estates. Specie was in very short supply in Scotland throughout the early modern period and particularly so in the second half of the seventeenth century.[58] An important device in the working of what was effectively a grain-based economy was the striking of county fiars prices for the grains and pulses most commonly grown and traded. County fiars prices provided a base conversion rate for grain and a basis for the settlement of various fixed payments such as feu duties, stipends and legal processes. Sheriff courts normally struck fiars in February when the crop from the previous harvest had been in the market for some time and when levels of supply and demand, as well as a good number of negotiated prices, were known. Although fiars prices for, say, the 1680 harvest were not struck until February 1681, they pertained to the crop of 1680 and were, therefore, called and known as the 1680 fiars prices. Much of the evidence taken by the fiars courts in deciding the prices was given by merchants, middlemen and local estate owners. Their information related in the main to large transactions and the prices struck thus reflected a wholesale rate rather than the retail price likely to be paid by urban workers. However, when assessing the general level of corn supply, it is large transactions and wholesale prices that provide the more appropriate guide. An extensive list of the fiars prices struck at Perth has survived and these, along with many from other counties, have been collected and published by Gibson and Smout, together with notes regarding their use for historians.[59]

There were a variety of circumstances particular to the Mains of Castle Lyon that would have

[56] NRA(S) 885, 50/3, 1698 and, 64/1/7–22, crop years 1680–95.

[57] For a study of Scottish food prices in this period see A. J. S. Gibson and T. C. Smout, *Prices, food and wages in Scotland, 1550–1780* (1995), *passim*.

[58] For a discussion of monetary problems in Scotland in this period in relation to payments and trade, see T. C. Smout, *Scottish trade on the eve of the Union, 1660–1707* (1963), pp. 116–28.

[59] Gibson and Smout, *Prices, food and wages*, pp. 66–129. See also R. Mitchison, 'The movements of Scottish corn prices in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', *EcHR* 18 (1965), pp. 278–91.

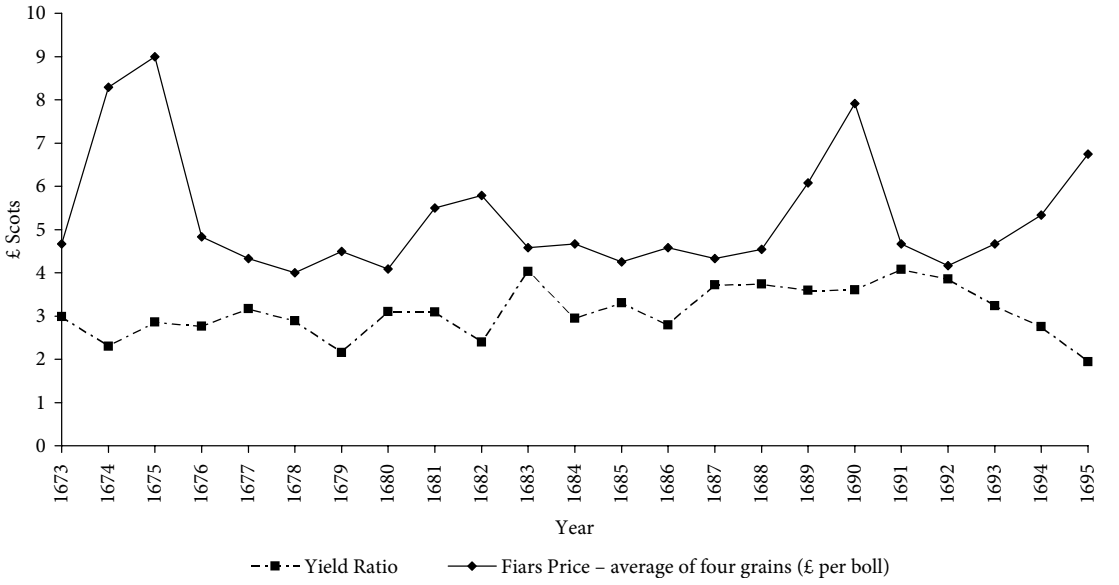


FIGURE 7. Comparison of the fiars prices struck at Perth (average per boll of wheat, bere, oats and pease) and the average yield ratio for the same crops on the Mains of Castle Lyon

lessened – or increased – yields there relative to other farms in the locality. These included the extension of the infield ground, the slow and probably uneven process of bringing outfield up to infield standard and, from 1687, the introduction of improved English wheat seed (which we discuss below). However, there remains a remarkable symmetry between the level of the overall yield in any one year at Castle Lyon and the average of the Perth fiars prices for the same four crops. In 18 out of the 23 years for which figures are available, a dip or rise in yields at Castle Lyon was mirrored by a respective increase or fall in the county fiars (Figure 7). This emphasizes the extent to which prevailing weather conditions were responsible for the fluctuations in yield.

The very high fiars prices associated with times of dearth and famine reflected substantial falls in production. In 1674, a time of serious want across much of Scotland, particularly in upland areas and including Perthshire, the overall yield on the Mains dropped to a low of 2.3:1 (one of the poorest returns recorded prior to 1695) while the average of the Perth fiars for the same crops rose to £8 5*s*. 10*d*. per boll.[60] Although there was some recovery in Castle Lyon yields in 1675, returns remained below 3:1 and the Perth fiars rose further to £9 in that year. This illustrates the vulnerability of early modern Scotland to the occurrence of poor weather in consecutive years, resulting in spent reserves and the potential need for seed corn to be consumed.

In the 1670s and 1680s it would seem that years of poor yields were relatively isolated and dearths, if severe, were short lived. This, however, was not the case in the 1690s. The first year of harvest failure and the onset of the famine across most of Scotland has generally been

[60] Gibson and Smout, *Prices, food and wages*, p.169.

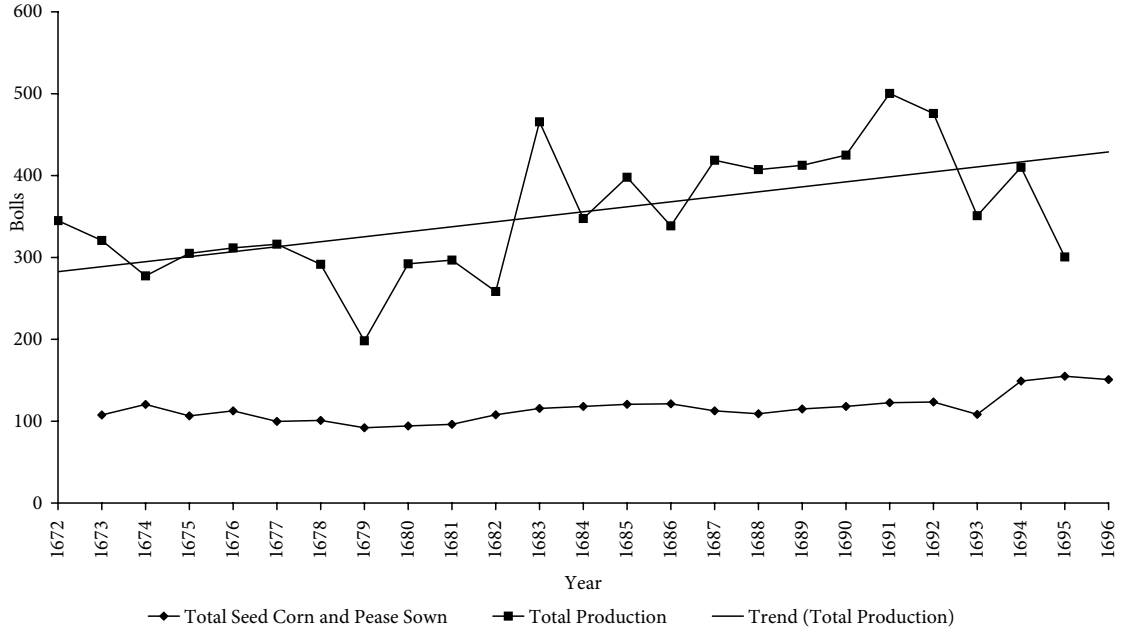


FIGURE 8. Combined production of wheat, bere, oats and peas, Mains of Castle Lyon, 1672–1695

considered to be 1695, but with signs of problems in Orkney and Shetland as early as the crop of 1693.[61] The Castle Lyon figures, however, reveal that even in the relatively sheltered Carse of Gowrie, a slight downturn in the 1692 crop was followed by a substantial fall in yields in 1693. This must have been quite widespread as it was reflected by a sharp rise in the Perth fiars. The situation was compounded by a very poor harvest by Castle Lyon standards in 1694, when a yield ratio of only 2.75:1 was achieved. In 1695 the wheat and oat harvests in particular were a disaster and the yield across the four principal crops grown on the Mains averaged only 1.9:1, 50 per cent below that obtained in 1692. The returns of fruit from commercial orchards on other estates in the district support the case for a serious deterioration in climate in these years. The rent payable on orchards in the Carse of Gowrie was appraised on an annual basis according to the amount of fruit produced. In 1692, rent for the orchard at Gourdiehill in Errol parish was assessed at 13 bolls one firlot of fruit; in 1693 there was insufficient fruit on which to make an assessment and in 1694 only a paltry two firlots.[62] These figures indicate that although severe failure may not have been evident until 1695, the roots of famine were established in the poor harvests of 1693 and 1694, with reserves of corn already brought to a critical level by successive years of falling yields. Between 1695 and the end of the century much of Scotland suffered an extremely severe famine. In Aberdeenshire a decline in population of 21 per cent has been calculated, with even higher losses in inland parishes. In the highland areas of Perthshire, the available evidence indicates that conditions were similarly catastrophic and though mortality

[61] Ibid., p. 170.
[62] NAS, GD316/10. (One firlot was equal to one quarter of a boll.)

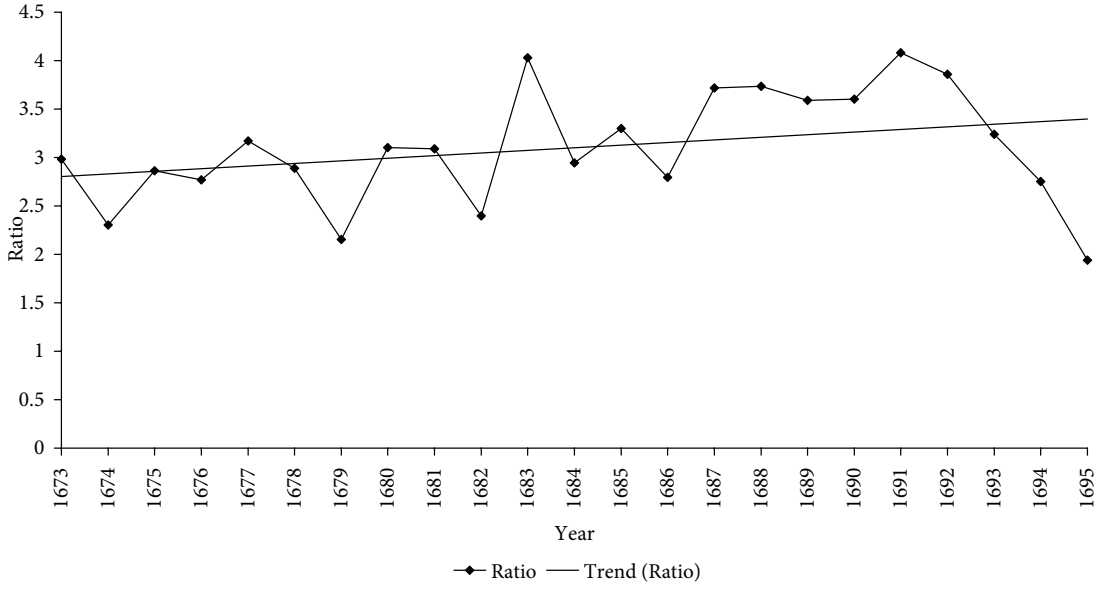


FIGURE 9. Average yield ratio of wheat, bere, oats and pease, Mains of Castle Lyon, 1673–1695

among the inhabitants of the more sheltered and fertile lowlands was limited, there was grave and long-run economic debilitation. The phrase 'seven ill years' used popularly to describe the famine of the 1690s, was undoubtedly much nearer the mark in its accuracy than has sometimes been supposed.[63]

In spite of the year-by-year fluctuations and the catastrophic downturn caused by the weather patterns of the 1690s, the returns for the Mains of Castle Lyon reveal a clear improvement in the overall crop yields achieved there in the 23 years following 1672. The trend line in Figure 8 indicates the general increase in production of the four principal crops grown; it shows a rise from a total of less than 300 bolls per annum to considerably over 400. That this increase was not only in the total produced and the result of an extension in the acreage cropped, but was also in terms of yield achieved, is confirmed in Figure 9 where the trend line indicates an increase in the yield ratio across the period from 2.8:1 to 3.4:1 (approximately 20 per cent). Included in these figures are two years of very poor harvests at the beginning of the famine years. If it is considered that the extreme weather conditions of that period were atypical and the returns for 1694 and 1695 are discounted, it can be seen that in the preceding 21 years, from 1673 to 1693, a much more dramatic increase (in the region of 45 per cent) was recorded. But the level of improvement did not apply evenly to all the crops grown. Even discounting 1694 and 1695, pease, a notoriously erratic crop, showed no overall improvement across the period. The trend in wheat yield improvement between 1673 and 1693 was in the region of 44 per cent, bere 39 per cent, with oats showing the greatest increase at 54 per cent.

Wheat was both the most valuable and the most successful crop in terms of yield on the Mains of Castle Lyon. In the period for which figures are extant, it yielded on average 3.3:1

[63] Tyson, 'Famine in Aberdeenshire', pp. 48–50; Cullen, Whatley and Young, 'King William's Ill Years'.

and in the best seven years 1687–1693, 4.5:1. It is probable that this crop received most of the available manure and there is evidence that efforts were made to improve its production. The importance of the quality of seed and the varying properties of different strains was recognised and understood. A brief note in the account book for the 1685 crop refers to 284 threaves of 'ried' [red] wheat out of a total harvest of 307 threaves, the remainder being of 'whyte' wheat. Unfortunately no further information is given with regard to the nature, origin, or performance of what would seem to be two quite different strains.[64] In 1688 half a boll of imported English wheat was tried against ten bolls of Lothian wheat and twelve and a half bolls of Castle Lyon's own saved seed. The English wheat yielded at 14:1, the Lothian wheat 4.4:1 and Castle Lyon's own, 5.2:1.[65] While the English wheat was obviously far superior to the two samples of Scottish origin, it is also interesting that the local seed performed better than that from Lothian, generally regarded as the most advanced area for cereal production in Scotland at that time. However, no judgements can be made on the basis of one trial, particularly when it is not known how typical the Lothian sample was, or the conditions in which it was grown. No further mention is made in the accounts of Lothian wheat. The product of the English wheat was kept for use as seed, but in spite of the much higher yield returned by the English sample, seed of local origin also continued to be used. No information is given in the records on how the different strains were managed, or whether there was any cross fertilisation. In 1692 seven bolls of English wheat achieved a yield of 9:1 against 4.7:1 from seed of local origin. It is not known if this was a new sample brought in or whether it was the product of that first purchased in 1688, but the accounts intimate that all the 62 bolls of English wheat harvested were to be kept for use as seed. Just under 24 bolls were sown on the Mains that autumn and 13 bolls were sent to Glamis. Wheat was not a traditional crop at Glamis (situated in the Vale of Strathmore) and would seem not to have been tried there in any quantity before *c.*1690.[66] After 1692, weather conditions deteriorated and there was a progressive fall in yields: of all the grains grown on the Mains of Castle Lyon, wheat registered the largest drop in returns. Whether wheat of local origin would have withstood the conditions more successfully can, at the distance of 300 years, only be a matter for speculation.

Bere was traditionally a crop that responded well to high levels of nutrition and it suffered to some extent on the Mains of Castle Lyon by following the wheat. The average return was 3.3:1 and did not match the kind of yields that have been recorded on other Lowland Scottish farms in the seventeenth century where, in the absence of wheat, it would have received the majority of the manure.[67] Following the wheat and bere on the infield land, and grown in successive years on the outfield, oats returned the least well of the four Mains' crops with an average yield over the period of only 2.9:1. However, from their position at the end of the rotation, the rise in yield achieved by the oats over the period for which there is data, demonstrates the core improvement brought about at Castle Lyon, be this through an increase in the underlying fertility of the soil, better management, the use of improved seed, or a combination of all three.

[64] NRA(S) 885, 64/1/12. Threave: a measure of cut grain, probably two stooks.

[65] NRA(S) 885, 64/1/15, 1688.

[66] NRA(S) 885, 64/1/18.

[67] Whyte, *Agriculture and society*, pp. 75–6.

IV

The scarcity of comprehensive figures from other farms, either locally or from other areas, makes it difficult to gauge how typical were the Castle Lyon yields. When assessments of growing crops were made in testaments pertaining to the Carse of Gowrie and dating from the second half of the seventeenth century, wheat, pease and bere were all estimated as yielding the 'fourth corn' (i.e. 4:1) and oats the 'third corn' (i.e. 3:1).[68] Donaldson, based in the Lothians and writing in 1697, suggests that 4:1 was a reasonable return from infield land.[69] His assessment was generally supported by other writers of the period, but they also emphasized that improved practices such as the use of additional dung or other fertilizers were employed and could improve yields considerably. These include Martin Martin's account of the very high returns secured in the Western Isles, where small plots with heavy applications of seaweed were recorded as producing yields of 20:1 in bere and Alexander Troup's description of the north coast of Buchan where manure improved with turf allowed yields of 5:1 and 6:1 to be obtained.[70] There is obviously the potential for a very considerable difference in the yields obtained from small individual plots benefiting from close care and attention and a great deal of fertilizer, compared to those obtained from the relatively large acreage cultivated on a farm of two ploughgates.

Among the few runs of crop yields for Scotland in the seventeenth century are figures from the Cassillis Estates in Wigtownshire in the south-west of Scotland for 1655–61 and from the Mains of Dundas, near South Queensferry, from 1655–62.[71] The figures for the Cassillis estate comprise oats and some bere. The oat returns are taken from nine farms on the estate. Only five of the yields reached 3.0:1 or above, and the overall average a modest 2.5:1. This compares with the lowest oat yields at Castle Lyon when, for the ten years from 1673 to 1682, the average was also only 2.5:1. Only 15 bere yields were published for Cassillis (from seven farms for the years 1659–61); they are, however, with highs of 8:1 and an average of 5.3:1, considerably better than those achieved at Castle Lyon where the average for the 23-year period 1673–95 was 3.3:1, with a high in 1681 of 6.0:1. This suggests that the bere on the Cassillis farms benefited from most, if not, all the available manure.

The Mains of Dundas, situated in the Lothians, should provide a more useful comparison with Castle Lyon even though there is no common period in terms of the years for which figures are available. Both grew wheat and pease as well as oats and bere and both were situated on the east coast and near sea level. The oat yield at Dundas averaged 3.6:1 and compared comfortably with the best years for oats on Castle Lyon. Wheat yields achieved on the Mains of Dundas were, however, considerably lower, averaging only 2.3:1 compared to Castle Lyon's average of 3.3:1. Bere yields were far superior to those gained on Castle Lyon, averaging above 5:1. No figures are given for the pease. There were two important differences in the practises followed on the Mains of Dundas compared to Castle Lyon that need to be taken into account.

[68] NAS, St Andrews Commissary Court, 20/4/14.

[69] J. Donaldson, *Husbandry anatomised, or an enquiry into the present manner of teiling and manureing the ground in Scotland* (1699), p. 28.

[70] Whyte, *Agriculture and Society*, p. 73; M. Martin, *Description of the Western Isles* (1703), pp. 42 and 139; A. Gordon, 'An account of the north side of the coast of Buchan, 1663', in *Collections for a history of the shires of Aberdeen and Banff* (Spalding Club, 1843), pp. 99–107.

[71] Whyte, *Agriculture and society*, pp. 74–7.

At Dundas, lime was used as a fertilizer and bere, rather than wheat, followed the pease in the rotation.[72] All the Dundas crops should have benefited from the liming that was denied the crops at Castle Lyon. The bere on the Mains of Dundas would also gain from the nitrogen-fixing qualities of the legume crop it followed, while the wheat, sown at the end of the rotation would, on the other hand, receive least assistance. This was almost the opposite of the system employed on Castle Lyon.

Runs of yields from the Melville estate in Fife, but dating from the eighteenth century, have been calculated by Gibson.[73] These contain figures for oats and bere for 19 years between 1737 and 1757. The ratio of yield to seed sown for the oats ranged from a low of 2.05:1 in 1744 to a high of 5.41:1 in 1741 and averaged 3.8:1, which was significantly better than that achieved in the previous century at Castle Lyon. Bere yields were even stronger; the lowest was 4.1:1 (also in 1744) and the highest 12.5:1 in 1737 with an overall average of 6.4:1. It should be noted that though the annual average amount of bere sown was just under 16 bolls, the yield of 12.5:1 was achieved from a sowing of only two bolls of seed. Pease at Melville were less successful when compared to the returns from Castle Lyon, averaging, for 11 years between 1746 and 1757, only 2.7:1. Only four figures for wheat are extant – for the years 1741, 1743, 1744 and 1755 – and the amounts sown small, ranging between one and 2.25 bolls. The yields achieved varied widely from a low of 2:1 in 1743 to 7.72:1 in 1741. Their average return – of 4.78:1 – was in line with the better years at Castle Lyon. It is of significance that the year to year fluctuations in yield found in the Melville returns are, in general terms, very similar to that at Castle Lyon.

The longest sequence of crop returns so far published for pre-Improvement Scotland are for the years 1698 to 1753; they pertain to the Mains of Yester, situated close to the edge of the Lammermuirs in East Lothian and are the subject of an article by Whyte.[74] There are important parallels between Yester and Castle Lyon. The acreage under cultivation was similar, at between 90 and 120 acres, to that on the Mains of Castle Lyon in the 1690s. Also, being a mains farm with the advantage of parks, policies and enclosed hay meadows, it was likely that a similarly large number of livestock would be maintained, making available more dung than would be the case on an average tenanted holding. It is thought that the sequence of cropping at Yester was wheat → bere → oats → pease, the same as at Castle Lyon. However, the yields at Yester were, for the most part, much higher. Although the growing of wheat was discontinued during the Ill Years and did not recommence until 1714, on only five occasions after this date were yields of below 5:1 recorded and on 12 occasions the crop returned better than 10:1. In 1750 a peak of 18.6:1 was reached. It is known that lime was used at Yester. The years following the 1690s also saw an improvement in climatic conditions. Both factors are likely to have contributed to the superior yields at Yester. The variability of the crop from year to year was much greater though than at Castle Lyon. Whyte suggests the level of variability to be a consequence of the sensitive nature of wheat under Scottish climatic conditions and the contemporary standards of husbandry. The Yester wheat yields were well above others recorded for Scotland in the

[72] Ibid.

[73] http://www.ex.ac.uk/~ajgibson/scotdata/scot_database_home.html.

[74] I. D. Whyte, 'Crop Yields on the Mains of Yester, 1698–1753', *Trans. of the East Lothian Antiquarian and Field Naturalists' Society*, 22 (1993), pp. 23–9.

pre-Improvement era and it is possible that a strain of higher yielding seed was in use there.[75] Again, there are parallels with Castle Lyon where imported English seed was a great deal more productive, but possibly not as capable of coping with poor growing conditions as that of local origin. Although the performance of the peas at Yester was little different to those at Castle Lyon, the returns for the oat and bere crops were much better and revealed a distinct upward trend. At Yester over the full 56-year period, the bere and oats averaged 5:1 and 4.1:1 respectively; for the 14 years 1740–53, their respective averages were 6.3:1 and 4.8.1.

English crop yields that can be compared directly with those from Castle Lyon are rare. A great deal of work has been carried out in England using probate inventories, but the yields determined from these sources are given in terms of bushels per acre or hectolitres per hectare.[76] Any comparisons between these and the yields from the Mains of Castle Lyon, where the exact acreage cropped is uncertain, must therefore incorporate a large number of estimates and assumptions. The evidence suggests however that on average, the Castle Lyon yields were well below those found in the south of England.[77] This is to be expected when the shorter growing season, the much greater severity of the Scottish climate and, particularly, the lesser productivity of the local seed is taken into account.[78] When the yields from the English sourced wheat seed used are taken on their own, these compare more favourably with the average of 9.7:1 found at Lowther in Westmorland between 1657 and 1667, where improvements had been carried out on the demesne lands by Sir John Lowther.[79] At their best they approach the average of 14.2:1 at West Horsley, Surrey in 1670–1 and the 14.8:1 found at Fowlmere, Cambridgeshire in 1682–3.[80] The oat yields were however a great deal lower and at an average of 2.9:1, were well below the 5.8:1 at Lowther, and the 8.2:1 and 11.6:1 found at West Horsley and Fowlmere, respectively.

V

Although the data examined is from only one holding, the sequence of crop yields recorded at the Mains of Castle Lyon sheds valuable light on cereal production in Scotland in the second half of the seventeenth century. In spite of the relatively favoured nature of the farm's location, the low general level of the yields, together with the extent to which they fluctuated from year to year, lays bare the difficulties faced in this period. For these results to be translated across the country, particularly in the many more marginal areas, the threat to the supply of staple foods

[75] R. C. Allen suggests that better seed could well have been responsible for the rapid rises in wheat yields evident in Oxfordshire in the seventeenth century. R. C. Allen, 'The two English agricultural revolutions, 1450–1850', in B. M. S. Campbell and M. Overton (eds), *Land, labour and livestock* (1991), pp. 248–9.

[76] The pioneer in the use of inventories in England is M. Overton, 'Estimating crop yields from probate inventories: an example from East Anglia, 1585–1735', *JEcH* 39 (1979), pp. 363–78. See also R. C. Allen, 'Inferring yields from probate inventories', *JEcH* 48 (1988), pp. 117–25. Discussion of the various methods used to assess yields and results obtained is in P. Glennie, 'Crop yields in early modern England', in Campbell and Overton (eds), *Land, labour and livestock*, pp. 255–83. For a contemporary discussion of Scottish yields, see Donaldson, *Husbandry anatomised*.

[77] Young, 'Rural society', pp. 244–51.

[78] The effects of wind exposure in Edinburgh has been measured at 270% above that encountered in the English Home Counties (conversation with Prof. Charles McKean, 25 Oct. 2004).

[79] A. B. Appleby, *Famine in Tudor and Stuart England* (1978), pp. 157–8.

[80] J. Thirsk (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, V, *1640–1750* (2 vols, 1985) (ii), p. 881.

from home sources by any prolonged deterioration in weather conditions is evident. Nevertheless, the changes introduced at Castle Lyon facilitated a considerable increase in the yields of the principal cereals grown, particularly in the case of wheat, the most valuable crop. Where imported English wheat seed was used, production compared with results from English farms in the same period. The importation of English seed indicates a knowledge and appreciation of the farming practices and improvements that were being carried on in that country. It is apparent that where resources were available, substantial returns could be, and were, achieved.

Scotland was a damaged and under-developed country in a period of transition. Patrick, Earl of Strathmore, like many among the Scottish landowning nobility at this time, was heavily burdened by debt. Yet within the economic strictures that prevailed, he was able to make considerable investment in improvements and institute fundamental change to the way in which his land was farmed. The context and nature of the improved agrarian practices that he pursued was part of a growing drive towards modernisation, which would pave the way for the massive strides that would be made in Scottish agriculture in the eighteenth century.

Married with children: the family status of female day-labourers at two south-western farms*

by Joyce Burnette

Abstract

While female factory workers and agricultural servants were primarily young and single, female agricultural labourers were more likely to be middle-aged, married mothers. This paper examines the female labourers at two south-western farms and finds that middle-aged married women account for the majority of days worked. Widows and mothers of illegitimate children account for only a small fraction of the workforce. While evidence from the Bragg farm suggests that some mothers worked when their children were still infants, evidence from the Estcourt farm suggests that women reduced their labour force participation when their children were young. Child care was available for mothers who worked outside the home, but it was expensive.

We tend to think of the working mother as a modern invention, and imagine that in the past women ceased working outside the home when they were married, or at least when they had their first child. However, the participation rate of married women has fluctuated over time, and only certain periods fit this description. In the early twentieth century, only a few married women worked; in English towns only 10 per cent of married women were in the labour force.[1] However, such low participation rates seem to have existed for only a brief moment and were reached only after a long period of decline in the nineteenth century. According to the census, the participation rate of married women declined from 25 per cent in 1851 to 10 per cent in 1901.[2] No comprehensive measures of participation rates exist for the early nineteenth century, but the measures of participation among working-class married women suggest decline. Using family budgets, Horrell and Humphries found that the participation rate among working-class wives was about two-thirds at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but had fallen to 45 per cent by the middle of the century. Even after controlling for male income, female wages, and fertility, there was still a downward trend in female labour force participation.[3] Participation

* This paper is based on work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant 0213954. Conclusions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

[1] Timothy Hatton and Roy Bailey, 'Women's work in census and survey, 1911–31', *EcHR* 54 (2001), pp. 87–107.

[2] Hilary Land, 'The family wage', *Feminist Rev.*, 6 (1980), p. 61. Hatton and Bailey conclude that the censuses of the early twentieth century provide accurate female participation rates, so if the 1851 census understates female participation, the decline was even greater then these numbers suggest.

[3] Sara Horrell and Jane Humphries, 'Women's labour force participation and the transition to the male-breadwinner family, 1790–1865', *EcHR* 48 (1995), pp. 89–117.

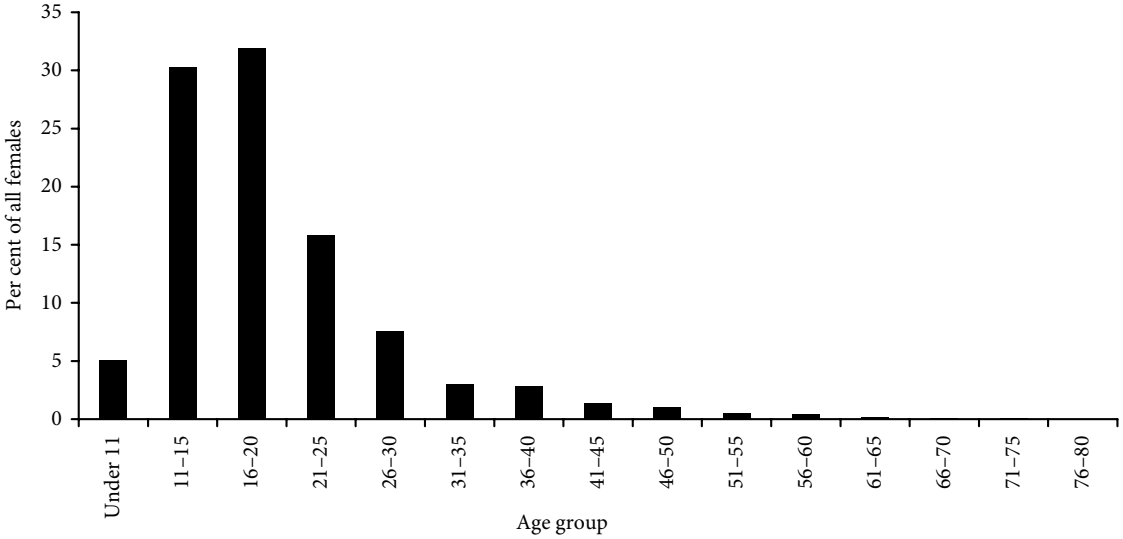


FIGURE 1. Age distribution of female factory workers

Source: 'Report from James Mitchell to the Central Board of Commissioners', BPP 1834 (167) XIX.

rates, though, varied greatly from one region to another. Berg found that the participation rates of married women in the late eighteenth century were under ten per cent in Corfe Castle, Dorset, but were much higher in Cardington, Bedfordshire, where two out of every three married women were employed.[4]

If half to two-thirds of working-class wives were in the labour force, where were they working? In spite of Engels' claim that 'large-scale industry has transferred the woman from the house to the labour market and the factory, and makes her, often enough, the bread-winner of the family', very few married women worked in factories.[5] Female factory workers were overwhelmingly young. Figure 1 shows the age distribution of female factory workers from an 1833 survey that covered seven industries.[6] Two-thirds of female factory workers were 20 years old or younger. Given this age structure, it is not surprising that only 10 per cent were married.[7] The high participation rates of married women in the early nineteenth century were not caused by the advent of the factory. Instead, married women worked in more traditional sectors of the economy. Large numbers of married women were employed in cottage industries, which allowed women to work from their homes, and in household services such as house cleaning or

[4] Maxine Berg, 'What difference did women's work make to the Industrial Revolution?', *History Workshop J.*, 35 (1993), pp. 38, 40.

[5] Frederick Engels, *The origin of the family, private property and the state*, repr. in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* (New York, 1986), p. 508.

[6] 'Report from James Mitchell to the Central Board of Commissioners', BPP 1834 (167) XIX.

[7] BPP 1834 XIX; Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women workers and the Industrial Revolution*, (1930), p. 198.

laundry services. Alternatively they made clothing or food for others.[8] This paper will examine another important employer of married women: agricultural day-labour.

Women participated in agricultural work in many different ways. Women contributed as wives and daughters of farmers, or as farmers in their own right. (Seven per cent of the farmers and graziers in the 1841 census were female.[9]) Poorer women were also engaged in various forms of independent agricultural production when they were fortunate enough to have access to commons, cottage gardens, or allotments.[10] Women worked as agricultural employees, either as indoor servants or outdoor labourers. The 1851 census suggests that about 32 per cent of servants and 5 per cent of labourers were women, but the number of females in both categories was underestimated.[11] Female servants were generally younger than female labourers. Examining data from the 1851 census for Somerset, Speechley finds that the vast majority of farm servants were in their teens or twenties, whilst the distribution of female labourers was fairly uniform between ages 20 and 70, with lower levels of employment for those aged under 20 or over 70.[12] Whilst the age distribution of indoor servants looked much like the age distribution of factory workers, outdoor labourers were older and more likely to be married.

The 1843 report on *Women and children in agriculture* suggests that female labourers were mostly married women. Alfred Austin, reporting on the south-west, concluded that 'The ages at which women are employed vary from 15 to 70, or even older … the majority of the women who work in the fields are above the age of 30; and perhaps I may add, that they are generally married, and [are] sometimes widows with children'.[13] Other regions gave similar reports. In his report on Yorkshire and Northumberland, Sir F. H. Doyle concluded that 'it is not the system for women to work in the fields till they are married, and as young wives are commonly employed in attendance upon their children, the main body of agricultural women workers is composed of widows and matrons'.[14] A Sussex farmer reported that 'Married women are more frequently employed than single'.[15] However, contemporary observers may not always have reached the right conclusions. Both the investigators and their witnesses in the 1843 report were concerned about the 'moral effects' of allowing single women to work in the fields with men, and their comments may have been attempts to allay such fears and justify the employment of women. We know that Austin reached an erroneous conclusion about allotments in

[8] On the importance of household services as a female occupation in London, see Peter Earle, 'The female labour market in London in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries', repr. in Pamela Sharpe (ed.), *Women's work: The English experience, 1650–1914* (1998), pp. 121–49.

[9] BPP 1844, XXVII.

[10] For a discussion of how women used commons, see Jane Humphries, 'Enclosures, common rights, and women: the proletarianization of families in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries,' *JEcH* 50 (1990), pp. 17–42.

[11] On the undercounting of female farm servants, see Edward Higgs, 'Women, occupations and work in the nineteenth century censuses,' *History Workshop J.*, 23 (1987), pp. 59–80. On the undercounting of female labourers, see Joyce Burnette, 'The wages and employment of female day-labourers in English agriculture, 1740–1850', *EcHR* 57 (2004), pp. 664–90.

[12] Helen Speechley, 'Female and child agricultural day labourers in Somerset, *c.*1685–1870' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Exeter, 1999).

[13] *Report from Special Poor Law Commissioners on women and children in agriculture* (1843), p. 6.

[14] Ibid., pp. 293–4.

[15] Ibid., p. 203. In Carbrooke, Norfolk out-door work was 'generally done by married women and children', Ibid, p. 243. Reports from Castle Acre, Norfolk, suggest that most of the women in work gangs were young and unmarried, Ibid., p. 277, but gang labour was not typical.

Somerset.[16] This paper checks the claims that female labourers were mainly middle-aged married women against records from two south-western farms, and finds that in this respect the conclusions of the report seem to be accurate.

Previous work on the family status of female agricultural labourers is limited, and does not provide a uniform picture. For a much earlier period (1593–4), Hassell Smith finds approximately equal numbers of married and single women at a Norfolk farm (15 unmarried women, 16 married women, and 5 widows).[17] Amongst recent writers on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Pamela Sharpe finds that female day-labourers on a Devon estate in the 1790s were single women in their twenties who were the daughters or sisters of the male labourers, and that 'most of them had had illegitimate children, or went on to have them in the future'.[18] In this case the female labourers were not a cross-section of working women, but a select group of women who had few alternatives. Nicola Verdon, studying four different farms, reports a different demographic: she finds that nearly all of the women working at these farms were married.[19] Helen Speechley provides the most detailed description of the demographics of female labourers in her dissertation on female and child workers in Somerset agriculture. She reports that most of the women working at the Dunster Castle Farm in 1848 had children, though few had young children. Out of 13 women, all but two had had children, though only seven had children aged under 16 at the time.[20]

This paper will examine female outdoor farm labourers working on farms at Shipton Moyne (Gloucestershire) and Thorncombe (Dorset, formerly Devon) and will show that most of these women were married and had children. While census records are used for demographic information, I do not rely on census records to identify which women were labourers because it is well known that the census did a poor job of recording the employment of females in general and female farm workers in particular. Miller, Speechley, and Verdon have all documented cases where women who worked substantial numbers of days as farm labourers were not recorded as farm labourers in the census.[21] Instead, I use the wage books of the two farms to identify female labourers, and the census enumerators' books and parish registers to determine the age, marital status, and childbearing history of these women.

[16] Austin claimed they were uncommon in that county, but Burchardt finds enough evidence of allotments to contradict this conclusion. Austin's error probably results from the fact that he visited only one region in Somerset. Jeremy Burchardt, *The allotment movement in England, 1793–1873* (2002), pp. 56–8.

[17] A. Hassell Smith, 'Labourers in late sixteenth-century England: a case study from north Norfolk', *Continuity and Change* 4 (1989), p. 30.

[18] Pamela Sharpe, 'Time and wages of West Country workfolks in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,' *Local Population Stud*. 55 (1995), p. 67.

[19] Nicola Verdon, *Rural women workers in nineteenth-century England* (2002), p. 128.

[20] Speechley, 'Female and child agricultural day labourers', ch. 7.

[21] C. Miller, 'The hidden workforce: female field workers in Gloucestershire, 1870–1901', *Southern Hist*. 6 (1984), pp. 139–61; Speechley, 'Female and child agricultural day labourers' and Verdon, *Rural women workers*.

I

First I examine the female labourers working at a farm owned by Thomas G. B. Estcourt in Shipton Moyne, Gloucestershire, between 1828 and 1849.[22] Estcourt was a large landowner who rented out most of his land, but kept a farm in Shipton Moyne in hand. He lived in Devizes, so he did not manage the farm directly, but left it in the charge of his steward, Thomas Marshall. The wage accounts used here were kept by Marshall, and were checked periodically by Estcourt. As an MP and a member of the 1843 Select Committee on the Labouring Poor, Estcourt was not a typical employer, but I do not expect his status to influence the demographics of the female labourers that Thomas Marshall hired to work on the farm.[23]

The Estcourt farm was about 250 acres, and was a mixed farm, though mainly pastoral. The main products sold off the farm were sheep, cattle, wheat, and barley. Over the period 1828 to 1849, only 16 per cent of the farm's sales came from grain, while 34 per cent came from sheep and 19 per cent from cattle. Pigs were also sold, and occasionally potatoes or other vegetables. The farm's cows were rented out, so none of the workers at this farm were doing dairy work.

This farm hired a relatively large number of female day-labourers. For England as a whole, women were about 13 per cent of agricultural day-labourers, but provided 20 per cent of all days worked at the Estcourt farm.[24] Table 1 shows the total number of days worked by men, women, boys, and girls at the Estcourt farm. Since the wage books do not contain information on the age of workers, children are distinguished from adults by their wages. Males who earned half the median male wage or less are considered to be boys, and females who earned three-fourths of the median female wage or less are considered to be girls.[25] Wage profiles estimated from this farm suggest that boys who earned half the median wage or less were 16 years old or younger.[26] Girls who earned less than 75 per cent of the adult female wage were probably 14 or younger. However, less than one per cent of all days worked at this farm were worked by girls. This supports the conclusions of the 1843 report on *Women and children in agriculture*, which suggested that females started to work as agricultural labourers at the age of 15 or 16, and that younger girls were engaged at home in housework or cottage industry, or sent to work as domestic servants.[27] Boys, on the other hand, were a substantial part of the labour force, contributing 19 per cent of all days worked, or approximately the same amount as women.

The wage accounts of the Estcourt farm contain the names of 71 different female workers between 1828 and 1849. Many of these women appear in the wage books for only one season, but others worked over several years. Counting each year as a separate observation for the women who worked multiple years, there are a total of 158 woman-year observations. Some of

[22] Gloucestershire Record Office [hereafter GRO] D1571, vols A40–A50.

[23] Estcourt was a supporter of allotments. In 1793 his father had implemented what was probably the first allotment system in England. Burchardt, *Allotment movement*, pp. 28, 101.

[24] Burnette, 'Wages and employment', p. 683.

[25] I do not follow this rule in the case of Sarah Beasant, who earned less than three-fourths the normal female wage, but whom I know to have been in her 70s when she worked at the Estcourt farm.

[26] Joyce Burnette, 'How skilled were English agricultural labourers in the early nineteenth century?' *EcHR* 59 (2006), pp. 688–716. One drawback of this method is that I may confuse very old workers with children.

[27] *Report on women and children in agriculture*, pp. 6, 74, 82.

TABLE 1. Per cent of days worked by men, women, boys, and girls at the Estcourt Farm in Shipton Moyne, Gloucestershire

Year	*Men*	*Women*	*Boys*	*Girls*
1828	68.6	14.5	16.9	0.0
1829	61.9	17.5	20.6	0.0
1830	68.7	17.0	12.9	1.4
1831	62.6	17.8	19.5	0.0
1832	68.3	23.5	8.2	0.0
1833	67.0	17.0	16.1	0.0
1834	56.5	20.3	23.2	0.0
1835	53.6	18.1	28.4	0.0
1836	62.2	16.9	20.1	0.9
1837	64.1	21.8	14.1	0.0
1838	58.1	21.2	20.7	0.0
1839	49.3	27.3	23.2	0.1
1840	50.4	27.9	21.6	0.0
1841	51.5	25.8	20.9	1.6
1842	56.6	27.0	16.4	0.0
1843	61.5	18.6	19.8	0.0
1844	57.9	17.7	22.1	2.3
1845	59.1	19.4	19.4	2.1
1846	63.6	19.7	16.6	0.2
1847	59.1	18.5	22.4	0.0
1848	62.5	19.6	17.9	0.0
1849	62.7	17.5	19.5	0.3
Average	60.3	20.2	19.1	0.4

Source: GRO, D1571, vols A40–A50.
Note: Piece-work is included; piece-work payments are converted into days using the average wage for the appropriate type of worker.

the female agricultural labourers worked regularly, and others only casually. Even the regular female workers, though, did not work as many days as the male labourers. A number of the male labourers worked six days a week for 52 weeks, a total of 312 days per year and possibly more if they worked Sundays as well. No women worked 312 days in a year, but Elizabeth Bicknell fell only one day short of this in 1842. At the other extreme, the smallest number of days worked was one day, and it was fairly common for women to work only a few days during haymaking or harvest. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the number of days worked in a year. The most common number of days worked was between 21 and 40 days in a year, or about four to six weeks. This reflects the fact than many women were hired only for haymaking and harvest.

Casual workers are distinguished from regular workers by drawing an arbitrary line at 60

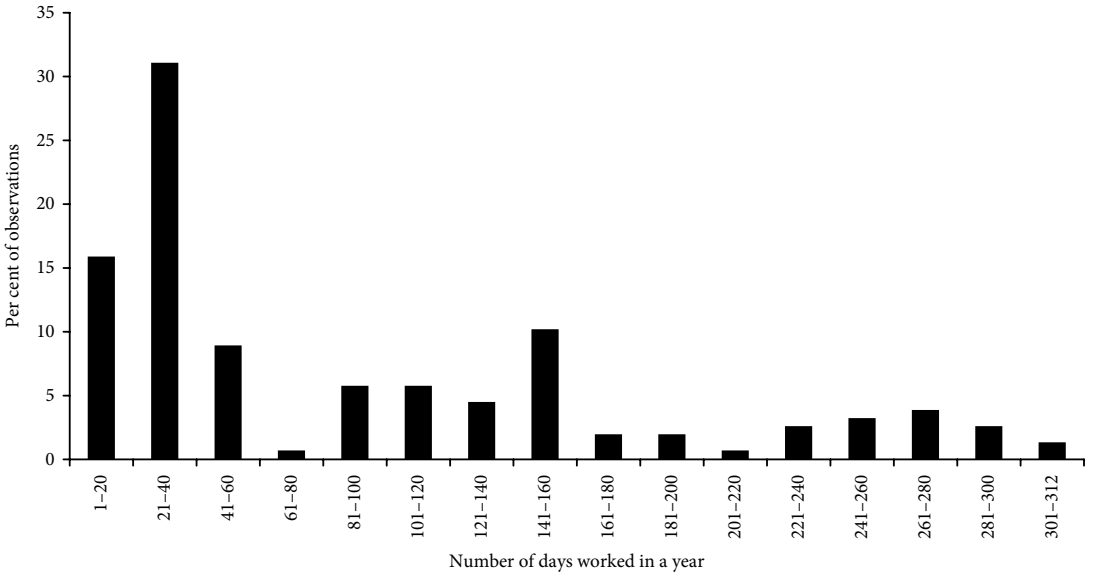


FIGURE 2. Distribution of days worked per year by female labourers, Estcourt Farm

Note: Between 1828 and 1849, 71 women worked an average of 2.225 years each, so there are 158 observations.
Source: GRO, D1571, vols A40–A50.

days of work. Women who averaged more than 60 days per year for the years that they were employed are identified as regular workers, and women who averaged less than 60 days per year as casual workers. Table 2 lists the number of days worked by all twelve of the regular workers in at this farm. Elizabeth Bailey and Elizabeth Bicknell were the most regularly employed female labourers. Both of them worked 19 out of the 22 years, and averaged over six months of work per year. Most of the other regular workers appeared in the wage accounts for only a few years between 1828 and 1849.

A shorter run of wage records from a farm at Thorncombe, Dorset was also examined to check whether the results from the Estcourt farm are representative.[28] This farm was owned by John Bragg of Thorncombe and was also managed by a bailiff. Wage records for this farm are available for only two complete years, 1838 and 1839, during which time eleven different females were hired. The farm was most probably a dairy farm. Detailed records of farm output are not available, but the accounts for 1831–7 include the purchases of two cows and six ewes, and the sale of six cows and £55 worth of hay.[29] One of the women working at Bragg's farm, Mary Langford, earned substantially more than the other women (14*d*. per day rather than 8*d*. or 9*d*.) probably because of her skills as a dairy woman.[30] She also worked a full 312 days per

[28] Dorset Record Office [hereafter DRO], D83/22.

[29] DRO, D83/21.

[30] Elsewhere we observe women being paid relatively high wages for dairy work. In earlier years the Estcourt farm had been a dairy farm, and in 1821 Marshall paid £3 14*s*. 3½*d*. to 'Jos. Wilcox for his wife attending the Dairy, 7 weeks.' (GRO, D1571, vol. A36). Even assuming that she worked seven days per week, Mrs Wilcox earned more than 18*d*. per day for this work, which was substantially greater than the 7–10*d*. that the female labourers were earning that year.

TABLE 2. Regular female workers at the Estcourt Farm in Shipton Moyne, Gloucestershire

Name	*Years Worked*	*Total Days Worked*	*Average Days Per Year*
Elizabeth Bailey	1828, 1831–45, 1847–49	3315	174
Elizabeth Bicknell	1829–47	3281	173
Sarah Bicknell	1837–44, 1847–49	1620	147
Elizabeth Boulton	1845–49	1428	286
Olive Box	1829–1837	933	104
Elizabeth Heaven	1846–49	379	95
Harriet Bicknell	1840–42	335	112
Ann Bicknell	1828–1829, 1831–32	330	83
Harriet White	1847–49	301	100
Mary Grey	1829, 1835, 1847	276	92
Hannah Bailey	1843, 1849	189	95
Sarah Beasant	1844, 1845	173	87

Source: GRO, D1571, vols A40–A50.

TABLE 3. Per cent of days worked by men, women, boys, and girls at the Bragg Farm in Thorncombe, Devonshire

Year	*Men*	*Women*	*Boys*	*Girls*
1838	63.5	20.7	10.1	5.7
1839	60.1	20.5	12.9	6.5
Total	61.7	20.6	11.6	6.1

Source: DRO, D83/22

year, which was unusual for female workers. Bragg's farm also hired a relatively large amount of female labour; 26 per cent of total days worked by day-labourers were worked by female labourers. Table 3 gives the percentage of total days worked by men, women, girls, and boys, using the wages to distinguish children from adults as in Table 1. The Bragg farm employed approximately the same portion of adult men and women as the Estcourt farm, but more girls and fewer boys. If we considered labourers in just three categories, men, women, and children, then both farms hired these groups in approximately equal proportions (60 per cent men, 20 per cent women, 20 per cent children).

Eleven different females worked at the Bragg farm in 1838 and 1839, five of them working in both years, so there are a total of 16 annual observations. Figure 3 shows the distribution of the number of days worked in a year. In this case there is a clear division between regular and casual workers. An unusually high number of women (5 of 16 observations) worked more than 300 days in a year. The other peak in the distribution is at 21 to 40 days per year, or approximately four to six weeks of work.

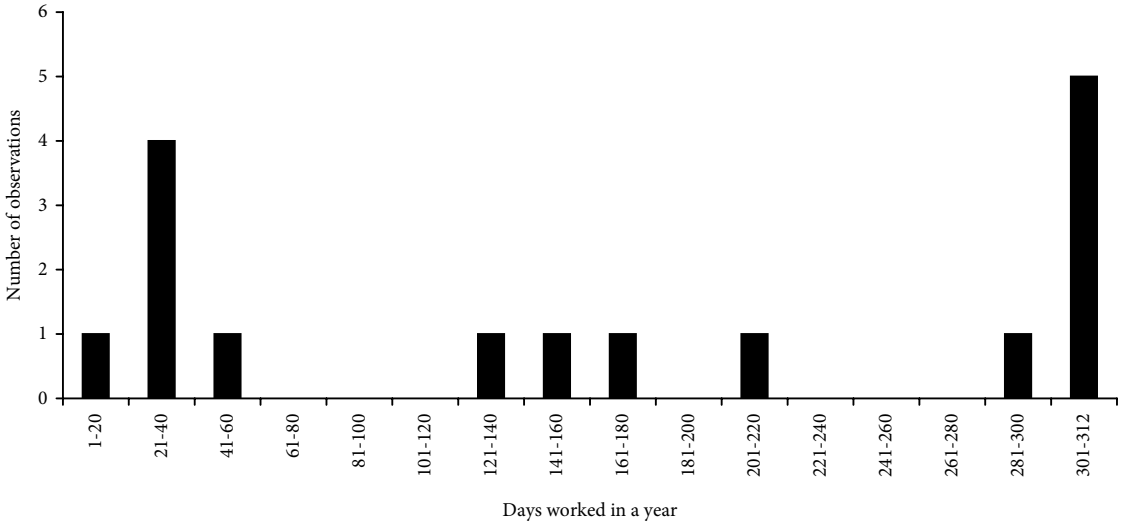


FIGURE 3. Distribution of days worked per year by female labourers, Bragg Farm

Source: DRO, D83/22

II

The census enumerator's books and parish records from Shipton Moyne, Gloucestershire and Long Newnton, Wiltshire, for the Estcourt farm, and from Thorncombe, Dorset, for the Bragg farm, were drawn on to collect information on the age, marital status, and childbearing history of as many women as possible. This section will examine the age of the labourers, the next their marital status, and the following section their childbearing and family size.

At the Estcourt farm I was able to establish the ages of 35 of the 71 workers, accounting for 93 of the 158 woman-year observations. Some individuals could not be identified because their names did not appear in any of the records, and some could not be identified because their names appeared multiple times. For example, there were two different Sarah Bicknells in Shipton Moyne, and another one in Long Newnton.[31] All three were married, so I counted the Sarah Bicknell the labourer as a married woman, but I could not determine her age or the number of children she had because I could not determine which of the three Sarah Bicknells appeared in the wage accounts. For the Bragg farm I was able to identify the ages of seven of the eleven workers, accounting for 11 of the 16 observations.

Female labourers at the Estcourt farm spanned a wide range of ages, but were mostly middle-aged. The youngest worker identified was 14, and the oldest 77. This range closely matches the range of ages reported by Alfred Austin in 1843. Austin also adds that 'the majority of the women who work in the fields are above the age of 30'.[32] This was also true of the women

[31] The spelling of the name is 'Bicknell' in the wage book and 'Bignall' in the census records. Whenever there are variant spellings I use the spelling from the wage book.

[32] *Report on women and children in agriculture*, p. 6.

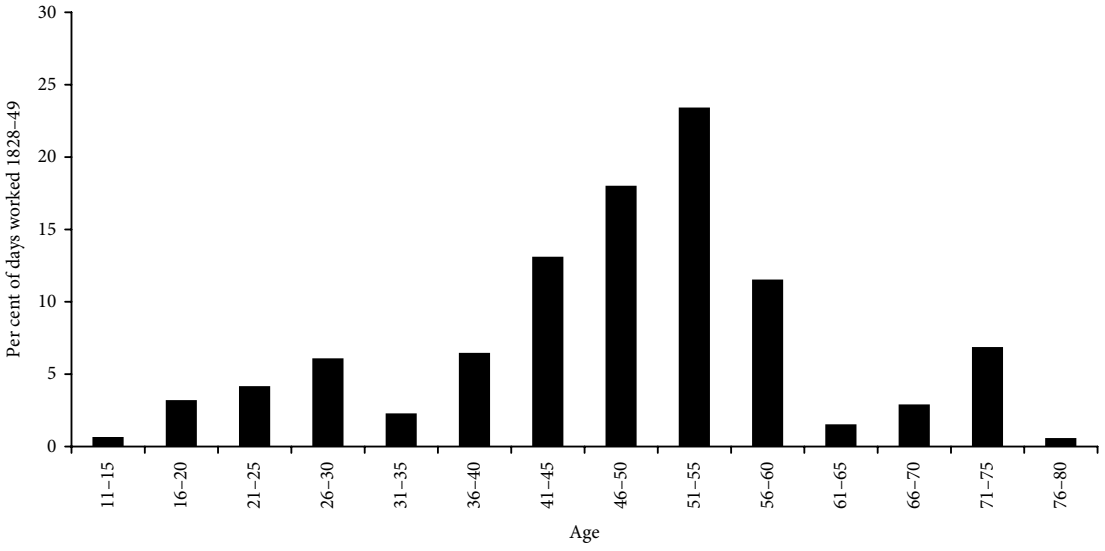


FIGURE 4. Age distribution of female agricultural labourers at the Estcourt Farm

Note: For women who worked multiple years, days of work are categorized according to the age of that woman at the time those years were worked. So, if a woman worked 100 days in the year she was 40 and 100 days in the year she was 41, then the first 100 days count towards the 36–40 total and the second hundred days count towards the 41–45 total.
Source: GRO, D1571, vols A40–A50.

working at the Estcourt farm. Figure 4 shows the distribution of days worked across various age groups for the female labourers at the Estcourt farm. Two-thirds of all days worked by female labourers were worked by women who were in their 40s and 50s. Some of the female labourers, but only a small fraction, were young. Teenagers account for only 4 per cent of all days worked, and women aged 30 or younger accounted for only 14 per cent of all days worked. If we separate regular and casual labourers, we find that regular workers tended to be older than casual workers. The median regular worker was 50, while the median casual worker was 23. Among casual workers, 60 per cent of days were worked by women under age 30, while among regular workers only 8 per cent of days were worked by women under age 30.

Female labourers at the Bragg farm were younger than female labourers at the Estcourt farm; they ranged in age from 11 to 43, and the median age was 27. Figure 5 shows the distribution of days worked across various age groups for female labourers at the Bragg farm. Middle-aged workers still account for the bulk of the work (half of the days worked were worked by women aged 36 to 45), but girls aged 11 to 15 also contributed a significant share.

The age distribution at the Estcourt farm, shown in Figure 4, is more heavily skewed towards the 40–60 age group than is the distribution based on the 1851 census presented by Speechley.[33] This may be due to the fact that Elizabeth Bailey and Elizabeth Bicknell dominate the sample, together accounting for 46 per cent of all the days worked by females over the 22-year period.

[33] Speechley, 'Female and child agricultural day labourers', Fig. 7.1.

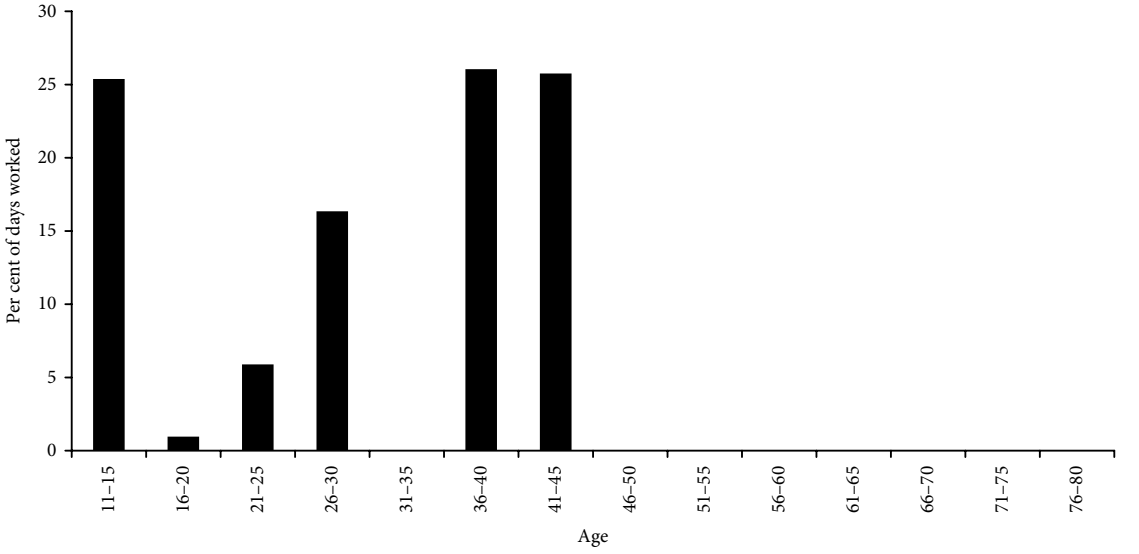


FIGURE 5. Age distribution of female agricultural labourers at the Bragg Farm

Note: as Figure 4.
Source: DRO, D83/22

Labourers at the Bragg farm were younger, so I cannot reject Speechley's finding that female labourers were spread uniformly across the age groups. Even so, the age distribution of female agricultural labourers was completely different from that of either female servants or female factory workers. Female factory workers were overwhelmingly young; they ranged in age from 6 to 84, but most were in their teens or twenties.[34] Only 9.5 per cent of factory workers were over age 30, while female labourers over age 30 worked 86 per cent of days worked by females at the Estcourt farm, and 52 per cent of days at the Bragg farm. Female farm servants were also younger than agricultural labourers. Speechley reports that in 1851 slightly more than half of all female farm servants were younger than 20, and another third were in their twenties, so that only about fifteen per cent of farm servants were over 30 years of age.[35] Factory work and indoor farm labour employed similar segments of the female workforce, girls and young women. Outdoor day-labourers, on the other hand, were much more likely to be older than 30.

III

Given this difference in age, it is not surprising that female agricultural labourers were also much more likely than female factory workers or female farm servants to be married. The large majority of women working in factories were single. About ten per cent of all females working in factories, or 27.5 per cent of those of 'marriageable age' were married.[36] Indoor farm servants, who boarded with the farmer, were also primarily single. Agricultural day-labour, on the other

[34] 'Report from James Mitchell'.
[35] Speechley, 'Female and child agricultural day labourers', Fig. 7.1.
[36] Pinchbeck, *Women workers*, p. 198.

TABLE 4. Marital status of women workers at the Estcourt Farm

A. Number of individuals

	Regular Workers	*Casual Workers*	*All Workers*
Single	0	17	17
and had an illegitimate child	0	2	2
Married	9	12	21
Widowed	1	3	4
Total, marital status known	10	31	41
Marital status unknown	2	28	30

Note: One of the casual workers is counted as both wife and widow, because she works both before and after her husband dies.

B. Per cent of days worked

	Regular Workers	*Casual Workers*	*All Workers*
Per cent of all days worked			
Marital status known	95	61	91
Marital status unknown	5	39	9
Per cent of days worked by those with known marital status			
Single	0	52.5	4.6
and had an illegitimate child	0	3.5	0.3
Married	98.5	32.7	92.8
Widowed	1.5	14.8	2.6

Source: GRO, D1571, vols A40–A50.

hand, was dominated by married women. Table 4 shows the number of workers in each marital status category, and the percentage of days worked by women in each category for the Estcourt farm. Nearly all of the regular workers were married; none were single, and only one was a widow. Because the regular workers did most of the work, and all but one of the regular workers was married, married women worked 93 per cent of all days worked by females at the Estcourt farm. Even among the casual workers, who were younger, one-third were married. In 1843 the vicar of Witheridge, Devonshire, reported that women agricultural labourers were 'Almost without exception married, or widows with families'.[37] This is an accurate description of regular workers at the Estcourt farm, though single workers were common among the casual workers.

A few widows worked at the Estcourt farm, but they were only a small portion of the workforce. Of the 41 women for whom marital status is known, only four were widows. One of the widows, Sarah Beasant, was in her 70s. She counts as a regular worker because she averaged

[37] *Report on women and children in agriculture*, p. 98.

87 days per year during the two years that she worked at the farm. The other widows worked only casually for one or two years. Sarah Smart was a married woman when she worked at the farm in 1831, but her husband, a carpenter, died in March 1833. Sarah worked 56½ days in the summer immediately following her husband's death, but did not appear in the farm accounts again. Because these widows worked for only short periods, overall widows worked for only 2.6 per cent of the days worked by women.

While most female labourers were married, they were not necessarily the wives of the farm's male labourers. Less than half of the married women labourers were married to men who also worked at the Estcourt farm.[38] Of the two most regularly employed women, one was married to a man regularly employed at the Estcourt farm, and one was not. Elizabeth Bicknell was the wife of Daniel Bicknell, who was employed six days a week, 52 weeks a year, as the shepherd. Elizabeth Bailey's husband, Richard Bailey, was listed in the census as an agricultural labourer, but must have worked for a different farmer because he does not appear in the Estcourt wage records at all between 1828 and 1849. None of the widows had been married to a man who worked at the Estcourt farm, and the single women were not necessarily related to the male labourers either. Less than a third of the single female labourers at the Estcourt farm were daughters of male labourers employed at this farm.[39] Donna Ulyatt found that half of the women and girls working at William Dixon's Hall Farm in Lincolnshire from 1801 to 1817 were either wives or daughters of male labourers at that farm, but I find fewer women related to male labourers at the Estcourt farm.[40] I am able to identify seven women as wives of labourers and four as daughters of male labourers; this is only 15 per cent of the 71 female labourers at the farm, but it is 31 per cent of the 35 females I was able to identify.

Pamela Sharpe found that most of the female labourers at the Shute Barton estate in the 1790s were mothers of illegitimate children.[41] At the Estcourt farm, however, I find only two mothers of illegitimate children, and they each worked only a few days, so that together they account for less than one per cent of all days worked by women. The Shipton Moyne baptismal register reports the baptism of 'Peter illegitimate son of Hannah Kirby' on 3 January 1836. Peter died as an infant, and was buried on 24 March 1836, at the age of 3 months. Hannah Kirby appears in the wage accounts only once: she worked six days in June, 1844, eight years after her son died. The other mother of an illegitimate child was Mary Trinder, who baptized her son David on 5 June 1825.[42] In the 1841 census we find David living with his mother in Shipton Moyne. Mary Trinder appears in the wage accounts only in 1848, when she worked a total of 34 days in July and August. While mothers of illegitimate children were not entirely absent from the Estcourt labour force, they certainly were not the typical worker.

Because the Bragg farm employed younger women, it also employed more single women.

[38] Forty-four per cent of the married women labourers had husbands who also worked at the Estcourt farm. Of days worked by married women, 41 per cent were worked by women married to men working at the Estcourt farm.

[39] Even if we restrict the pool to single labourers aged 20 and under, only 37.5 per cent were daughters of male labourers at the Estcourt farm.

[40] She identifies 19 wives and 16 daughters out of 70 women and girls. Donna Ulyatt, 'Female agricultural labour on the Dixon estate, Lincolnshire, 1801–17', *AgHR* 54 (2006), p. 83.

[41] Sharpe, 'Time and Wages', p. 67.

[42] The Long Newton baptismal record simply notes that the Mary was a 'single woman'.

TABLE 5. Female labourers at John Bragg's Farm in Thorncombe, Devon

Name	*Year*	*Days Worked*	*Age*	*Marital Status*	*Ages of Children*
Anne Baker	1838	306	42	Married	none
	1839	311	43		
Sarah Bagg	1838	140	22	Single	none
Anne Clarke[a]	1838	26		Married	
Susan Dean	1839	152	17	Single	none
Mary Hawker[b]	1838	59			
Elizabeth Jeffrey[a]	1839	23.5		Married	
Mary Langford	1838	312	37	Married	16, 13, 11, 7, 4, 1
	1839	312	38		17, 14, 12, 8, 5, 2
Louisa Lintern	1839	15.5		Married	1
Jane Phelps	1838	281	14	Single	none
	1839	304	15		
Marianna Phelps	1839	23	11	Single	none
Mary Powell	1838	173	27	Married	5, 2, infant
	1839	218	28		6, 3, 1

Notes:
[a] Two different women with this name were located in the census, both of them married.
[b] Mary Hawker is unmatched because the 1841 census for Thorncombe contains five different individuals with this name.
Source: Dorset RO, D373/2. Census and parish records of Thorncombe, Devon.

Table 5 lists all eleven women who appear in the Bragg accounts. Marital status is known for all but one of these workers. Six out of ten female workers were married, and married women worked 71 per cent of all days worked by females. The relatively high portion of single women working at this farm is a direct result of the relatively high portion of teenagers. Only one of the women over age twenty was single. None of the women working at the Bragg farm were widows or mothers of illegitimate children.

IV

Female labourers were not only married, but also had children. The majority of female labourers at the Estcourt farm, and the majority of female labourers over age 20 at the Bragg farm, had children. Using baptism registers and the census, I was able to track the birth histories of 33 women employed at the Estcourt farm, and eight women employed at Bragg's farm. Unfortunately the baptismal records give only the date of the baptism and not the date of the birth, but baptism usually followed birth by only about a month.[43]

[43] Wrigley and Schofield find that the median interval between birth and baptism in 1800 was 30 days. E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The population history of England, 1541–1871* (1989), p. 289.

TABLE 6. Distribution of female labourers by number of children, Estcourt Farm

	Children aged 16 and under		*Children aged 5 and under*		*Children aged 2 and under*	
	Per cent of annual observations	*Per cent of days worked*	*Per cent of annual observations*	*Per cent of days worked*	*Per cent of annual observations*	*Per cent of days worked*
0	38.2	31.7	68.5	77.0	84.3	87.6
1	11.2	17.3	13.5	10.8	12.4	9.1
2	12.4	12.3	12.4	8.4	3.4	3.3
3	16.9	17.1	5.6	3.9		
4	9.0	8.5				
5	4.5	6.2				
6	6.7	5.4				
7	1.1	1.4				

Note: This table is based on 89 annual observations of 33 different women for whom I have child-bearing histories. A woman provides an 'observation' for each year that she works. The same woman will appear in different family size categories as her children age or as she gives birth to new children. Family size is calculated from baptismal and census records. Children who appear in the burial records are removed, but other children are assumed to remain in the family from their baptism until age 16.

Table 6 shows the distribution of the Estcourt women by the total number of children age 16 or younger for each woman.[44] Some of the casual women workers were young and unmarried, and had no children. Other women were old enough that all of their children had grown. Overall about a third of the female labourers had no children. The median woman had two children, but a significant minority of women had much larger families. Nearly one-fifth of women had four or more children. While the majority of the women labourers had at least one child, it was much less common for them to have young children at home. In only 32 per cent of the cases did the female labourer have children aged five or younger at home, and in only 16 per cent of the cases did the women have children age two or younger at home. These results match the pattern that Speechley found for women working at the Dunster Castle Farm in Somerset, where the median woman had children at home, but only a minority of the female labourers had young children. At this farm, out of 13 women, seven (54 per cent) had children aged 16 and under, three (23 per cent) had children aged five and under and two (15 per cent) had children aged two and under.[45]

At the Bragg farm, only three of the eight women with identifiable family histories had children, but since three of these eight women were younger than 20, sixty per cent of the women aged over 20 had children.[46] Sarah Bagg, aged 22, was still single and had no children, while Anne Baker seems to have reached middle age without bearing children. The other three

[44] Outside of the census years I cannot tell which children are actually living with their mother. Children who appear in the burial records are removed from the family; otherwise I assume that a child survives until age 16.

[45] Speechley, 'Female and child agricultural day labourers', Table 7.1.

[46] Anne Clarke cannot be definitely matched, but both possible Anne Clarkes had children. Including her would raise the number of women with children to 4 out of 9.

women aged over 20, Mary Langford, Louisa Lintern, and Mary Powell, all had families of varying sizes. Louisa Lintern had just given birth to her first child, Mary Powell had three children, and Mary Langford had six children. Unlike the mothers at the Estcourt farm, mothers at the Bragg farm had young children; all three mothers had at least one child aged two or younger.

In 1843 a Devonshire vicar reported to Alfred Austin that 'Most women who are constantly employed in agriculture have ceased child-bearing. They cannot bear the fatigue whilst suckling an infant'.[47] The child histories for female labourers at the Estcourt and Bragg farms offer a chance to examine whether women were less likely to work when they had young children. I conclude that all of the mothers working at the Bragg farm had young children, but that the presence of young children does seem to have reduced the labour supply of mothers at the Estcourt farm.

Young children do not seem to have prevented women from working full-time at Bragg's farm. Mary Langford, already the mother of five children, baptized her sixth child, William, on 26 March 1837. Farm records are available for part of the year 1837, and suggest that Mary returned to work when William was quite young. The records begin on 13 May 1837, and Mary is not paid that week. She is, however, paid for a full week's work on 20 May. Since 20 May was a Saturday, Mary probably began working on 15 May, seven weeks after William was baptised. We do not know how old William was when he was baptised, but assuming a lag between birth and baptism of about a month, William would have been about eleven weeks old when his mother returned to full-time work. Another worker at this farm, Mary Powell, was away from work for a total of five months when her son Thomas was born. She worked regularly from March to October 1838, worked only eight days in November, and then stopped work completely until the end of March 1839. Thomas was baptized on Christmas Day 1838, and was between three and four months old when Mary returned to work in the week ending 30 March 1839. Mary then worked full-time, averaging 5¾ days per week for the next 38 weeks. Louisa Lintern did not return to work as quickly; her daughter was at least 17 months old when Louisa first appears in the wage book.[48]

At the Estcourt farm, however, few women worked when they had newborn babies at home. Among the women for whom child histories can be established, there are five cases where the mother begins or resumes work less than 12 months after the baptism of a child, and in all but one of the cases, the interval is at least seven months. The closest interval between baptism and birth occurs after the birth of Martha Bicknell in 1833. Elizabeth Bicknell baptized her ninth and last child, Martha, on the 19 May 1833. She was paid for 12 days of work on 6 June 1833, so the interval between baptism and the date she resumed work was probably less than a week. Unfortunately it is not possible to say exactly when Martha was *born*, so we don't know how quickly Elizabeth went from confinement to the fields. Elizabeth Bicknell worked until the end of September in 1832, and began work again in April 1833, so if Martha was born during this interval and her baptism was delayed, she may have been as much as much as six months old when Elizabeth returned to work, but it is unlikely that she was any older. Elizabeth Bicknell did work fewer days in 1833 than in either 1832 or 1834, so the birth seems to have reduced the number of

[47] *Report on women and children in agriculture*, p. 98.

[48] Mariana Lintern was baptized on 21 Jan. 1838. Louisa Lintern first appears in the wage book in the last week of June 1839.

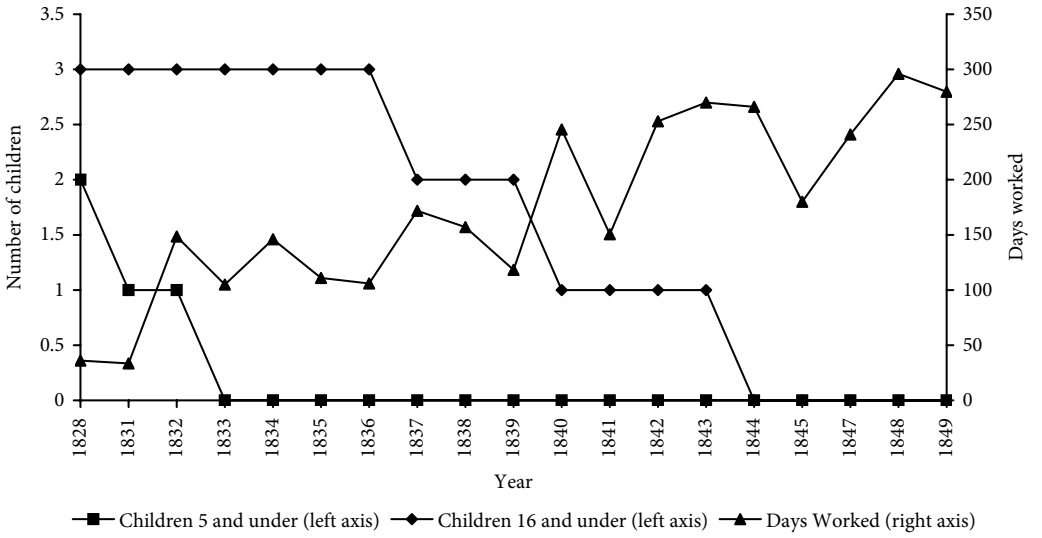


FIGURE 6. Work history of Elizabeth Bailey

Source: GRO, D1571, vols A40–A50.

days that she worked, but it did not prevent her from working entirely. However, she is the only mother at the Estcourt farm who worked when her child was less than six months old.

There were four other cases where the mother returned to work less than a year after baptizing a child. The next smallest interval between baptism and birth was seven months, and this occurred twice. In both cases the mother was a casual worker. Prescilla Prior baptized her daughter Sarah in December 1833, and worked six days in July 1834. Elizabeth Young baptized her son Edwin in January 1842, and worked 23½ days in July and August 1842. The next smallest interval between baptism and birth was nine months; Prescilla Prior also worked 34½ days in the summer of 1832, nine months after the baptism of her daughter Mary in September 1831. Elizabeth Heaven waited almost a year to begin work; she worked at the Estcourt farm in the first three months of 1847, baptized her daughter Mary Anne on 18 July, and resumed work 11 months later in late June 1848.

Among the women whose childbearing history could be established, I observed 38 baptisms between 1828 and 1848. Of these 38 baptisms, there are only five cases where we observe the mother working at the Estcourt farm less than a year after the baptism. There are three cases where the mother worked between one and two years after the baptism, and five cases where the mother worked between two and three years after the baptism (including one where a younger sibling had already been born). In a majority of these cases, then, the mother did not work at the Estcourt farm in the first three years of the child's life. The evidence from the Estcourt farm suggests that most women waited until their children were no longer toddlers to return to work.

If we look at the careers of the two most regularly employed women, we observe that they worked less when their children were young and more as their children grew older. Elizabeth

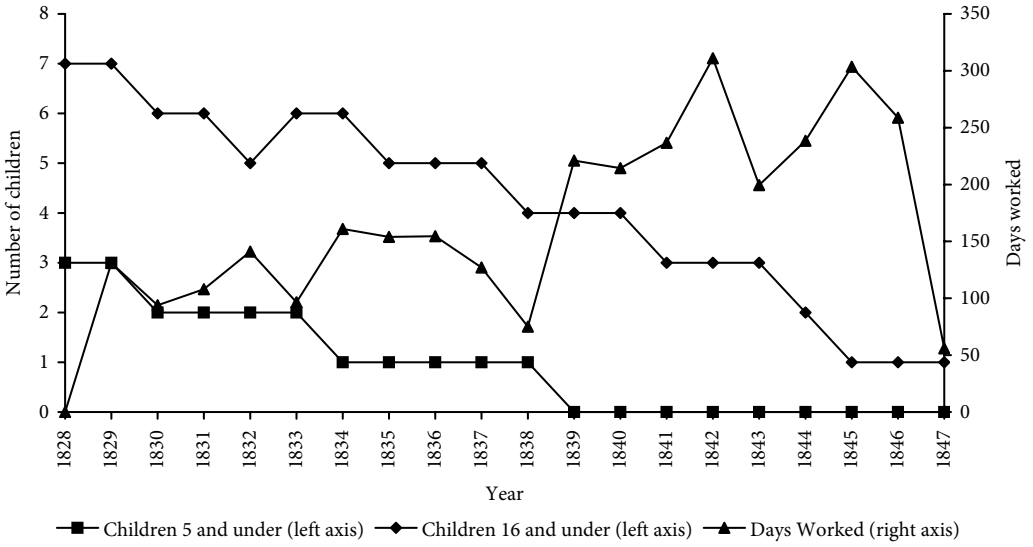


FIGURE 7. Work history of Elizabeth Bicknell

Source: GRO, D1571, vols A40–A50.

Bailey worked every year from 1828 to 1849. Figure 6 shows the number of days she worked in each year, along with the number of children in her family. Elizabeth Bailey worked fewer days per year when she had young children, and her employment steadily increased as her children grew older. When she had children aged five and under, she averaged 73 days of work per year. When she had children under 10, but no children under five, she averaged 128 days per year. When she had children under 16, but no children under 10, she averaged 199 days of work per year. When all her children were over 16 years of age, she averaged 253 days of work per year, which today would be considered full-time year-round employment.

Elizabeth Bicknell was also employed every year between 1829 and 1847. She did not work in 1828, when her son Charles was an infant. Charles was baptized on 20 January 1828, so he was more than a year old when his mother began work in February 1829. However, Elizabeth did work in 1833, the same year that her daughter Martha was baptized. Figure 7 plots the days worked by Elizabeth Bicknell between 1828 and 1847, along with the number of children in her family. Elizabeth Bicknell clearly increased her days of work when she no longer had children aged less than five. Between 1829 and 1838, when she had children aged five or younger, Elizabeth worked an average of 124 days per year, or about five months of full-time work. Between 1839 and 1847, when Elizabeth still had children under age 16, but did not have any children less than six, Elizabeth averaged 227 days per year, or not quite nine months of full-time work.

V

Though they were not the majority, some of the women working as agricultural labourers had small children. At the Estcourt farm, ten per cent of women had children aged two or younger,

and a third had children aged five or younger. At the Bragg farm, three out of eight workers had children aged two or younger. What happened to these children while their mother was at work? The farm wage accounts do not give us any answers to this question, but we can find detailed information about childcare arrangements from the women interviewed for the 1843 report on *Women and children in agriculture*. Alfred Austin's report on the south-west included interviews with female labourers, and these give us a chance to hear how the women themselves described their childcare arrangements.[49]

The women interviewed by Austin reported the use of different types of childcare arrangements, including older siblings, other relatives and hired carers. Sometimes older children were entrusted with the care of younger children. Mrs Britton of Calne (Wiltshire) explained how 'I have worked in the fields, and when I went out I left the children in the care of the eldest boy'.[50] Other relatives were used as well. Mrs Smart, also from Calne, told Austin 'Sometimes I have had my mother, and sometimes my sister, to take care of the children, or I could not have gone out'.[51]

If no family members were available to take care of the children, the alternatives were less attractive. A girl could be hired, but this was expensive. Mrs Sumbler, also a Wiltshire labourer, thought that when she worked the net gain was small:

> I do not think a great deal is got by a mother of a family going out to work; perhaps she has to hire a girl to look after the children, and there is a great waste of victuals and spoiling of things; and then working in the fields makes people eat so much more.[52]

Mrs Sumbler was correct in noting that the cost of hiring a girl to look after the children could be a significant deduction from earnings. Austin reported that 'Where a girl is hired to take care of the children, she is paid about 9*d*. a-week and her food besides, which is a serious deduction from the wages of the woman at work'.[53] Mrs. Sumbler reports that her normal wage was 8*d*. per day, so the girl's cash wage would have been 19 per cent of her weekly earnings, and paying for food as well must have at least doubled this.

Some women did not pay for care but instead left their children alone. Mary Hunt, a labourer from Studley (Wiltshire) seems to have worried a great deal about the safety of her children when she went out to work.

> I have always left my children to themselves, and, God be praised! nothing has ever happened to them, though I have thought it dangerous. I have many a time come home, and have thought it a mercy to find nothing has happened to them. It would be much better if mothers could be at home, but they must work. Bad accidents often happen.[54]

Other mothers were less fortunate. A farm bailiff from the area noted that 'I know of two or three cases of deaths from burning of children, since I have been in the neighbourhood'.[55] The

[49] Austin interviewed 15 women labourers, and his report was unusual in this respect. Reports by Mr. Vaughn and Sir F. H. Doyle contain no interviews with women, and Mr. Denison interviewed only three women. *Report on women and children in agriculture*.

[50] Ibid., p. 66.

[51] Ibid., p. 65.

[52] Ibid., p. 67–8.

[53] Ibid., p. 26.

[54] Ibid., p. *68*.

[55] Evidence of Mr. Henry Phelps, agent of the Marquis of Lansdowne, Ibid., p. 63.

dangers were great enough that some women did not consider leaving children on their own to be an option. Mrs. Smart reported that she 'could not have gone out' without the help of her mother or sister. The fact that some women paid more than one-fifth of their earnings to hire childcare also suggests that they too did not consider leaving the children alone an acceptable risk.

Mary Collier, in her poem of 1739, 'The Woman's Labour', suggests that a mother might take her nursing infant into the field while working:

> Our tender Babes into the Field we bear,
> An wrap them in our Cloathes to keep them warm,
> While round about we gather up the Corn;
> And often unto them our Course do bend,
> To keep them safe, that nothing them offend.[56]

There is evidence in the 1843 report that this did happen. Mrs. Britton notes that, when going to work in the fields, she 'frequently carried the baby with me, as I could not go home to nurse it'.[57] An earlier Poor Law report also mentions the practice, suggesting that 'the custom of the mother of a family carrying her infant with her in its cradle into the field, rather than lose the opportunity of adding her earnings to the general stock, though partially practiced before, is becoming very much more general now'.[58] This type of childcare, though, was only used for infants.

Childcare was available, but for women who could not rely on family members, it was expensive. Some women had so much trouble finding childcare that they left their children alone, even though they feared for the children's safety. The lack of adequate affordable childcare may explain why Elizabeth Bailey and Elizabeth Bicknell worked fewer days when their children were young, and more days as their children grew older.

VI

Female agricultural day-labourers were unlike women working as farm servants, domestic servants, or factory workers. All three of the later occupations employed mainly young, single women, and a concentration on these occupations may give the impression that older married women were not an important part of the labour market in the early nineteenth century. However, not all working women in the early nineteenth century were young and single. Agricultural day-labour is an occupation in which female workers were mainly older married women, many of whom had children at home. Marriage and children did not prevent women from working outside the home, but young children do seem to have made working outside the home more difficult, since the women most regularly employed on the Estcourt farm worked fewer days when their children were young, and more days when their children were older.

[56] Mary Collier, *The Woman's Labour* (1739, repr. 1985).

[57] *Report on women and children in agriculture*, p. 66.

[58] Second Report of Poor Law Commissioners, BPP, 1835, XXIX, p. 221, quoted by Pinchbeck, *Women workers*, p. 85.

Regional agricultural wage variations in early nineteenth-century England*

by Margaret Lyle

Abstract

This paper provides a detailed mapping of the agricultural wage in England based on responses to a wages question in the 'Rural Queries', sent to selected parishes in 1832. It shows clearly the regional nature of the wage and the relative amounts given by region. It reveals hitherto unreported detail, with two centres of high wages and a gradual falling away with distance from these centres. Wage profiles within each region are discussed in the text and give confidence that the regions are real and not an artifice. These newly mapped wage regions are then used to demonstrate that magistrates awarded 'maintenance payments' to mothers of bastard children in direct proportion to the basic agricultural wage.

In 1832 the commissioners established to investigate the Old Poor Law, and who were charged with making recommendations for its reform, circulated a questionnaire to rural parishes asking for information.[1] The individual returns from 1152 parishes, the so-called 'Rural Queries', were printed as an Appendix to the 1834 Report of the commission.[2] It has been argued on a number of occasions that the wealth of information contained in the Rural Queries was largely ignored in the report, or at most, used selectively to demonstrate the correctness of policies which the commissioners had already decided to recommend. It may however be argued that the data contained in the Rural Queries remained largely unusable until modern computing technology allowed it to be quickly and effectively analysed and mapped. This was done in a previous paper for the data collected on the treatment of illegitimate children under the Old Poor Law regime.[3]

Rural queries asked parishes to supply information about the prevailing weekly agricultural wage, winter and summer. This is not the first time that these replies to the wage question have been used in the pursuit of both chronological and spatial trends. In 1898 Bowley used them to prepare a table of 1833 agricultural wages by county. In 1986 Hunt used Bowley's table to

* I thank Professor Richard Hoyle for his encouragement and sound advice during the writing of this paper and Dr. Nicola Verdon for kindling my initial enthusiasm for Rural Queries. I also thank the two anonymous referees for taking the time to give such helpful comments and advice.

[1] *Report from his Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Application of the Poor Laws*, Appendix (B.1), *Answers to the Rural Queries*, pt 1 (BPP, 1834, XXX), p. 2 *a*.

[2] This paper is concerned with agricultural wages; the analysis was restricted to replies from Rural Queries and replies to the Town Queries were excluded.

[3] M. A. Lyle, 'Regionality in the late Old Poor Law: the treatment of chargeable bastards from Rural Queries', *AgHR* 53 (2005), pp. 141–57.

map, *inter alia*, the pattern of agricultural wages for 1833–45. In 2001 Clark published a national agricultural wage index from 1670 to 1850 and used the amounts recorded in the answers to the Rural Queries as a benchmark.[4] Why then go over old ground? In the first place, Bowley's amounts were averages: he gave the results of three different calculations in the table, the average of the summer rates, the average of the summer and winter rates and 'the average total annual earnings divided by 52'.[5] Secondly, Hunt averaged two of Bowley's averages to obtain an amount for the period 1833–45. Finally, these averaged amounts were further averaged for each county. The effect of this cumulative averaging is to lose so much detail that the end result is a very blurred picture of how agricultural wages varied over the country. By going back to the original answers to the Rural Queries it has been possible to prepare a detailed parish by parish picture of the regional differences in agricultural wages in 1832.

Very few of the parishes that answered the questionnaire returned a reply to every question, but 879 parishes replied to question eight which asked parish officials 'Weekly wages, with and without Beer or Cyder, in Summer and in Winter?' These answers provide a reliable distribution of wages because the question required an objective, quantified response: individual inaccuracies, whether accidental or deliberate, become less important given the number of data points returned. This provides a unique sample in terms of size, and can be contrasted with Clark's enforced reliance on a sample of 45 for his work on the decade 1830–9.[6]

Responses contained information on winter wage, summer wage and benefits. The basic winter daily wage was chosen for this study as the best indicator because the objective was to detect regional patterns, if they existed: it was not to determine an agricultural labourer's true annual income. The basic winter wage required neither adjustment for bed and board (part of the annual remuneration of live-in farm servants) nor adjustment for food or drink (which some parishes included in hay and harvest remuneration). Very few parishes included beer and cider with the winter wage, so deciding whether or not to attach a monetary value to this allowance was not necessary. Also, the winter wage made up the major part of a labourer's income – it was paid for nine or ten months of the year – so the winter wage was the core of an agricultural labourer's income, summer wages being a variable add-on.[7] A formula proposed by Clark lends support to the use of the winter wage as an indicator of relative remuneration. He demonstrated that the total annual earnings of an agricultural labourer would move proportionately with the winter wage as long as the ratio of hay wage to winter wage and harvest wage to winter wage remained constant and the total number of days worked at hay and harvest did not change.[8] These conditions would apply to the whole country in any single year as well as the 150-year period covered by Clark. On that basis, the winter wages would track total annual earnings.

[4] G. Clark, 'Farm wages and living standards in the Industrial Revolution: England, 1670–1869', *EcHR* 54 (2001), p. 486.

[5] A. L. Bowley, 'The statistics of wages in the United Kingdom during the last hundred years: Parts I, II, IV, Agricultural Wages', *J. Roy. Stat. Soc*., 61, 62 (Dec., 1898, Mar., Sept., 1899), p. 707.

[6] Clark, 'Farm wages and living standards', Table 3, p. 482.

[7] BPP, 1834, XXX, p. 10a, Binfield, Berkshire, '10*s*., except for about 5 weeks in hay-time and harvest'; p. 200a, Upper Slaughter, Gloucestershire, 'During four weeks in harvest, 13*s*. per week'; p. 288a, Waltham, Leicestershire, 'Summer for eight weeks, 14*s*. per week'.

[8] Clark, 'Farm wages and living standards', p. 487.

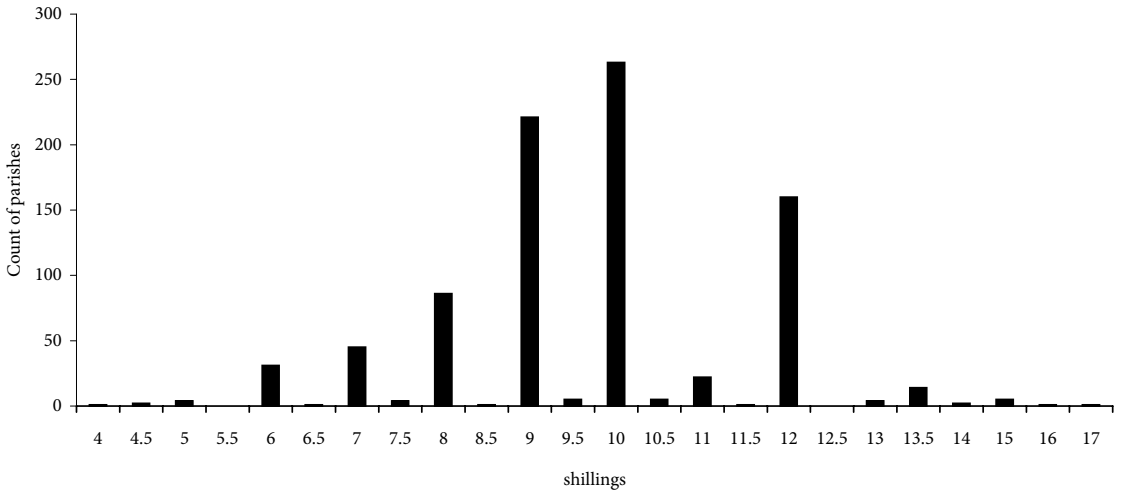


FIGURE 1. Weekly winter wages, only or minimum amounts reported, by parish in 1832.

Source: BPP, 1834, XXX. Data compiled from responses to Question 8.

Some parish answers gave only a single amount for the winter wage but other parishes gave a range.[9] Mapping was therefore carried out, and boundaries compared, for two sets of circumstances. In the first, single wage amounts were used with the lower value from those replies that gave a range. In the second, the lower value of a range was replaced by the higher value. The identified regions proved robust, the boundaries moving only slightly between the two versions, and the mapping from the first has been used throughout the paper.

The mapping demonstrated a clear picture of regional differences in the amounts given to agricultural labourers. These regions do not follow county boundaries, but are distinct and unmistakable.

I

For the whole sample, the spread and frequency of the winter wage for all single amounts reported together with the minimum where a range was reported are shown in Table 1 and in Figure 1. Although the wage spread was large, three amounts predominated; 9*s*., 10*s*. and 12*s*. per week. Almost three-quarters of the parish wages fell into one of these amounts.[10] To facilitate analysis, the parish wage levels were grouped into four bands: the first contained low waged returns of 8.5*s*. or less; the second centred on 9*s*.; the third on 10*s*.; and the fourth contained all returns above 11.5*s*. The resulting spatial pattern allowed seven distinct regions of similar wages to be identified as shown in Figure 2.

[9] 630 of the 879 parishes (72%) reported single amounts; 28% reported a wage range.

[10] 263 (30%) of the 879 parishes replied that they paid 10*s*. per week in winter to agricultural labourers, 221 (25%) that they paid 9*s*. per week and 160 (18%) that they paid 12*s*.

TABLE 1. Weekly winter wage by number of parishes, by region, in 1832.

Region	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*4a*	*4b*	*Total*
Wage	*NE*	*NW*	*EM*	*W*	*Y*	*V*	*SE*	*L*	*SW*	
4.0*s.*							1			1
4.5*s.*		2								2
5.0*s.*		2	1		1					4
6.0*s.*	3	8	3	11	3	3				31
6.5*s.*									1	1
7.0*s.*	2	2	2	28	8	1			2	45
7.5*s.*		2		1		1				4
8.0*s.*	4	5	3	34	25	10	3		2	86
8.5*s.*				1						1
9.0*s.*	23	14	7	30	95	30	4	3	15	221
9.5*s.*	2				1	1			1	5
10.0*s.*	14	8	22	7	32	140	29	6	5	263
10.5*s.*				1		2			2	5
11.0*s.*		3			1	11	5	1	1	22
11.5*s.*					1					1
12.0*s.*	5	6	49		3	5	84	8		160
13.0*s.*			1				3			4
13.5*s.*							14			14
14.0*s.*	1		1							2
15.0*s.*			1			2	2			5
16.0*s.*							1			1
17.0*s.*				1						1
Parishes	54	52	90	114	170	206	146	18	29	879
Average (*s.*)	9.3	8.6	10.8.	8.0.	9.0.	9.8.	11.6.	10.8	9.1.	

Notes:
(i) The region number corresponds to the number in Figure 2.
(ii) The average wage is reported in shillings per week.
(iii) The horizontal lines delineate the banding used in Figure 2.
Source: BPP, 1834, XXX. Data compiled from responses to Question 8.

These regions are labelled for subsequent discussion and analysis as the North-East, Region 1; the North-West, Region 2; the East Midlands, Region 3; the West, Region 4; a Y-shaped area, Region 5; a V-shaped area, Region 6 and the South-East, Region 7.[11] There are also two sub-regions within Region 4: the first around Liverpool, Region 4a, and the second in the South-West corner made up of most of Cornwall and a small part of Devon, Region 4b, which both gave higher wages than was usual in Region 4.

[11] Regions 5 and 6 are called the Y Region and the V Region because they are vaguely shaped as a 'Y' and 'V', and this avoids the need to reproduce long lists of counties and parts of counties.

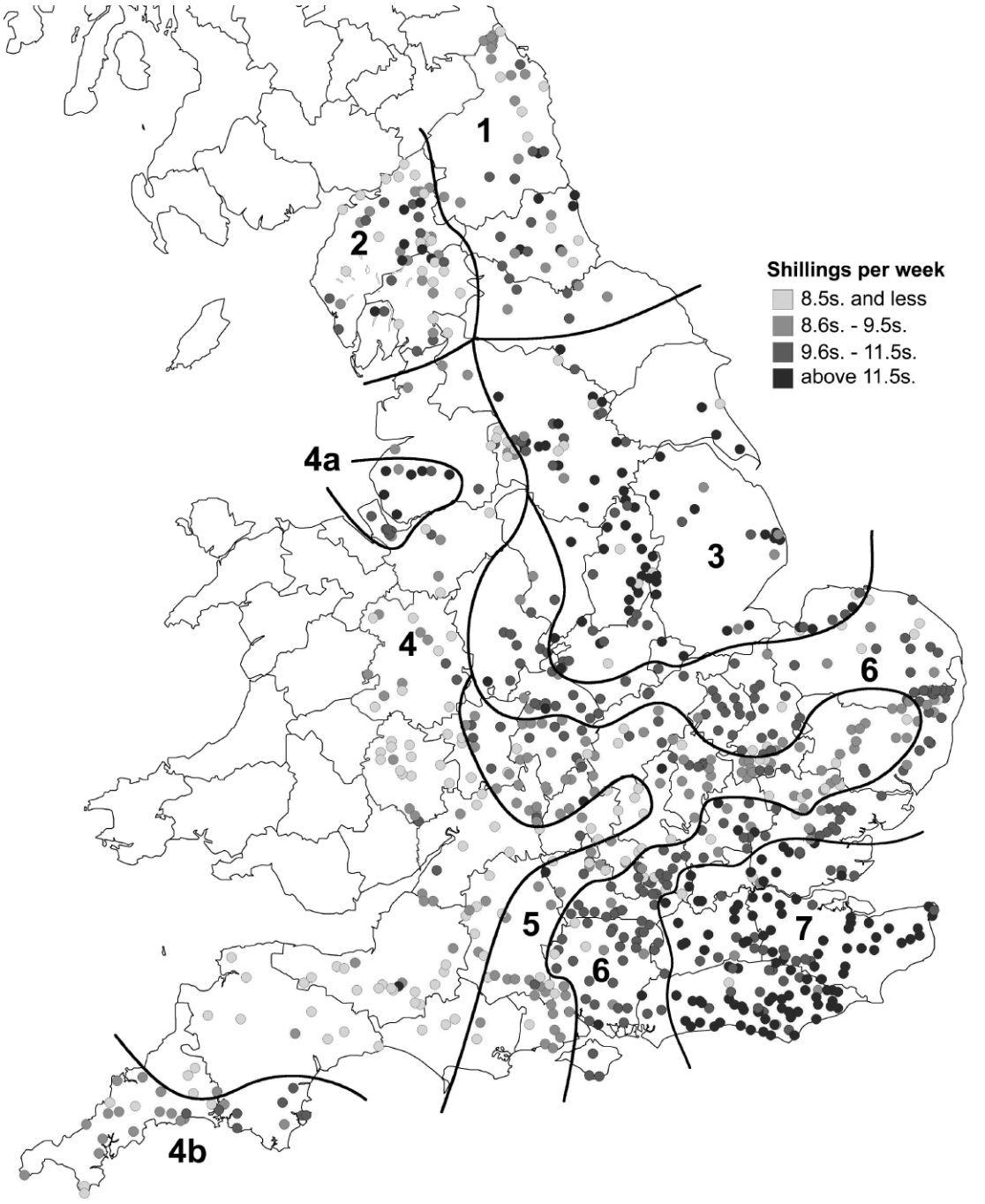


FIGURE 2. Regional divisions based on the amounts that parishes gave for agricultural wages in winter (only or minimum).

Note: In those cases where a range was reported, the lower value of the range has been used.
Source: BPP, 1834, XXX. Data compiled from responses to Question 8.

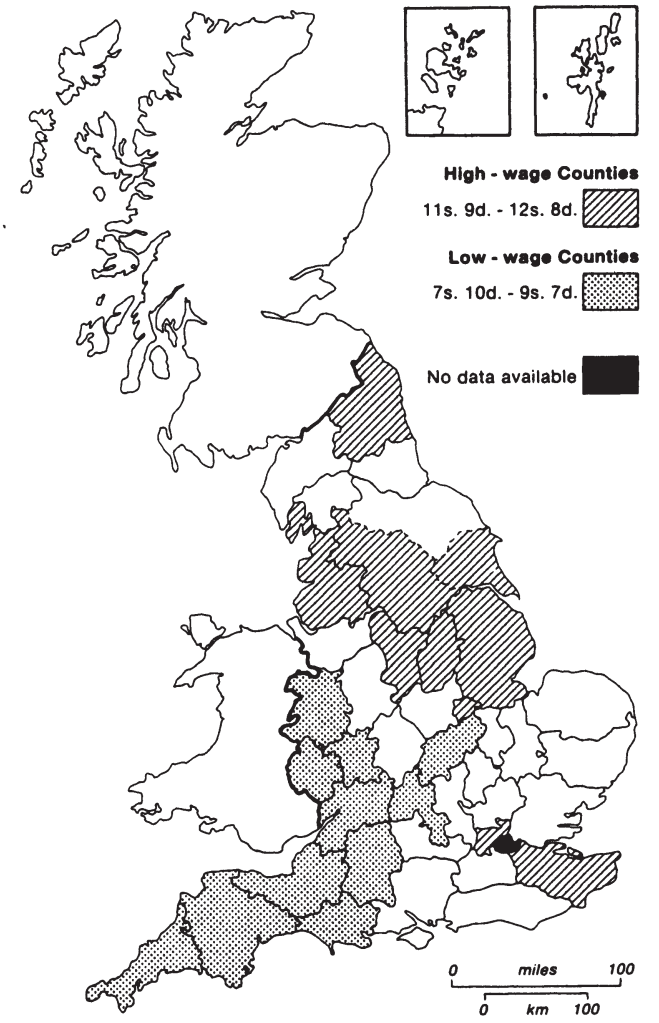


FIGURE 3. Pattern of agricultural wages, 1833-45

Source: E. H. Hunt, 'Industrialization and Regional Inequality. Wages in Britain, 1760–1914', *J. Econ. Hist.*, 46 (1986), p. 943.

Hunt published the most comprehensive analysis prior to this study, in which he identified high and low wage counties. His map for the period 1833–45 has been reproduced in Figure 3. Although there is some superficial similarity, the regions that appear when the averages are unbundled differ significantly to those proposed by his study.

Figure 2 shows that the region of high wages in the south-east is much more extensive than Hunt proposed, while that in the Midlands is less so; when mapped at parish level there is no evidence that the West Midlands was an area of high wages. The most marked difference between the two studies can be seen in Northumberland. Hunt reported it as a county of high wages for agricultural labourers but at parish level the replies to the Rural Queries show this

was not the case. For low waged regions there is some overlap with Hunt's findings, mainly in the south-west and west of the country. Other regions identified from this study as low waged he reported as either middle or high waged.

II

The distribution of wage amounts within the identified regions is shown in Table 1 and discussed, essentially in order of descending wage, in the following section which should be read as a commentary on Figure 2. In overview, most regions are characterised by a predominance of one wage amount, with two exceptions. Parishes in Region 4, the West, reported three different, but all low, amounts in almost equal proportions and Region 2, the North-West, showed no pattern in the amounts given by the parishes.

Region 7, the South-East, was clearly differentiated by its average of 11.6*s*. per week and a high density of parish returns, with 146 parishes in a tight geographical area. It comprises Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Middlesex and parts of Essex and Hertfordshire. While there were extremes in reported wage levels, the distribution is dominated by 12*s*. (84 parishes, 58 per cent). Region 3, the East Midlands, the second highest wage area, had an average wage of about 1*s*. per week less than Region 7. It is made up of Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, the East Riding of Yorkshire, part of the West Riding of Yorkshire together with parts of Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Rutland and the northern tip of Norfolk. The lower average is attributable to a reduction in the incidence of the 12*s*. relative to the 10*s*. wage. It had a lower parish density than Region 7; 90 parishes made a return over a geographically larger area.

Separating these two regions of high winter wage was a band of 206 parishes in a V-shape, Region 6, which ran from north Derbyshire following the boundary with Region 3 into north Norfolk then turning south and forming the boundary with Region 7 to Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Figure 2. This region demonstrated a further shilling decrease in average wages by the virtual disappearance of the 12*s*. wage, but was a surprisingly homogenous region with a strong single-peak profile, 70 per cent reporting a wage of 10*s*. per week.

Bordering the V-shaped region was a Y-shaped region, Region 5, of 107 parishes where wage levels were almost a shilling per week lower again. The strong single-peak profile was retained, but moved from 10*s*. to 9*s*. per week (95 parishes, 58 per cent).

The lowest winter wage was given by the 114 parishes that made up Region 4, the West, where the average was only 8*s*. per week. It comprised Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and most of Dorset and continued both northwards around the Bristol Channel into Herefordshire, Shropshire and Cheshire with an eastward band running through Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. The spread of wages was wide, from 6*s*. to 17*s*. per week. No single amount predominated, but the wage envelope has broadened and shifted significantly to lower levels as clearly shown in Table 1.

Two areas within this region were identified as separate sub-regions because they reported much higher amounts; Region 4a, a very small area of 18 parishes around Liverpool, had an average of 10.8*s*. per week and Region 4b, made up of 29 parishes in mostly Cornwall and a small part of Devon, had an average of 9.1*s*.

Region 1, the North-East, was made up of 54 parishes from Northumberland and Durham

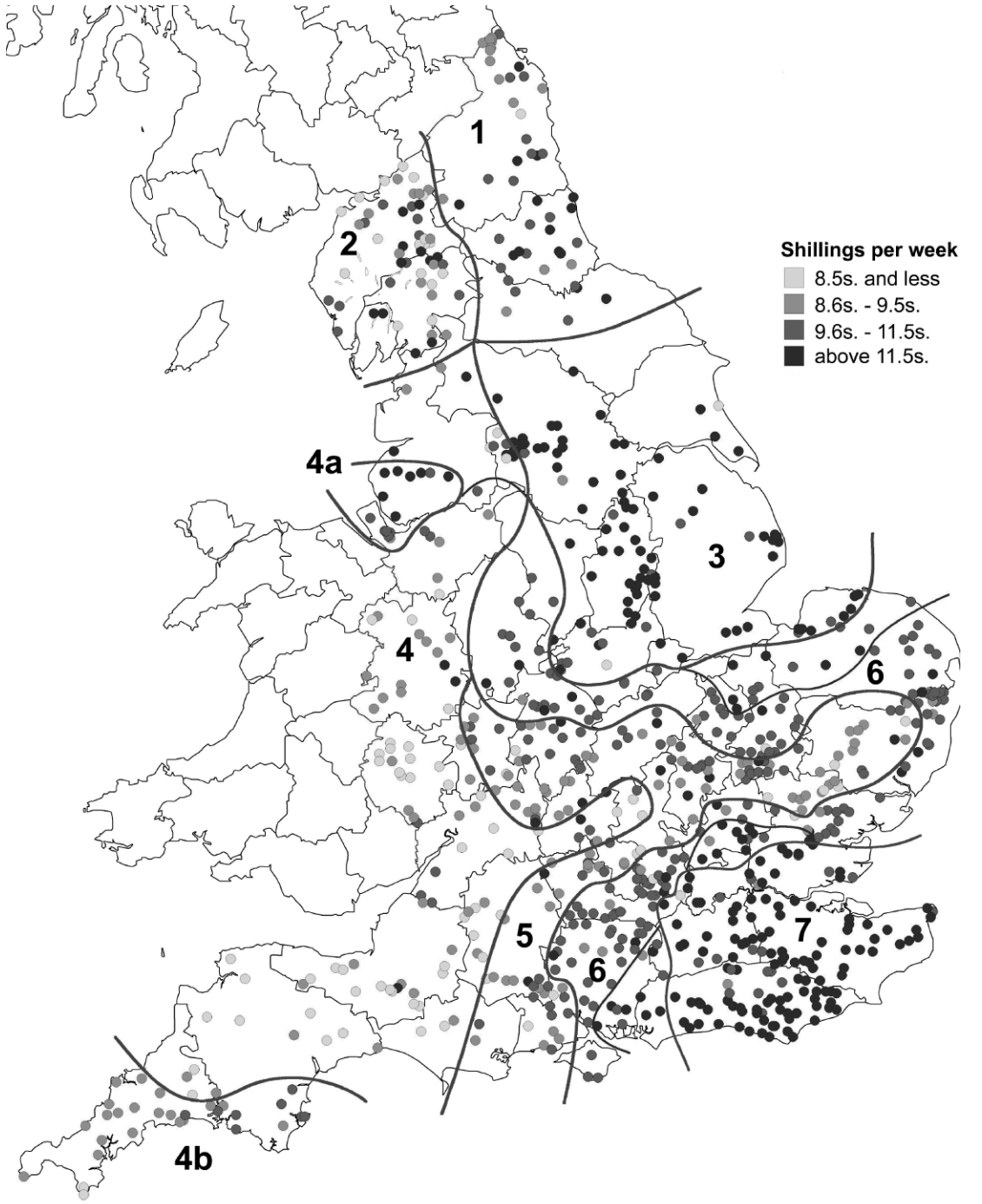


FIGURE 4. Regional divisions based on the amounts that parishes gave for agricultural wages in winter (only or maximum).

Note: In those cases where a range was reported, the higher value of the range has been used.
Source: BPP, 1834, XXX. Data compiled from responses to Question 8.

together with some from the North Riding of Yorkshire. Here the average winter wage was 9.3*s*. per week. The distribution showed a strong peak at 9*s*. (43 per cent of parishes) and a weaker one at 10*s*. (26 per cent). Region 2, the North-West (effectively Cumberland and Westmorland) reported the greatest variety in amounts given. In its 52 parish returns there was no strong predominance of any single amount. In summary, the wage pattern clearly shows two high wage poles, one in the South East and the other in the East Midlands, with wage levels decreasing as a function of distance from these poles.

III

Wages were reported as either a single value or as a range. In Figure 2, the single value given and the lower value where a range was reported were used. To examine the robustness in the mapping of the basic winter wage, the other extreme, the single value and the higher value where a range was given, were used with the results shown in Figure 4 where original boundaries are shown in heavy grey and the revised boundaries in light grey. The mapping was modified, but not significantly. Changes where regions of high wage push into the adjacent regions of lower wage occur in a few places only. Region 7 pushes west and north into Region 6 while Region 3 pushes south into Region 6. Also Regions 3 and 4a appear to be merging, although the very low number of returns from parishes in Lancashire and Cheshire make such a diagnosis somewhat problematical. The parishes around Halifax, Bradford and Leeds reported a low minimum and high maximum range and therefore move from low to high wage category. Assuming that the maximum of any range reported would be given to the most able and willing workers, the wide range of wages here could be explained because the agricultural employers needed to compete with industry for the best workers.

These variations do not distort the overall countrywide pattern which remains robust whether the minimum or maximum reported amount is used to prepare the map.

IV

These newly mapped agricultural wage regions were used to examine the hypothesis that, in regions of higher agricultural wages, magistrates would set higher maintenance payments for the mothers of bastard children. This was tested using data from the responses to question 47 in Rural Queries, which asked, *inter alia*, 'What is the allowance received by a Woman for a Bastard?'.[12] The allowances to the mothers at parish level were grouped into the agricultural wage regions, with the results shown in Table 2. Graphing the average amount given to the mothers of bastard children against the average agricultural wage for each region revealed a direct linear relationship, Figure 5. It transpires that parishes generally paid about 18 per cent or a little over a day's wage for an agricultural worker as an allowance to the mothers of bastards.

Four regions did lie off the trend line, but only two contained a significant number of parishes. Region 3, the East Midlands, gave the second highest average winter wage and the third

[12] The answers to Question 47 have been analysed in a previous paper, and regions of relative generosity to the mothers of chargeable bastards proposed. Lyle, 'Regionality'.

TABLE 2. Amounts awarded to the mothers of bastard children, by agricultural wage region, in 1832.

Region	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*4a*	*4b*	*7a*	*Total*
Amount	*NE*	*NW*	*EM*	*W*	*Y*	*V*	*SE*	*L*	*SW*	*H*	
12 *d.*		3	4	8		5		1			21
14 *d.*					1						1
15 *d.*	1	2	1	15	2	1		1			23
16 *d.*		1		3	1	1	1				7
18 *d.*	8	21	43	88	99	70	8	13	12	15	377
20 *d.*	6	10	1	9	9	8		1	12	1	57
21 *d.*	4	7	6	1	1	8		1			28
22 *d.*		1		1	3						5
24 *d.*	17	4	37	10	31	52	75	2	2	1	231
27 *d.*	1			2	2						5
30 *d.*	6		4	1	2	11	29		1		54
36 *d.*	2		1				3		1		7
42 *d.*	1					1					2
Parishes	46	49	97	138	151	157	116	19	28	17	818
Award, av., (*d.*)	23.7	18.9	20.9	18.1	19.6	21	25.3	18.4	20.4	18.5	20.8
Wage, av., (*s.*)	9.3	8.6	10.8	8.0	9.0	9.8	11.6	10.8	9.1	11.6	
Award as per cent of wage	21	18	16	19	18	18	18	14	19	13	

Notes:
(i) The region number corresponds to the number on Figure 2, except for Region 7a which is a small region around Hastings.
(ii) The region description is as for Table 1, except for H, a small region around Hastings.
(iii) The award is the amount given to the women and is the average amount given by all the parishes in the region in pence, *d*., per week.
(iv) The average wage is the average winter wage in shillings per week and is taken from Table 1.
(v) The ratio is the amount awarded to the mothers as a percentage of the average winter wage.
Source: BPP, 1834, XXX. Data compiled from responses to Question 47.

highest average amount to the mothers, but the latter fell below that expected from the trend line by a few pence. Region 1, the North-East, gave the mothers about 20 per cent (4*d*. per week) more than would have been predicted from its average wage level. This region did not show the usual strong single peak profile in the agricultural wages, indicating some distinct difference from other regions, but this has not been investigated further here. The remaining two non-trend regions – 4a (the area around Liverpool) and 7a (the area around Hastings) – were extremely small in both area and number of parishes. In the area around Liverpool, the mothers were awarded the same low amount as others in the West but here the agricultural wage level was higher than the rest of that region. The anomaly here is not significant as it applies only to 19 of the 818 parishes. Hastings' agricultural wages were in line with the rest of Region 7, but the mothers were awarded less than was usual for that part of the country,

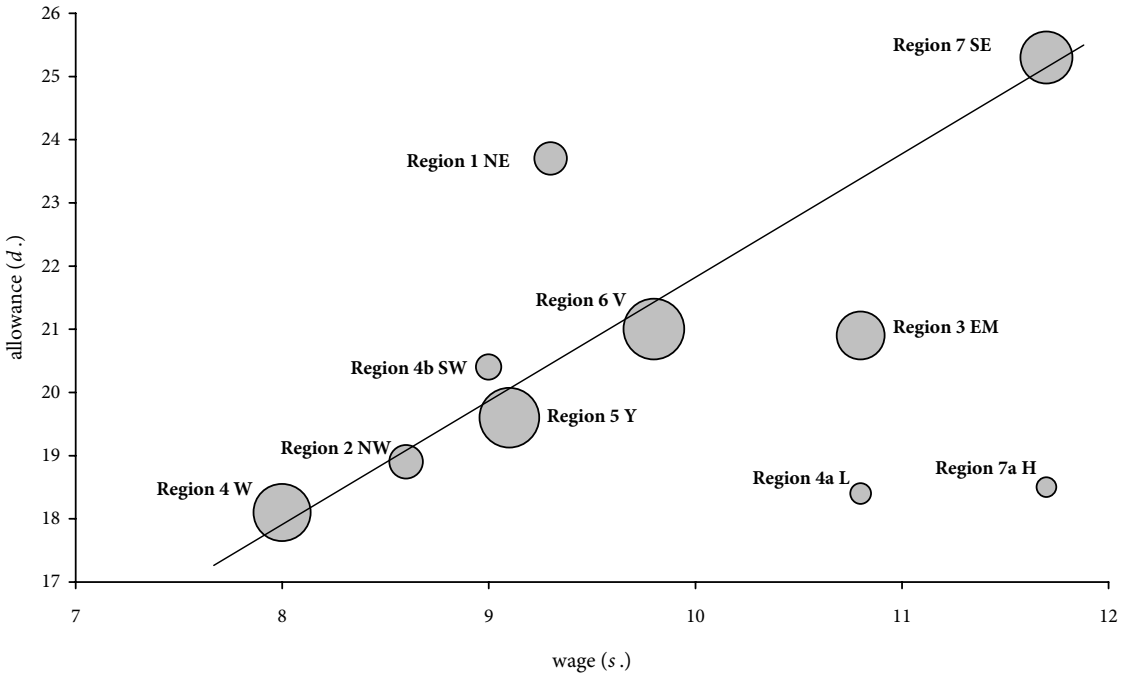


FIGURE 5. Relationship between the average winter agricultural wage and the amounts given to the mothers of bastard children, by region, in 1832

Notes:
(i) The region number corresponds to the number on Figure 2, except for Region 7a which is a small area region around Hastings
(ii) The region description is as for Table 1 except for 7a which is a small area around Hastings;
(iii) The average winter agricultural wage is in shillings per week and the average amount given to the women is in pence per week;
(iv)The circle size shows the relative number of parishes in each region;
(v) The trend line is the least mean squares line for the regions excluding NE, EM, L and H; this represents 78% of the parishes.
Source: BPP, 1834, XXX. Data compiled from responses to Questions 8 and 47.

about 18*d*. or 19*d*. where we would expect 24*d*. or 25*d*.[13] Comments in the answers to the Rural Queries suggest that the low payment to the mothers was the result of the local policy of the magistrate's bench. The Rape of Hastings reported, 'In this District it has, for some years past, been lowered to 1*s*. 6*d*. per week'.[14] Ewhurst reported that the amount awarded was set by the Battle bench and was inadequate, so the financial burden of the bastard children often fell on the parish:

> 1*s*. 6*d*. per week is the sum ordered by the Magistrates at the Battle Bench, without regard to

[13] The area around Hastings, 7a, is peculiar to the allowances given to women for their bastard children and is not mapped in this paper. Details can be found in Lyle, 'Regionality'.

[14] BPP, XXX, p. 510e (Richard Davenport, Salehurst).

> the Father's circumstances, which is a great hardship on parishes, as the Children are often left for the parish to support in the Poorhouse.[15]

Again as this region contained only 17 of the 818 parishes it may be considered a local curiosity of little overall significance to the relationship of wages to allowance.

It may be concluded that the amounts awarded by magistrates to the mothers of bastard children depended to a great extent on the regional average agricultural winter wage with a chargeable bastard's weekly allowance set at slightly more than one day's basic agricultural wage. The primary driver of amounts given to the mothers of bastard children for each region therefore appears to have been financial rather than cultural.

V

This study is not concerned with, and provides no information on, the total family income of agricultural workers in the different regions: it takes no account of the contribution made by women or children and no account of the additional income from hay or grain harvest work nor any other higher earning activity such as threshing.

It does provide for the first time a quantified countrywide wage map at a single point in time, 1832. The regions do not follow county boundaries but are well defined giving a 'wages map' with easily recognisable contour lines, which elegantly demonstrates the regional nature of the basic agricultural wage. It shows a definite distance effect where wage rates diminish as the point of employment moves away from the two high wage areas.

The wage map, in combination with data on amounts awarded by magistrates to a parish's chargeable bastards, reveals a linear relationship. The 'generosity' of magistrates towards the mothers was in direct proportion to the average regional winter wage, and approximately one day's wage was provided for one week's support. While such a correlation is not surprising, this is the first time that it has been demonstrated to exist on a countrywide scale.

[15] BPP, XXX, p. 503e (William Beck, Assistant Overseer).

Annual list of publications on agrarian history, 2005*

Compiled by Peter McShane
Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading

JOURNAL AND BOOK ARTICLES

ALBARELLA, UMBERTO, 'Meat production and consumption in town and country', in Giles and Dyer (eds), *Town and country in the Middle Ages*, pp. 131–48.

ALBARELLA, UMBERTO and PAYNE, SEBASTIAN, 'Neolithic pigs from Durrington Walls, Wiltshire, England: a biometrical database', *J. Arch. Science*, 32, pp. 589–99.

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—, 'Noyfull fowles and vermyn: parish payments for killing wildlife in Wiltshire, 1533–1863', *Wilts. Arch. and Natural Hist. Mag*., 98, pp. 143–54.

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BARTON, P. G. and OLIVER, H. NIXON, 'The Beander Mill, Newtown, Montgomeryshire, 1330–1851', *Montgomeryshire Coll*., 93, pp. 37–53.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

A rare thing: the memoirs of a Breton peasant*

by R. W. Hoyle

The appearance of an English translation of the autobiography of the Breton peasant, Jean-Marie Déguignet (1834–1905), brings to the attention of a new audience a remarkable account of what in many ways was an ordinary life. Déguignet spent the first years of his life in and around Quimper in south-west Brittany, the son of a farmer who failed and was forced to give up his farm and take day labouring jobs a few months after Jean-Marie was born. When he was six, Jean-Marie was kicked in the head by a horse. This gave him a wound which suppurated for a decade or more, and which, when finally cured, left him with a pronounced scar on his temple. Using cod-phrenology, Déguignet explained his acquisition of intellectual interests and abilities from this injury. But it was also a curse: his childhood companions had, he acknowledged, in some ways lived happier lives than he, 'but lives exclusively physical and animal' (p. 32).

From the age of about ten the boy begged on a regular circuit around the farms of Ergué-Gabéric (a small village on the east side of Quimper) and undertook small jobs in the countryside. In 1851 he became a cowherd on a model farm run by a Professor Olive at Kerfeunteun (now a suburb of Quimper) and then in 1854 a domestic servant on another farm in the same commune. Later that year he joined the army and saw service in the Crimean campaign, arriving shortly before its end: after the cessation of hostilities he took the opportunity to travel to Jerusalem. In 1859–60 he saw service in Italy in Napolean III's intervention in Italian politics: he was then demobbed having served seven years and been made an NCO, and returned to Quimper. But back there he could find no work, so he re-enlisted in the army as an ordinary soldier and spent a further seven years as a soldier, spending time in Algeria and then Mexico where he witnessed the downfall of the Emperor Maximillian. He was compulsorily demobbed in 1868, and returned to Quimper with the intention of setting himself up as a smallholder and apiculturalist in the woods which fill the estuary valley of the river Odet between Quimper and the sea.

This was not to be. His return to his native parish as a bachelor with sizeable savings made him prey to all his relatives, friends and acquaintances. He quickly found himself – in a display of remarkable passivity – being married to the daughter of a widowed farmer at Toulven, south of the town. She was nineteen: and with her Déguignet inherited responsibility for her mother and her younger siblings. He also, at some periods, had his own elderly relatives living with him. The farm, adjacent to the chateau at Toulven, was badly run down and undercapitalized, but Déguignet set about applying modern farming ideas – some acquired in his time at the model farm at Kerfeunteun in the early 1850s – to it, and seems, on his account at least, to have made it into an efficient and profitable dairy farm. He stayed there for 15 years until evicted in circumstances which tell us much about his character.

Déguignet was an autodidact of a kind which has probably entirely disappeared from Europe with the spread of formal, primary education. He was brought up to speak Breton, learnt Latin from a bilingual missal and French from French-speaking students at Professor Olive's farm. When his regiment was told that it was

* A review of Jean-Marie Déguignet, *Memoirs of a Breton peasant*, trans. Linda Asher (Seven Stories Press, 2004), £17.99. The translation is based on the selective edition of Déguignet's writings published in Quimper in 1998 as *Mémoires d'un paysan bas-breton* (Éditions An Here). More recently the unexpurgated Déguignet has appeared: Jean-Marie Déguignet, *Histoire de ma vie. L'intégrale des mémoires d'un paysan bas-breton* (Éditions An Here, 2001). Regrettably the volumes have little editorial apparatus. For another review, which served to attract my attention to Déguignet, David Coward, 'To the manure born', *London Review of Books*, 21 July 2005.

moving to Italy, whilst his fellows were writing their last letters to their families, he tells us he went out and bought an Italian grammar so he could talk to the Italians in their own tongue. He also had some Spanish. When garrisoned in Durango in Mexico, he want to the library there to obtain a history of Mexico. He records his astonishment that the library was full of books in French – still in their crates – but he met and formed a friendship with a professor of languages who was in exile there. A beggar-boy from Brittany, he returned there with his sergeant's stripes, a literate and well-read man with wide interests and a penchant for scientific knowledge. A polymath, when he was turned away from the Quimper public library in the 1890s, he had gone there seeking a book on *astronomy*.

But he also returned to Quimper an atheist and a free-thinker, who entirely rejected the magical and superstitious world in which he had been brought up. A rationalist, he was vehemently anti-clerical. Faced by a marriage he was reluctant to make, he tried to evade it by telling his future landlord that he was 'a republican of the most advanced sort, and in religion a freethinker, a philosophic friend to humankind and … the declared enemy of all gods, who are only imaginary creatures, and priests who are only charlatans and knaves' (p. 293) and by offending the clerics whose permission he needed to marry. He emerged as a locally prominent agitator on behalf of anti-clerical, Republican opinion in his district. It was this which cost him the tenancy of his farm at Toulven. His opinions and politics made it impossible to secure a tenancy elsewhere, and, as his tenancy at Toulven came to an end, he was run over by his own cart and, whilst unable to speak (and so object), he received the extreme unction. During his incapacity his wife bought a bar in Quimper: already an alcoholic, she drank herself to death and Déguignet was left to bring up their children alone. After a short period selling insurance to farmers was brought to an end by his wife's collapse and then death, he secured a licence to sell tobacco in a commune to the west of Quimper, Pluguffan, but after three years there, the landlord of his shop ended his tenancy and other possibilities for renting a shop were also withdrawn under pressure from the parish priest. He left Pluguffan and spent the rest of his life in poverty in and around Quimper, finally being driven to attempt suicide. He seems to have been disowned by his children who, he felt, were persuaded against him by his wife's relatives. His eldest son, after service in the Army, secured a position as a notary's clerk in Pont L'Abbe where he married without inviting his father to the either the marriage or the wedding meal. To Déguignet he was 'an ingrate, a traitor, and a liar'.

Déguignet began his memoirs and gave the first version to a noted Breton folklorist, Anatole Le Braz, who finally, after some delay, secured the publication of the first part of them in a Parisian magazine in 1904: but having lost them to Le Braz, he started again and filled some 43 surviving notebooks and 4,000 pages with his memoirs, but also rants against the church (and Le Braz), and his reflections on philosophy, politics, sociology and even mythology. To the end of his life he remained bitter, denouncing those newly interested in Breton folk law and culture as 'monarchisto-Jesuitico-clerico-Breton regionalists': 'Your goal would be to lock the poor people of Brittany into their primitive old traditions, their barbaric language, their foolish beliefs, so that through your art and your "unique industry" you can go on for ever exploiting them, sucking from them as much juice as possible' (p. 400–01). For Déguignet their sponsored revival of Breton culture was a form of feudal reaction akin to the profusion of 'No Fishing', 'No Hunting', 'No Trespassing' signs he noticed at the end of the century. And, of course, this was another world from which he was excluded. It was the new professional Bretonists who criticized his Breton when he submitted a treatise on apiculture to a competition in 1903. His notebooks, ironically, are written in French.

For all his education and experience of the world, Déguignet could never shake off the fact that at home in Quimper, he remained a peasant. He recounts how, right at the end of his life, he was turned away from the public library in Quimper and given books from the pile of library discards. He was a man of stubborn principle, and he held to his principles even when they went against his own best interests. It is all too easy, from his memoirs, to identify his flaws. Three turning points can be detected. The first was his unintended and unwelcome marriage in 1868 on his return to Brittany: here he seems strangely passive, accepting his fate, as his relatives made the marriage agreement for him. He calls himself 'stoic', but wandered off from the marriage feast and missed his own ceremonial bedding. The second was his eviction from Toulven: having been given notice as a result of his political views, his landlord made overtures which Déguignet recognized were an attempt to save face and offer him the tenancy again. After all, Déguignet mentions in passing that he was paying his rent before his due date; he was plainly a successful improving farmer; but he would not compromise and go and see his landlord to admit error – or receive an admission of error. Principle came before prosperity. Nonetheless, his landlord and his landlord's wife looked after him in the convalescence after his accident. Then, having secured his tobacco licence, he advertized for a housekeeper for himself and his children in a newspaper (one of many fascinating details) and secured a widow

who had money of her own. Her Catholicism helped make Déguignet acceptable in a reactionary commune and she plainly loved him, but misunderstanding gossip in Breton (which she did not speak), thought he was going to marry a local girl when it was another Jean-Marie who was the groom. She packed and left, but then wrote saying that she wanted to return to Déguignet and implying marriage. But he would not take her back, lost his toehold in Pluguffan and spent the rest of his life in increasingly meagre and squalid lodgings in and around Quimper.

The Brittany he was born into and describes was one of terrible poverty, superstition, magic, Catholicism and conservatism. The first part of his autobiography contains much on the 'mental world' of the nineteenth-century Breton, the belief in a parallel world which could not be seen, of goblins and elves which sometimes impinged on the world of people. It was a world in which the Devil could take the form of a black cat which would bring great riches, but unless the cat had been sold on before the end of six months, he would take the souls of whoever possessed him. When in 1868 he told his uncle of his intention to clear land in the Stang-Odet – the woods above the estuary of the River Odet – to make a smallholding, he uncle maintained the old beliefs that the stang was inhabited by ghosts and the Ugly Fairy. It was also a world of grinding poverty in which child beggars had their rounds. Pardons, the annual commemorations of the Breton saints, attracted crowds of beggars who made themselves up to appear disabled. (It was also one in which older women could play with children for their sexual gratification, and he describes the orgies – his word – amongst the farm servants at the model farm at Kerfeunteum.) There is much comment about the casual drunkenness of Breton society. Déguignet became an observer of the peasantry, well aware of its failings and limitations. He is critical for instance, of those who had children without the means to support them. He deplored its fatalism and hopelessness, its conviction that little could be done by people to help themselves.

Déguignet brought nineteenth-century rationalism and knowledge to bear in ways which were simply not understood by those about him. His first steps at Toulven were to clear the farmyard of its filthy pools. He then had the stone trough in the kitchen, into which domestic refuse as well as dirty crockery was thrown and which he recognised as unhygienic, bricked up, a cupboard for the cooking vessels and a tall clock installed in its place. He did this when his wife and mother-in-law were out: they were predictably apoplectic when they returned. He set about draining land. Throughout his farming at Toulven he describes how he had a constant barracking from his mother-in-law, wife and, in the time he was living there with them, his uncle. There is a long anecdote as to how he grew fodder carrots to the sneers of his uncle who, when finally confronted with 'carrots of a length and thickness never seen before in the area', left Déguignet and billeted himself on another nephew. He was also a gardener and made a kitchen garden at Toulven. At Pluguffan he rented some land for a vegetable garden. The nuns who lived opposite bought some of his surplus produce. They had their own vegetable garden but from his account, they had no understanding of the need for manure.

At Toulven, Déguignet built a shed to which he retired for his siesta, to escape the women and, as he says, to read the agricultural paper which gave him some contact with the wider world, its politics and ideas. His was a life full of ifs. Some of the turning points we have already mentioned. But what if he had remained in the army, or on being demobbed, had disappeared into the hubbub of Paris? What if he had remained a prosperous farmer at Toulven? He introduced himself to Le Bras as 'as peasant who has moved about a great deal whereas the others stayed put'. To make sense of his life, Déguignet pointed to the kick in the head which, he believed, had endowed him with an unusual intelligence and yet one suspects that every late nineteenth-century European community had its Déguignet, in their own times politically, socially, culturally and religiously out of step with their contemporaries, infected by science (and ideas of agricultural improvement), modernism, rationalism, and anticlericalism, some of them gained through military service. For those he knew him, Déguignet was almost certainly an insufferable oddball and it cannot be denied that his stubbornness was his enemy: but he lived his life with the confidence that the future belonged to him and his sort. Not that he cared a great deal for the manifestations of the future which he saw about him – as his acid comments on Breton folklorists and the appearance of factory capitalism around Quimper show.

Odd to say, Déguignet may also become one of the best known children of nineteenth-century Quimper, for his story, of a peasant made good (and never forgiven for making good), who was recognizably modern, is of international importance. Read it at home: read it, as this writer did, in a gite only a few miles from Quimper and Kerdévot, whose pardon Déguignet attended as a beggar and again on his demobilization from the army. But do read it, both as a remarkable story, but also as one of the fullest descriptions of nineteenth-century peasant society by who one who was born into it, and spent his life kicking against it. But then, he would not have liked the twentieth any better.

Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

HUGH KEARNEY, *The British Isles. A history of four nations* (CUP, sec. edn, 2006). xix + 362 pp. 40 illus; 16 maps. £45 (hbk); £17.99 (pbk).

Hugh Kearney's book provides a magisterial account of the complex histories and political geographies of the British Isles over the very long term. Many readers of this journal will be aware of Professor Kearney's aim in writing this monograph: 'to examine … the interaction of the various major cultures of the British Isles from the Roman period onwards' (p. 1). In particular, he seeks to show how our understanding of the histories of the various 'cultures' inhabiting the British Isles is augmented if we consider the long-term interactions between them. In this vein, Professor Kearney's book, when first published in 1989, was in the vanguard of a so-called 'new British history', which specifically attempted to view the history of the various peoples of the British Isles as a totality. His book – wide-ranging in its temporal and thematic scope – provided a welcomed corrective to previous studies which had fallen foul of, and indeed reproduced, ways of studying the British past that were grounded in the national historiographies of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. The additional insights provided by Professor Kearney's approach are numerous but one example may serve to illustrate its eminent value. The author's discussion of the history of the British Isles during the late seventeenth century, for instance, questions English historians' efforts to denote the revolution of 1688 as a 'landmark of English liberty' (p. 189), when the future of Protestantism, parliamentary sovereignty, religious toleration and progress was secured within the English state. When viewed in the context of a broader Britain, however, the revolution of 1688 appears as a far more uncertain event. The revolution's religious and geopolitical aims were not secured in Scotland, for example, until the middle of the eighteenth century, following the battle of Culloden. In Ireland, religious tolerance was not granted until well into the nineteenth century and the character of parliamentary sovereignty within Ireland was also of a dubious character. Even in Wales, religious tolerance was denied to a raft of dissenters. Professor Kearney's approach is made clear by this brief example. It is only by considering the British Isles as a whole that we may gain a true insight into the political, economic and cultural developments of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Professor Kearney's book is all the more impressive for the way in which it succeeds in negotiating a series of potential tensions in a deft way. One of the book's strengths is that it does not always consider equally each of the territories of the British Isles but rather interrogates a territory's history only to the extent that it contributes to the main themes being discussed within a particular chapter. For instance, in Chapter Four, which examines the Viking influence on the British Isles during the early medieval period, the discussion of events in Wales is limited, since the sources of evidence pertaining to the Vikings are far more extensive for England and Ireland. Professor Kearney's approach, therefore, is not borne out of a sense of national pedantry, which argues that equal attention should be directed towards the four territories of the British Isles as a matter of principle. Rather, his approach comprises an effort to understand the complex history of the British Isles through an interrogation of the processes and events taking place in its different territories but only to the extent that they contribute to the grander narrative.

At the same time, Professor Kearney has been wary of underplaying the overarching political, economic and cultural significance of England, and especially the south-east of England, within this historical narrative. By emphasizing the contribution made by processes in Scotland, Ireland and Wales to the politics, economics and culture of the British Isles, there might have been a danger of deflecting attention away from the key impetus provided by England for the emerging histories of the British Isles. In this respect, Professor Kearney successfully illustrates the significance of England (and the south-east in particular) as a motor of social, political and economic change, while at the same time trying to position it within the wider geographical framework provided by the British Isles as a whole. Professor Kearney's chapters on the early modern period, for instance, show how the south-east of England's, and especially

London's, economic and subsequent political dominance possessed considerable implications for the economic and agricultural practices of the north of England and the remaining territories of the British Isles. His skill, in this regard, has been to discuss the key innovations that took place in England – in numerous contexts – and to show how these shaped, and were shaped by, equally fundamental developments in other parts of the British Isles. And yet, Professor Kearney's story is not solely concerned with the interactions between the different cultures contained within the British Isles. Presaging debates concerning the significance of globalization and extra-territorial influences, which have become commonplace within the world of academia since 1989, the author is to be commended for discussing the important connections between Britain and a series of broader political geographies. Attention has already been drawn to the discussion of the Viking influence on British history in Chapter Four. Other chapters, in equal measure, demonstrate the links between developments in different parts of the British Isles and other far-flung places. The connections between Norman political and economic geographies within the British Isles, for instance, is placed within a broader European context in Chapters Five and Six, while the chapters dealing with the early modern period position Britain within the broader context of an English empire that extended into the New World. Taken together, such examples demonstrate Professor Kearney's remarkable sensitivity to the complex political geographies – both within and outwith the British Isles – that have contributed to British history over the long term.

Finally, I must congratulate Professor Kearney on his ability to present a thoroughly engaging 'big-picture history'. The danger with such 'big-picture history', of course, is that it becomes a superficial and rather anodyne treatment of key events with little time or space to discuss the more specific stories and occurrences that make history interesting. In this respect, Professor Kearney has been able to weave detailed stories about the struggles of a range of different people – from kings down to the more lowly businessman – into a far grander narrative concerning the major political, economic and cultural developments that have affected the British Isles. *The British Isles*, in this regard, succeeds in promoting highly-peopled versions of the past, which make the grander story that is being recounted all the more compelling.

While the above comments signal the impressive scope and quality of the book, I still have some slight criticisms. First of all, I would have liked to have seen the revisions provided in the second edition – revisions deriving from seventeen years of academic scholarship since the publication of the first edition – incorporated into the text in a more meaningful way. At present, the author reflects on these more recent contributions in discrete postscripts, which are to be found at the end of each chapter. While there is some effort to relate the themes discussed in each chapter to the findings of more recent academic studies, I would have appreciated a more concerted effort on the author's part to weave these more recent studies into his own narrative. The second criticism revolves around the book's temporal coverage, which is rather uneven. The chapters discussing the Roman past and the twentieth-century history of the British Isles are brief, especially when compared with the chapters focusing on the medieval and early modern periods. The relative brevity of the earlier chapters, admittedly, may be explained by the paucity of evidence concerning the Celtic and Roman past within the British Isles but the chapters that deal with twentieth-century history are, in my mind, overly brief. There was considerable scope to extend the discussion of this period.

Viewed as a whole, these are minor criticisms. I very much enjoyed reading the book and the second edition is to be welcomed. The success of the first edition is reflected in the way in which it has inspired a large number of other historians to consider the connections between the different cultures contained within the British Isles. I am confident that the publication of the second edition of *The British Isles* will serve to reinforce the value of such an academic endeavour.

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BRUCE M. S. CAMPBELL and KEN BARTLEY, *England on the eve of the Black Death. An atlas of lay lordship, land and wealth, 1300–49* (Manchester UP, 2006). xxiii + 382 pp. 26 tables; 42 graphs; 155 maps. £120.

This book represents a great achievement after years of preparation, and it offers opportunities for new work for decades to come. The first labour that made it possible was performed by officials of the English state, who compiled the original 9292 Inquisitions Post Mortem between 1300 and 1349. They summoned juries, questioned them, and recorded information about the lands, rents and other assets of royal tenants who had recently died. Campbell chose this half-century sample of IPMs for analysis because the surveys were more informative and reliable at this time, and especially in the years 1323–41. They provide a panorama of the English countryside before the Black Death, and during the first phases of the 'crisis of the fourteenth century'. The second prodigious task was performed by Campbell and Bartley, and their many collaborators, who transcribed the IPMs, added

other sources such as the lay subsidies of 1327–34, and subjected them to rigorous analysis. This generated numerous tables, and a Geographical Information System enabled the production of more than 150 maps. All of this was accompanied by many practical problems, as new techniques were being developed. The third and final major effort fell to the Manchester University Press, whose input is presumably reflected in the price. For this modest sum we should be grateful, as the volumes would be sold at more than £2000 each if the full cost of the research and analysis was to be covered.

The maps and the commentary on their contents cover such subjects as the administration of the Inquisitions, regional variety in landholding units, the landed estates, land use and agriculture on the demesnes, land values, tenants and rents, court revenues, mills and markets. The last chapter deals with the evidence of the lay subsidies. Maps appear at a number of sizes and use a variety of cartographic methods. They present the information sometimes as relatively simple densities, but also record complex ratios which indicate relationships between variables, such as the ratio of the value of free rents to the value of customary rents. Thirty are reproduced in colour. What new insights emerge from this picture of England on the eve of its great medieval disaster? Some of the distributions are familiar, either because they echo and reinforce maps already published in Campbell's *English Seigniorial Agriculture* (2000), or because they confirm observations made by other researchers, such as Kosminsky's findings about the prevalence of small, irregular and unconventional manors. Most of the maps are entirely new, and give us a series of valuable insights into the period. No-one has previously plotted the distribution of the conventional units of landholding, virgates and bovates, for example, nor have two-field and three-field systems been mapped over the whole country. They lead us to see farming systems in a new light, so that a map of common rights reveals (by their absence in the county) the especially individualistic agriculture of Kent. We will pore over the maps indicating the local variations in arable and pasture, and customary and free rents, or the varied land values and distribution of taxable wealth. The overall impression is of an agrarian world less dominated by communal institutions, and less thoroughly manorialized, than is conventionally supposed. There is new evidence for the fourteenth-century crisis, with impressive maps of demesnes suffering from infertile soils, lack of cultivation, or other problems and disadvantages, including Scots raids. The valuations put on land show a long-term decline from 1280 until the 1340s. The lay subsidies before their fossilization in 1334 provide a figure of 276,300 tax payers, with unknown numbers of those who evaded or were exempted, to fuel further arguments about the pre-plague population total.

We must all be grateful to Campbell and Bartley for making this material available to scholars, and for opening up yet further debate about the productive capacity of farming, the effectiveness of agricultural systems, regional variations in the rural economy, and the timing and character of the crisis. This book is absolutely scrupulous in defining the nature of the sources and their limitations. IPM extents were once regarded as very unreliable sources; and now they have been cautiously rehabilitated, but their many imperfections are acknowledged. We are told clearly that the IPMs provide a sample, based on the estates and manors of a section of the secular aristocracy. Nonetheless one fears misunderstandings arising from careless use of the maps, as not everyone will notice that the maps of markets or boroughs, for example, are telling us about the institutions mentioned in the IPMs over 50 years. Boroughs and markets on lay estates for which there is no IPM, and of course those on royal and church lands, do not appear.

The commentary is a useful indication of the conclusions that can be drawn from the maps, but there is only enough space to provide pointers of the significance of the evidence and its possible meanings. Dozens of future studies should be able to draw on this material. The authors, researchers and publishers have completed an important and authoritative piece of research, but they have also put into our hands a stimulating aid for new ventures.

CHRISTOPHER DYER
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C. M. WOOLGAR, D. SERJEANTSON and T. WALDRON (eds), *Food in medieval England. Diet and nutrition* (OUP, 2006). xvi + 347 pp. 25 tables; 19 illus; 39 figs. £55.

No previous work of scholarship has accomplished the scale, coverage, and depth this book devotes to what the medieval English ate. The editors set for it two ambitious goals: to synthesize rich, new, and widely-scattered information about human diet and nutrition in England during the sixth through sixteenth centuries; and to clarify and encourage interaction between methodological approaches of archaeology and history. Much of what here serves these purposes was cooked up during a decade's regular gatherings of the Diet Group at Somerville College, Oxford. The authors' shared experience and mutual criticism results in a common tone and focus rarely found in collective volumes such as this.

Food in medieval England presents nineteen chapters gathered into two thematic units with introductory and

concluding chapters by the editors. They are joined by ten more co- or contributing authors, many of them well known to medievalists, agricultural historians, and archaeologists.

Eleven chapters (Two to Twelve) and about two-thirds of the book survey the important classes of foodstuffs: plant materials from field and garden; domestic livestock; fish; wild and domestic birds; the hunt ('venery') and its take ('venison'). Individually- or co-authored chapters sometimes blend and sometimes distinguish between verbal and material evidence (to employ terms which may better differentiate objects of particular study as historians and archaeologists together engage in a common effort to understand the past). Critical criteria for inferring past conditions and human behaviour from recovered plant remains (archaeobotany) and animal parts (archaeozoology) are especially well established. In certain situations disciplinary conclusions coincide, in others they seem to convey different slices of past human experience. As here repeatedly demonstrated, written records of production and recovered traces of consumption must be considered together. All contributors attend closely both to social and cultural differences among contemporary English eaters and to changes visible over time. Merely to sample the rich buffet: C. C. Dyer decisively establishes from widely scattered but abundant data what medieval England's many gardens offered for both elite and common diets; D. Serjeantson judiciously assesses the scope of eleventh-century increases in consumption of marine fishes; D. J. Stone and J. Birrell respectively show surprisingly deep social strata eating more wild birds and some cuts of venison during the period after the Black Death.

The last third of the book offers six topical studies on aspects of diet and nutrition. Some of these present uniquely important summaries of the current state of knowledge. C. M. Woolgar's essay on collective dining customs and B. F. Harvey's on monastic pittances together weaken and nuance the stereotype of exclusively piscivorous monks. Others treat the essential ingredient of natural and cultural seasonality in human dietary regimes and the demographic consequences of known dietary conditions and changes. These essays should go straight to the table set for advanced student seminars in agrarian, economic, and social history.

Two items stun the reader with methods hitherto unfamiliar to medievalists, if not to scholars working on earlier periods. Stable chemical isotopes, trace elements, and pathologies measured in human skeletal remains pose striking new interpretative hypotheses. For example, the ratios of carbon–12 to carbon–13 and of nitrogen–15 to nitrogen–14 are well-known to differ consistently between such broad categories as foods of terrestrial and of aquatic origin or from plant or animal sources; this ratio is then preserved in the bone protein of humans who habitually consume such foods. Urban skeletons with stable isotope ratios showing more consumption of animals and animal products than was the case for rural people neatly coincide with the evidence of food remains and the written record. But G. Müldner and M. P. Richards report an unusual result from pilot isotopic analysis of large bone samples taken at three socially distinctive late medieval sites in northern England: anomalous ratios there detected argue for unexpectedly heavy eating of *either* omnivorous pigs *or* freshwater fishes. Neither dining habit would be suggested from other sorts of data. New methods open up whole new areas for inquiry.

By and large *Food in medieval England* achieves its editors' goal, offering a diverse, yet smooth and thorough reappraisal of the evidence regarding what medieval English people ate and their consequent dietary conditions. Agricultural historians narrowly conceived will want closely to examine the chapters on food products of domestic plant and animal origin, but anyone interested in broader relations among human social groups and between those people and their natural environment will be rewarded and inspired by the whole collection. The editors and their collaborators earn the highest praise and thanks for serving us this rich banquet. As intended, it stimulates our appetites for extended research efforts in Britain and serious emulation on the other side of the Channel.

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SIMON TOWNLEY (ed.), *The Victoria history of the counties of England. A history of the county of Oxford*, XV, *Carterton, Minster Lovell and environs, Bampton hundred part three* (Boydell and Brewer for the Institute of Historical Research, 2006). xiv + 280 pp. 84 figs. £95.

The eight largely rural parishes covered in this latest volume of the *VCH Oxfordshire* have few distinctive features. If they are known at all to the wider world, it will be because they take in the UK's largest RAF base at Brize Norton, the much visited ruins of William Lovel's great house at Minster Lovell, the childhood home of the Mitford sisters at Asthall, and, for the *cognoscenti*, the birthplace of Maria Edgeworth at Black Bourton. Lying mainly between the Thames and the Windrush, to the west and south-west of the town of Witney (the subject of the previous volume), most were originally part of the royal vill and minster *paruchia* of Bampton. The break-up of this great pre-Conquest estate, virtually complete by 1066, began a longer process of fragmentation which

saw the growth of independent parishes from Bampton's chapelries, the evolution of manors from small dependent settlements, and then, in the late medieval and early modern periods, the dispersal of manorial lands among freeholders, yeomen farmers and resident gentry. All eight were originally open-field parishes, whose enclosure between about 1770 and 1840 consolidated scattered holdings into fairly large farms, so partially reversing the earlier process of disintegration. To judge by the way in which parishes were apparently laid out in 'strip' fashion, giving access to different types of farmland, from the downs of the north to the riverine pastures and meadows of the south, some guiding hand, perhaps a communal one, lay behind their early formation. Mixed terrain must have facilitated the mixed arable-based farming which was (and is) characteristic of the region: wheat and barley, sheep and cattle, varied at different times and in different places with pigs, poultry, bees, turnips, sainfoin and mustard. The religious history of the different villages followed a broadly similar pattern of common experience. Livings were often held by distant corporations, and in the earliest days by Norman monastic houses, clerical non-residence was common until the nineteenth century, and dissent latterly exercised a strong attraction, particularly for the farm labourers, whose Primitive Methodism was often seen as a threat by the parish clergy. The records of church attendance suggest a generally low level of enthusiasm for the established church, though this was often effectively countered by a religious revival inspired by some particularly energetic and reformist parish priests in the mid to late nineteenth century. It usually proved short-lived. If these historical developments followed a generally similar course throughout the *pays*, so too have developments in more modern times. The closure of chapels and shops and their conversion into private houses, the decline and often the disappearance of voluntary organizations, the replacement of the tradesmen, craftsmen and retailers who once stood at the centre of village life by commuters, weekenders and the retired, and the shrinking opportunities for rural employment: these changes, whether regarded as melancholy, progressive or merely inevitable, typify the recent history not only of a few west Oxfordshire villages but also of much of rural England. In 1871 Ringwood Farm, at 600 acres the largest farm in Asthall, employed thirty people. In 2000, now much larger at 900 acres, it employed two.

In keeping with most recent volumes of the *VCH*, this one covers only a small area; but it does so with exemplary thoroughness and skill. To read it from cover to cover, which only a reviewer is likely to want to do, is in some ways a mind-numbing experience, so dense is the factual content and so unavoidably lacking in thesis or argument is most of the prose. Yet to do so reveals not only some of the general patterns and trends outlined above, but also the immense labour of productive research lying behind even the most straightforward parish history. The unpublished documents used in this volume are drawn from the muniment rooms of Eton and the Oxford colleges, from those of Arundel Castle and Longleat, and from many other repositories. Breaking with the old *VCH* tradition, but like its immediate predecessors, it contains full and valuable descriptions of buildings, and for one parish, Kencot, it follows a newly-adopted structure by including a discrete section on social history: a helpful innovation which makes possible what is in effect an historical essay, going beyond the usual sequence of facts to deal with such large issues as social structure and immigration. One conspicuous omission, common to other volumes too, is worth noting. Amid all the information provided here, nothing at all is said about village losses in the two world wars, though these must often have had a traumatic effect on farming, labour supplies, and many other aspects of village life. The names and numbers of the dead could easily have been gleaned from war memorials and it is odd that they should have been overlooked. Much can slip between the standardized and regimenting sub-headings which the *VCH* format imposes on each parish history. But in all other respects the series goes from strength to strength.

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JOHN HARROP, PAUL BOOTH and SYLVIA HARROP (eds), *Extent of the lordship of Longdendale, 1360* (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 140, 2005). lii + 116 pp. 14 plates. £25 to non-members from Dr Fiona Pogson, Department of History, Hope University College, Stand Park Road, Liverpool L16 9JD.

Longdendale is the eastern and higher part of the Etherow Valley. It rises due east of the Manchester urban complex and runs up into the Peak District National Park. Today it is notable for a string of reservoirs that supply Manchester. In this edition, 14 photographs generously illustrate the varying character of the landscape, from old arable and rolling park land up to open moor. In the fourteenth century Longdendale constituted a lordship centred on Tintwistle, where there was a small borough (not recorded in Beresford and Finberg, but well attested in the records printed here). The lordship was adjacent to the heavily forested lordship of Macclesfield, and one membrane of the Longdendale extents lists the foresters of Macclesfield even though the two lordships were separately administered. In the 1360s Longdendale was in the hands of the Black Prince, who

leased it out. Its administrators were responsible for compiling a series of extents, one in about 1357, of which nothing survives, a second in 1360, and a third a few years later. None of these survives in its final form, but a file of documents in The National Archives (SC 11/897) contains advanced drafts of the 1360 extent and its successor. The editors have printed these with a translation, and supply a detailed introduction describing the record and the circumstances of its composition. An appendix contains a summary of the tenancies, which cross-references the different drafts, and a prosopographical index that draws together available information about the 124 people they mention. There are also separate indexes of persons, places and subject. Although the record is a complex one, the editors have done everything in their power to make it intelligible and usable.

There were ten different settlements belonging to the lordship, but because most of them were subinfeudated as manors or parts of manors it is not possible to calculate the total number of households. The lordship rendered a total sum of £35–40 a year, of which about £16 13*s*. 4*d*. was from Tintwistle, its mill and the stallage. A further £12 was apparently from pasture rents. Most of the settlements owed only a few shillings. Though these were not for the most part commercial rents, their low valuation, together with the environmental characteristics of Longdendale, suggest that this was a lightly populated region. Its agriculture probably combined extensive pastoral farming with oats and barley cultivation. Tenants owing harvesting services at Arnfield, in the days before these had been commuted for cash payments, had received a daily meal of bread, butter and milk, and those owing ploughing services had expected to receive for each plough a gallon of ale, six herrings and six oatcakes (*vj kakes avene*). The editors surmise that the last of the three extents recorded here, coming so closely behind that of 1360, was occasioned by the plague epidemic of 1361–2. Even before then there had been depopulation; two burgage tenements in Tintwistle, as well as a couple of other properties there, are described as decayed in 1360, and the editors cross-reference to decays of rent recorded in contemporary account rolls from the lordship. So many of our records come from the wealthier and heavily populated parts of Britain, that it is particularly pleasing to have material in print from a more outlying estate such as this one. It would be interesting to know whether in the longer term Longdendale suffered exceptionally badly from depopulation as a result of its upland terrain, or whether its inhabitants had the resources and enterprise to defy the implications of their 'marginal' location.

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P. S. BARNWELL and MALCOLM AIRS (eds), *Houses and the hearth tax: the later Stuart house and society* (Council for British Archaeology, Research Report 150, 2006). xiv + 202 pp. 22 tables; 108 illus. £17.50.

The value of the hearth tax returns to family historians is now well attested, but it is really only since the mid-1980s that their potential significance for the history of houses has been recognized. This book arose out of a conference which brought together historians, archaeologists and architectural experts to pool their understanding of the documents and the surviving structures and so add to the greater body of knowledge. Some of the contributors look primarily at the problems of using the data (Parkinson, Arkell) but the central thrust of the book is to look at regional housing differences using the hearth tax returns. The regional coverage is mixed – Huntingdonshire and Warwickshire represent 'The Midlands', and, of the counties west of the Pennines, only Westmorland receives any attention. However, the point of the conference and now the thirteen regional contributions to this book was not to achieve blanket coverage, but to identify and reflect regional variation as a platform for work on the hearth tax returns in the future.

Judged from this perspective, the findings are not perhaps as path breaking as the conference convenors may have hoped. Not surprisingly, it turns out that the greater the number of hearths, the wealthier the household, but at the same time, the number of hearths was dictated among the wealthier members of society by individual preference in relation to the use of wealth. Consequently, as we have known for well over twenty years, 'the occupiers of one-hearth houses ranged from the poor to the moderately prosperous' (p. 177). We are faced in other words with the same problem that impacts on our modern society, of cash-starved (mainly elderly) people who happen for one reason or another to live in large (multi-hearthed in seventeenth-century terminology) houses. Nor is it clear where the essays take us next. Several of the authors use probate inventories, which is a standard way of assessing the relationship between house size and wealth, but the overall conclusion is that such linkages have to be tested carefully and used sparingly. Far better is the evidence of the taxed houses today, but the survival rate varies regionally, and the quality and build of the original properties was affected by the relative abundance or shortage of good building materials.

As far as rural historians are concerned, there is some evidence of differences in numbers of hearths between predominantly arable economies in the south-east, and pastoral economies, perhaps because arable farming had greater labour requirements. Possibly also the storage of grain required different heating arrangements from cheese and meat, where these were kept within the

household. But the hearth tax evidence is almost certainly less helpful in relation to households than the material which has been derived from probate inventories over the past forty years. If these conclusions seem rather nebulous, they should not detract from the point of the conference, which was to air the issues in an academic forum. Like the frustratingly voluminous but relatively limited land tax assessments at the end of the eighteenth century, the hearth tax returns may raise our hopes simply because they are so numerous, only to dash them because the evidence is less susceptible to manipulation than we might hope. The hearth tax returns will always be useful to family historians, but what this conference demonstrated is that they may never be quite as useful in the study of houses as the existence of so much data on the number of hearths would lead us to anticipate.

Be that as it may, the regional studies tell us a good deal about houses in late seventeenth-century England, and in themselves make a significant contribution to our understanding of what survives, and what surviving structures tell us about the communities in which they were located. If the hopes of the conferees were only partially fulfilled, we can at least thank the organisers for sponsoring a number of short, well-illustrated regional studies, which are themselves interesting discussions of vernacular architecture in the late seventeenth century. Perhaps the book's subtitle should have been given greater prominence.

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HEATHER M. BEAUMONT with members of the Hebden History Group, *Pointers to the past: the historical landscape of Hebden township, upper Wharfedale* (Yorkshire Archeological Society, Occasional Papers 5, 2006). vii + 57 pp. 56 figs. £12 incl. p. & p. from YAS, Claremont, 23 Clarendon Road, Leeds LS2 9NZ.

Pointers to the past forms part of the YAS Occasional Papers series and, as such, does not disappoint in terms of depth of research and detailed analysis. The paper examines the development of the man-made landscape in the small township of Hebden in the north Yorkshire Pennine dales. The monograph is one of a growing number of studies undertaken by local groups that look beyond their immediate locality in order to place their findings in a wider context.

The general and specific introductions establish with clarity the rationale for the study and the methodology adopted. The survey area is divided naturally into four divisions by a north/south beck which is conveniently bisected by a west/east roadway. The stated aim of the study is to record landscape details and, in particular, different types of stone wall design in order to identify earlier patterns of landscape development especially those which predate the limited written evidence. The resultant identification of five types of field divisions (largely stone walls) has enabled the group to establish a rough chronology of the development of the township's field system. With one exception, each type is associated with a different period, albeit with some overlap, in the development of the local landscape: medieval (boulder walls, relic hedgerows and trees); sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (external boundary walls); 1690 to 1770s (irregular walls); and the period culminating in the enclosure act of 1857 which enabled the enclosure of 2660 acres of moorland (parliamentary enclosure walls). The remaining group is the 'regular wall' type of which there were relatively few and which may have been constructed before or after the 1857 enclosure act. As part of their methodology, the study group also established chronology by wall to wall abutments. From their findings the researchers were able to identify a four-field system of primary enclosure from the medieval period with one field in each of the four divisions of the study area.

Once all the field-division remains had been identified and plotted, the study group examined other features and events that influenced the development of the agricultural system such as throughways and other routes, the establishment of a manor with a toft compartment, the role of the outlying hamlet in the northern divisions, and the very limited more recent industrial development. The monograph details the relationship of throughways with the primary enclosures and highlights the importance to the township of protecting its agricultural assets from the transit of animal traffic through the area particularly during the twice-annual transhumance activity.

Heather Beaumont emphasizes that due to the paucity of written evidence, interpretation of the landscape has required the time-honoured approach of historical imagination and conjecture based on the fieldwork findings. She cites other authorities in legitimizing this but notes that such assumptions can only provide pointers to the past. This approach is used in an interesting discussion of the dating and role of the peripheral settlement. Following findings in other northern studies, it is suggested that this type of settlement may have predated the manorial system. However, although the influence of the manor was undoubtedly strong within the township during the medieval period, it is possible that the outlying hamlet was not totally under manorial constraint. Rather it had a symbiotic relationship as it managed the two northern primary enclosures for the benefit of the whole township community.

The researchers have made good use of such written evidence as is available, marrying it with the field

evidence to provide valuable clues to the development of land management in the township, particularly as it moved from manorial to freeholder ownership. Place-name evidence is also used. For example, it is suggested that in one of the southern divisions called Sedber, a name of Norse derivation, a surviving earthwork may be the site of a pre-manorial settlement. This conclusion is further supported by indications that the manorial primary enclosures could have been a development of earlier enclosures.

The essay is presented in A4 format with the support of numerous maps, diagrams and photographs. It is well furnished with footnotes, bibliography and an index. Inevitably, the detailed discussion of stonewall types and their locations means that the text in part is dense and requires much page jumping between the figures and the relevant text.

Overall, while the findings tend to mirror the experience elsewhere, this detailed analysis of Hebden township provides another case study to add to the growing body of evidence drawn from the interpretation of the landscape and as such is of benefit for professional historian and the interested amateur alike.

CHRISTINE S. HALLAS
Trinity & All Saints, Leeds

ALYSHA LEVENE, THOMAS NUTT and SAMANTHA WILLIAMS (eds), *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700–1920* (Palgrave, 2005). xv + 249 pp. 32 tables; 7 figs. £50.

The subject of illegitimacy has become something of a historiographical relic. Since the work of the late and great Peter Laslett, historical demographers and local historians (of varying ability) have enjoyed proprietorial rights, but the subject has always begged closer textual analysis. If history has undergone a linguistic turn, this shift from the social to the cultural has had relatively little effect on the historians of Britain's bastards. This is not to minimize the importance of demography. It is rather to observe that it is still possible to read whole articles or books on illegitimacy without being any better informed about the sexual cultures that produced the birth of children outside of marriage. It is a history of sex without much sex.

Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700–1920 demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of this historiography – with, it has to be said, one added shortcoming. For histories of illegitimacy are also somewhat fragmented – or, as the editors of the book under review would have it, 'diverse' in their approach. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with this, but it does not make for thematically coherent edited collections. Levene and her co-editors valiantly struggle (Chapter 1) to impose some retrospective order on their contributors' essays, with reference to the emergence of 'many common historical themes' (deviancy, gender, power). But truly there are no common themes.

It is still a valuable volume. As the editors point out, *Illegitimacy* demonstrates collective innovation and range in its use of sources and methodologies: popular ballads (Chapter 2), London Foundling Hospital records (Chapters 3 and 6), settlement and bastardy examination books (Chapter 4), parish record linkage and pauper letters (Chapter 5), unmarried mothers' petitions (Chapter 6), petty sessions records (Chapter 7), Irish Catholic parish registers (Chapter 8), linked Scottish civil register and census data (Chapter 9), and Medical Officer of Health (MOH) notifications. The results vary in their import. The chapter on ballads is more about courtship than illegitimacy: its most noticeable feature is popular literature's relative silence on the very topic that the essay is supposed to deal with. Chapter 3, on the mortality of illegitimate foundlings, though cleverly conceived and executed, is too inconclusive about infant feeding arrangements and based on such a small sample that it is unlikely to have wider application. Chapter 8, which bizarrely constructs data only to demolish it, seems to demonstrate the unreliability rather than the usefulness of the Catholic parish registers. Chapter 5, although one of the most innovative in the collection, remains preoccupied with Laslett's bastardy-prone sub-society thesis, even when it goes against the grain of other chapters in the collection, and tends to assume rather than closely interrogate the usefulness of the concept.

Thus *Illegitimacy* is the bastard child of its own historiography. It contains excellent historical demography: John Black's nicely crafted analysis of the socio-economic typicality of the fathers of London illegitimates (Chapter 4); Andrew Blaikie, Eilidh Garrett, and Ros Davies's groundbreaking reconstruction of the community context of Scottish illegitimacy (Chapter 9); and Alice Reid's fascinating exploration of the mortality of illegitimate children in Derbyshire at the end of the First World War (Chapter 10). But there is relative little evidence of the impact of the new cultural history. The exception is Samantha Williams's treatment of unmarried mothers' petitions to the London Foundling Hospital that at least touches on narratives of seduction and the manner in which they may have impacted on these women's testaments (Chapter 6). One chapter is hardly enough to change the overall complexion of the volume.

Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700–1920 does not shift any historical parameters. We learn more about migration and mortality than sexual morality. Instead of wasting any more print on Laslett's 'bastardy-prone sub society' – a relic if ever there was one – it would make sense in the future to deal with the meanings and languages of

illegitimacy, with official and unofficial definitions, and with textual silences as well as condemnations.

BARRY REAY
University of Auckland

HERBERT HOPE LOCKWOOD, *Tithe and other records of Essex and Barking* (Essex Record Office, 2006). 158 pp. Illus. £9.99.

The main purpose of this book is to describe the unusually full tithe records of the old parish of Barking, particularly those predating the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836. With 12,307 acres until 1830, Barking was one of the largest parishes in the county. Other Essex tithe records are also discussed; notably those for Ilford, also a large parish.

The volume begins with a chapter discussing the origins of tithe and the historical evolution of tithing practices and customs up to 1836. The author notes the transition from collection in kind to collection in cash by the late middle ages, and early instances, as at Newport in 1704, of commutation of small tithes for an agreed local rate. The documentary record is the subject of Chapter Two. Informal tithe accounts were kept by incumbents in volumes which sometimes became general account books, containing references to Easter offerings, glebe accounts or occasional household expenses. Often the arrival of a new incumbent or a dispute would prompt a full farm-by-farm survey of tithe obligations, such as that undertaken at Barking by Isaac Johnson of Woodbridge in 1805. 'Tithe causes', initiated by incumbents or lay impropriators against recalcitrant tithe payers, left their own paper trail as cases were pursued through the courts. There were 484 tithe suits in the ecclesiastical court of the Archdeaconry of Essex between 1571 and 1609 alone.

Chapter Three traces the origin and evolution of the arrangements under which the tithes of Barking Abbey were farmed, by the Abbey itself from the later fifteenth century and by the Crown after the Dissolution. The activities of Thomas Cartwright, vicar of Barking from 1660 to 1688–9, are the subject of Chapter Four. An assiduous accumulator of ecclesiastical preferments, culminating in his elevation to the see of Chester in 1686, Cartwright was equally dedicated to improving his income from the Barking tithes. He launched twelve tithe cases in the Court of Arches soon after acquiring the Barking living, and commissioned two surveys of the parish, one in collusion with the lord of the manor.

Chapter Five shows how tithe surveys continued under some of the eighteenth-century incumbents. They included 'Mr Fiddes Green Book', compiled in 1727–8, and another survey, commissioned by the Revd William Stephen, which appears to date from 1750, though it relies to some extent on one of the surveys made during Cartwright's time. Christopher Musgrave, appointed in 1762, was soon active in determining what was rightfully his. His first account, dating from 1763, is a new and complete schedule of liabilities to vicarial tithe, and suggests increased income from root crops and garden produce.

Chapters Six and Seven treat documents more tangential to the Barking tithes but useful complements to their study. The archives of Ilford Hospital, which include surveys of lands in Barking earlier than those found in any other source, are touched on in Chapter Six, while Chapter Seven considers the usefulness of hearth tax lists, rate books, parish registers, vestry minutes, wills, manor court records and large-scale Ordnance Survey maps when interpreting the Barking tithe documents. A final chapter outlines the research potential of the unusually large number of documents relating to the tithes of Barking, and an appendix gives useful summary information about the sources.

NESTA EVANS
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ANNE ORDE (ed.), *Matthew and George Culley. Farming letters, 1798–1804* (Boydell Press / Surtees Society, 210, 2006). xliv + 625 pp. 1 illus; 2 maps. £50.

Matthew Culley (1731–1804) and his brother George (1735–1813), two substantial farmers in north Northumberland, have received some attention from agricultural historians such as Stuart Macdonald. Recently, Anne Orde edited and published their travel journals and letters from 1765 to 1798 (OUP, 2002). She has continued her excellent work on their extensive family deposit in the Northumberland Record Office with the editing of another tranche of their papers. This volume brings together 'the only substantial quantity of outgoing letters from the two Culleys' (p. xv): the letters from Matthew and George to John Welch, their steward at Denton, the family property in County Durham, from 1798 to 1804. In her introduction, Orde notes that the letters were kept by Welch who 'apparently later returned them to George or his son, so that they have descended in the Culley papers' (p. xxiii).

The collection comprises some 242 letters. Most were written by George, the better known of the two brothers. Matthew also sometimes added comments at the end of George's letters before they were sent to Welch. George's son, Matthew junior, who worked with his father, also contributed occasionally.

Orde describes George as an 'assiduous letter-writer' (p. xxix). George repeatedly stresses the importance of letter writing for the dissemination of information: 'I keep scolding and requesting you to write often, and

I hope in time to be able to convince you of the importance of communication by letter' (p. 75). Information exchange by letter is crucial to their business: 'What does 5£ postage signify between you and us compared to advantages gained by early intelligence?' (p. 76). He frequently lectures Welch that he was not writing often enough. He provides guidance on methodology: 'when you send away one, begin another letter to fill up as things occur' (p. 16). He also scolds him for omitting to write about things on which he had requested information.

The letters had a range of functions. Although they were written primarily to give Welch instructions, advice, information about markets and to consult with him, they also provided a wide range of information on other matters. Their main themes are agriculture and rural affairs; the state of the weather (a significant topic of discussion); the agricultural operations being undertaken by the Culleys and other farmers; the whereabouts of the two brothers, especially when they were away from home on business; news about people in the agricultural community; and the views of other farmers who corresponded with the Culleys.

A central topic is the state of agricultural markets, especially those for livestock and corn. George provides a wide range of detailed advice to Welch about how to maximize market returns on livestock by selling at opportune times ('in critical times, it is always wise to sell at these great prices' p. 140). Acutely aware of factors influencing market trends locally, regionally and nationally, George advises where the best returns are likely to be found.

The letters also refer in great detail to many aspects of livestock husbandry. They outline the changes in livestock in southern Scotland in the previous thirty years and describe the increasing popularity of the Dishley (New Leicester) breed of sheep. They show concern for animal welfare. George notes the relationship between the wellbeing of animals and stock quality, observing, for example, that deterioration results from their being driven aggressively or in unsuitable weather conditions.

The letters are a treasure trove of detailed information relating to the management of the Culleys' farming enterprises between 1798 and 1804, and to other aspects of agriculture – especially livestock and pastoral farming – over a much wider area of England and south-east Scotland. They provide angles that it would be difficult to find in other sources. For example, they record speculations, especially about price trends in various agricultural markets, and the impact (or likely impact) of external events on agriculture. They are especially important in uncovering the rationale behind the day-to-day activities of a very successful farming business.

The editor's excellent introductory essay gives context to the letters, which are judiciously edited, with helpful footnotes which clarify technical and dialect terms, expand on dates of fairs and markets, supply biographical information, and provide other explanatory elaborations. A note on editorial method is also given. In addition, the volume contains George Culley's 'An account of the names of domestic animals at different ages', which is invaluable for understanding the large number of technical terms for livestock that appear throughout the letters (pp. xxxxii–xxxxiii). The detailed index is especially welcomed: it allows scattered information to become easily accessible to readers who wish to examine a particular subject area.

The editor should be congratulated for undertaking this work and making this valuable collection of letters more widely accessible. This is an important collection which deserves to be widely known and examined in great detail. It is a 'must' for all agricultural historians interested in the period and has much to recommend it to scholars from other disciplines.

HEATHER HOLMES
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JAMES P. HUZEL, *The popularization of Malthus in early nineteenth-century England. Martineau, Cobbett and the pauper press* (Ashgate, 2006). xv + 266 pp. 6 illus. £55.

We either love him or hate him, but rarely do we ignore him. More than any other of his contemporary or near-contemporary political economists, Malthus has aroused emotions both in his lifetime and subsequently. The free market ways of Adam Smith of course attract political supporters and detractors on both sides of the political divide. Ricardo and Ricardian thought perhaps enjoys less the political and more the intellectual attention. Rent theory, whether Ricardian or not, is a theoretical approach to the contractual interactions between peoples that is concluded every day of their working lives. Malthusianism is altogether more brutal. How often is it depicted with the grim reaper in the background ready to scythe down peoples? Our news broadcasts almost daily remind us that the three great Malthusian people purges of the past – war, pestilence, and famine – live on in the twenty-first century. Yes it is as much a modern story of pessimism as it is historical, and it starkly divides the haves from the have-nots in this world, both within societies, but also between societies. The 'Live Aid', 'Band Aid', 'Africa Aid' conscience of western society has reached almost industrial proportions.

War, pestilence and famine were the positive checks on population growth, Malthus also had much to say on the preventive check of sexual restraint, and that of

course is also a major debating point in modern society, not only in sub-Saharan Africa but also in modern British society with the teenage pregnancy explosion of recent times. Malthus linked the issue of sexual restraint directly to the operation of the contemporary Poor Law. He observed that it worked against his preventive check because it encouraged people to entertain early marriage and to multiply household size in the sure knowledge that a social safety net was in place. As he put it, with the encouragement of parish relief, 'men are thus allured to marry with little or no prospect of being able to maintain a family in independence' (p. 21).

But how was the Malthusian spectre received in his own time? The burning issue then, and the recurring issue for subsequent generations of historians, is the influence that Malthusianism, and in particular the preventive check of the control of family size, had on the state management of poverty. In the British case this culminated in the New Poor Law and the ending of outdoor relief in 1834. This book describes how the Malthusian message about the rise of population and the attendant social and economic dislocations that ensued were received by Malthus' contemporaries.

The author claims that his approach is the first serious attempt to investigate how contemporaries tried to broadcast the Malthusian message, both negatively as well as positively, especially among the working class. He concludes that Malthusian thought shaped public opinion more widely than was hitherto imagined because it reached below the purely intellectual and public policy level where perhaps historians have otherwise concluded that it resided. The sub-title of this book – Martineau, Cobbett and the pauper press – sets up the lines of engagement. Harriett Martineau is depicted as a Malthus champion in the early 1830s, with William Cobbett in the opposing corner representing the single most determined adversary of Malthus of that generation. And what of the pauper press? This really refers to the attempted wider circulation of what Martineau, Cobbett and others wrote and thought, through the popular circulation of comment in the working-class press. All three means of communication were intended to reach a similar and wide audience, the middle class and especially the working class, Martineau through her 25 fictional stories in *Illustrations of political economy* and her *Poor laws and paupers illustrated* (published in four volumes) and Cobbett through the reprints, extracts, and tracts taken from his *Political register*.

James Huzel tells his story in four parts. The first is about Malthus and seeks to engage not only the experts but also an audience that is not wholly conversant with Malthus, what he said and believed, and how those beliefs changed over time. The second part offers the Martineau position, and the third the Cobbett position. The final part is a consideration of what the radical working-class press said. The whole is topped and tailed by an introduction and a chapter of conclusions. What does Huzel conclude? Martineau made huge mistakes in her representation, not least in her espousal of moral restraint both in delaying marriage but also of restraining carnal knowledge within marriage, though Huzel believes that the invective against her for this was a contemporary misinterpretation of what she was really saying. Cobbett attracted a wide audience, and indeed Huzel claims that the wider readership enjoyed by Cobbett is itself evidence of the animosity to Malthus by the working class, and this was reinforced by the invective from the pauper press. But history is about winners and losers, sometimes regardless of the weight of public opinion. Do we conclude that the triumph of the New Poor Law makes Malthus the winner? James Huzel thinks that this is too simplistic, but if he is correct in thinking that hitherto there has been a neglect of Malthus in writing the history of this important aspect of public policy, then perhaps he has sent a hare running that will be pursued for some time to come.

MICHAEL TURNER
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ROBERT LEE, *Unquiet country. Voices of the rural poor, 1820–1880* (Windgather Press, 2005). xii + 162 pp. £14.99.

I suspect many professional historians will find this book slightly uncomfortable – not because of its subject – but because of how that subject is tackled. Its avowed intention is to 'give a voice' to the rural poor, mainly of Norfolk, in the middle years of the nineteenth century. It does this through a series of brief vignettes covering topics like machine breaking, poaching, instances of 'rough music', witchcraft and rural bastardy. The topics chosen are interesting enough but it is the way they are treated which causes some problems. Each essay is prefaced by what the author calls a 'dramatized section'. In these he uses what he calls 'imaginative licence' to put a gloss on the accounts which follow, for example using a vernacular voice to present a version from the view of 'the poor', or writing an account of the event described in the third person in an almost novelistic way.

This has advantages, especially for the non-specialist reader. Many historical sources are dry and not easy to follow and present barriers to understanding necessitating long and often complex exegesis by the historian. This in turn often blunts the impact of what are frequently powerful and moving historical stories. However, to many 'professionals' such changes smack of tampering with evidence. It is not that Lee makes anything up in

the way of facts, rather that the 'imaginative licence' employed appears to give sets of meanings to events over and above what is in the source. For example, in the account of 'rough music' at Clippersby in Norfolk in 1868 in the *Norfolk News* (quoted it has to be said by Lee), the victim, John Mumford, 'was standing at a gate ... with his master [when he saw a number of men coming towards him]. They were carrying an image, which was dressed in [a] similar dress which he wore.' Lee renders this at much greater length, having Mumford hear music and drumbeats across the marsh and his employer recognize the effigy: '"That look just like you John!" cried his employer, his voice incredulous but betraying the first chokings of suppressed laughter. With a muttered curse Mumford turned his back on the scene and set off for home, trying hard not to break into a run ...'.

There is nothing implausible in this. Mumford's employer raised laughter in the court when he described the effigy; Mumford did go to his house (as did the procession); but it is the assumptions about 'the muttered curses' and later when Mumford in his house stands 'flattened against the wall' while outside his neighbours join in 'dancing impromptu reels' that leave me uneasy. Simply we don't know if he was 'flattened against the wall', and secondly, in the case of the reels, it is stretching the evidence a bit.

In fairness, we only know it is stretching the evidence because Lee, unlike say Ronald Blythe in *Akenfield*, provides us with the original material, but it remains important. Lee wants to give the rural poor a voice – a project to which I have given part of my working life and which I strongly applaud – but the question must be does this method do that? The answer is not simple. The imaginative reconstruction of the lives of the poor, both contemporary and historical, has huge virtues and at its best presents texts of enormous power. Few rural historians could have read Adam Thorpe's novel *Ulverton* without a recognition of the deep 'truth' of his account of the aftermath of Swing. Nearly a hundred years earlier Hudson's accounts of the same events in *A shepherd's life* with its intensely moving plea for the 'good, brave men' transported in 1830–1 has a similar resonance. Yet it is an area which those who lack the training, patience and skill of the novelist should always approach with caution. Against this there is real value for the non-specialist or general reader in using materials in this way. In that respect, the book will certainly have a potential appeal outside the normal academic audience.

I am left however with a sense of unease. In the final chapter Lee talks about 'finding patterns', including widespread alienation among the rural poor of the 1820s to 1840s, who after the suppression of Swing, the advent of the New Poor Law, the 'new' game acts and enclosure appear as a class apart, sullenly and bitterly confronting the rural elite. In some ways that was certainly the case, as the essays and vignettes in the book show. Yet it was a short moment and one which was made more complex, as Lee's other work shows, by the reaction of the rural poor of East Anglia in the 1850s and 1860s. In those years the rick burner and cattle maimer becomes less significant than the Methodist preacher, the friendly society member and ultimately the trade unionist and Liberal Party activist. By the early 1870s there were more labourers involved in these essentially respectable movements than had ever been actively involved in the desperate resistance of the 1830s and 1840s. This is not to discount the earlier period, and Lee's work certainly gives it a real and anguished human face, but to suggest that the patterns found might be different.

There were survivals of older 'class struggles without class', as E. P. Thompson called them, but they seem increasingly odd and even out of step. In 1911, in a bitter strike at St Faiths in Norfolk, the women and children of the village 'ran-tanned' blacklegs and ended up in court. They claimed what they were doing was a 'tradition' and clearly understood the public contempt and disapproval contained within the ritual. Yet circumstances had changed, and with that change so the ritual shifted its site, its meaning and its importance. What they were doing was part of a strike, led by a well-organized and increasingly powerful union in one of its strongholds. They were supported by unionized urban workers, the Independent Labour Party and were defended in court by a solicitor hired and paid for by the union. There are patterns but they are patterns which show the rural poor modernizing their protest into nineteenth-century forms recognized, albeit reluctantly, by the state. They were also forms which, at least in terms of hours, wages and conditions, were more effective than the doomed and bitter movements of a hundred years earlier. It is that pattern, that change, which needs to be understood, for it was that change which the trades unionists and the early rural socialists of Norfolk believed to be the great advance. They also believed that it was an advance of their own making. The unions, the friendly societies even the Methodist Chapel were, they believed, the product of a new rural 'working class' and their own activity.

ALUN HOWKINS
University of Sussex

M. HOLLAND and J. COOPER (eds), *Essex harvest: a collection of essays in memory of Arthur Brown* (Essex Record Office, 2003). xii + 182 pp. Illus. £9.99.

This engaging volume of essays on Essex themes by his pupils, friends and colleagues commemorates the life and work of a distinguished Essex historian, the late

Dr Arthur Brown. During more than half a century's association with the North Essex branch of the Workers' Educational Association, with the collections of the Essex Record Office, and following his retirement from schoolmastering in 1974, with the departments of Sociology and History at the University of Essex, where he held a research fellowship, he made a seminal contribution to teaching and research in the social and economic history of eighteenth and nineteenth century Essex.

He came to local history, as did many of this generation, by a roundabout route. Welshman by birth and classicist by training, he became attracted to local history as a PPE student at Oxford in the 1930s. Having decided against joining the International Brigade, he chose instead to tutor for the WEA in the Rhondda, prior to taking up a Classics post at Colchester Royal Grammar School. His commitment to local history is reflected by the fact that, as a schoolteacher, he found time to author or edit some eight books on Essex subjects. Three publications in particular are of special interest to rural historians: *Essex at work 1700–1815* (1969); *Meagre harvest: the Essex farm workers struggle against poverty 1750 to 1914* (1990), *Prosperity and poverty, rural Essex 1700–1815* (1996).

The volume reflects Arthur Brown's own wide-ranging interests. It begins with a study of parochial clergy by Jane Pearson, based on a 1776 visitation questionnaire circulated to parishes by the Bishopric of London. The Essex clergymen, she concludes, were more 'lone figures in the landscape', rather than, as they tend often to be depicted, integrated members of the community. Jacqueline Cooper looks at town life in Saffron Walden through the eyes of a local gentleman and his involvement with contemporary issues such as allotments, poor relief, public health, the Swing Riots, and relations with the landowner, Lord Braybrooke. The biographical theme continues with an insight by Maureen Scollan into the character of the first Chief Constable of Essex, John McHardy, and the establishment of a full-time county police force. Rural protest is allotted two papers: Michael Holland's scrutiny of the trial and execution of John Evans, the first Essex Swing incendiary to be prosecuted in 1830, and Valerie Pattenden's rounded account of the 'Chartist challenge' in Chelmsford.

The functioning of the Poor Law is addressed by Pamela Sharpe in an examination of the treatment and effects of malaria in the low-lying marsh hundreds, as revealed by a bizarre and often intemperate correspondence concerning relief between poor law officials and John Thurtle, head of family, and prototype 'Essex man'. The functioning and governance of the Waltham Cross Foundling Hospital, the duties of its trustees, inspectors and nurses, and the origin and 'disposal' of foundlings, are examined by Raymond Cassidy.

Some readers, and Arthur Brown himself no doubt, may be disappointed at the neglect of agriculture, which reflects perhaps a perceived lack of interest by local historians in technical and economic topics. It is touched upon by Brian Bourn in his review of the work of Thomas Churchman Darby of Pleshey, inventor of the much celebrated 'Darby Digger'. This steam-powered Leviathan, reminiscent of the Martian machines in the film version of *The war of the worlds*, weighing up to 15 tons, and moving sideways across the field at one half of a mile per hour on 'feet' worked by 'legs', was arguably the most mechanically bizarre item of equipment ever used on British farms. Poor marketing rather than technical defects accounted for its disappointing sales, of just 20 machines.

Kevin Barnes's study of the migration of farm workers from depressed clayland parishes in Dengie Hundred in the coastal southeast to the Durham coalfield in the 1870s, is an original contribution to labour history. The Durham census for 1881 identifies upwards of 257 former Dengie residents living in the county in 1881, many of them in the parish of Butterknowle where they formed a significant community and are still remembered today. Also to be commended is the study by Andrew Philips and Patrick Denney of the revival of domestic clothing manufacture in the Colchester area in the late nineteenth century. Upwards of an estimated 3000 outworkers were then employed on a piecework basis, many using sewing machines, making menswear for retail firms in London and the provinces.

The volume concludes with a contemporary incursion. Stephen Hussey draws on oral evidence collected in 1991 to assess the strength of tradition in rural Essex in the first half of the last century. Up to 1950, he believes, most villages had a distinctly rural culture – self-centred, land-based, and reflected in language – and a belief system rich in folklore and superstition. Thus to varying degrees, the old culture prevailed in the face of powerful modernizing forces which, from the 1950s, were to transform village life in the more rural parts of the county beyond the built-up areas of Thames-side and the metropolitan south-west.

In its choice of topics and contributors, editorial standards and, as Arthur Brown would have applauded, concern for the common man, this scholarly yet enjoyable volume is a model of its kind, and fitting tribute to the life work of a guiding light in the study and teaching of Essex history.

E. J. T. COLLINS
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PAUL BRASSLEY, JEREMY BURCHARDT and LYNNE THOMPSON (eds), *The English countryside between the wars. Regeneration or decline?* (Boydell Press, 2006). x + 270 pp. 15 illus; 2 maps. £55.

Over recent years the received image of inter-war Britain, of dole queues, of undernourished workers, of bleak and depressing living conditions and of a countryside abandoned to scrub and bush, has been called into question. The extractive and heavy manufacturing industries of the Midlands and the North may have gone steeply into decline, yet, in some regions, economic growth spawned employment in both traditional and novel areas. The commercial world and the white collar sector prospered and standards of living in the south and elsewhere began to advance. As the 'rural trippers' descended on the countryside, they were enabled sniffily to observe their 'primitive' fellow countrymen and by their purblind incomprehension of rural matters to deepen the growing gulf between the urban and rural worlds so much in evidence today.

In this book eleven contributors from a variety of disciplines discuss the social, economic, political and cultural aspects of the rural world between the wars and assess whether the English countryside at this time might better be characterized by growth and innovation rather than stagnation and decline. And it is a totally anglocentric work, Wales receiving three cursory mentions and Scotland none at all. The volume comprises a series of papers delivered at the agreeable venue of Dartington Hall, itself originally conceived as a social experiment in reconstruction after the First World War. It is fitting then, that Leonard Elmhirst's vision is described in detail as are John Spedan Lewis's extraordinary ventures at Leckford, both of them exercises in rural regeneration. In like manner, village drama and various other attempts to foster local cultural cohesion were seen as regenerative activities. Yet so often there was a vapid artificiality about these efforts. What had Dartington Hall or Leckford to do with the rural community beyond their self-sufficient boundaries? What was the purpose of rural drama if it did not somehow connect to the daily round or common task? The holistic vision of a 'rural university' adumbrated by Rolf Gardiner and others wherein music, drama, ritual and masque were directly linked to routine work is not considered. A comparative study of the Gardnerian vision and that of the Elmhirsts would have been instructive. In fairness, the editors admit that they have not attempted to produce a comprehensive coverage of the period, yet one cannot help feeling that several opportunities have been lost, especially since there are elements of repetition throughout the book. Take for example, two rather lacklustre chapters on rural and agricultural education, which incidentally eschew any reference to my book on the subject written in the 1980s. These are replete with material on the WEA, the Rural Community Councils, the Village College Movement and other matters pedagogical, yet fail completely to address the issue of agricultural research. Given that there was a modest increase in agricultural output, especially of high-priced products, a nod in the direction of the world of research would have been appropriate. Plant breeding, herbicide and pesticide development, advances in reproductive physiology, artificial insemination and dairy hygiene, to say nothing of the evolution of extension systems, all were moving rapidly forward in the two decades under consideration and were to lay the foundation for the dramatic expansion of agricultural technology in the postwar period. And what about the great modernists who hammered away at the conservative bastions of the rural world? In discussing the advance of dairying, the salvation of many a farmer during the period, Paul Brassley mentions 'Mr Boutflour, an educator and advisor'. This is, in fact, Professor Robert Boutflour CBE of the Royal Agricultural College whose crusade for the evolution of a high yielding dairy cow fed on a high level of concentrated feeds did more to promote the animal feed industry than anyone else at the time. He left behind a substantial archive and is deserving of more than a footnote in the rural history of the inter-war period.

Like C. S. Orwin, that fervent apostle of modernity and implacable enemy of traditionalists, Boutflour would have had little time for the Mary Webbs, Sylvia Townsend Warners, Winifred Holtbys and Constance Holmeses whose works are skilfully dissected in this volume by Marion Shaw. Their craving for an imagined past to set against the social wrongs and economic stagnation of the present would have cut little ice with Boutflour who would also have raised his ample eyebrows at Professor Shaw's suggestion that England was ceasing to be an agricultural country 'in the first third of the twentieth century'. The reality was that she had been an essentially urban country since around 1860. Boutflour might also have been surprised to learn elsewhere in this book of his acquaintance Rolf Gardiner's 'English Mistery'. Gardiner was, in fact, only loosely associated with this reactionary body (of which Minister of Agriculture and future Governor of Burma Reginald Dorman-Smith was a member), the 'Mistery' having been founded by his friend Viscount Lymington.

Another of Gardiner's friends was that past master of myth-making and man-of-action, Henry Williamson. As Mark Rawlinson brilliantly demonstrates, Williamson saw the restoration of his derelict farm in Norfolk as a metaphor for the restoration of fertility in its

broadest political sense, while his ruralist and neo-romantic fascist vision is manifest in his vast novel sequence *Chronicles of ancient sunlight*. Williamson was no stranger to the workings of bodies like the National Council for Social Service, the Rural Industries Bureau and the Rural Community Councils who struggled to bring life to the remote reaches of rural England, generating mountains of paperwork as they tried to reconcile the protectionist/modernist dichotomy. Together with most politicians, especially on the Left, these various rural bodies were united in the view that for the national interest to be properly served the land should be fully utilized in providing nutritious food for the people. Farmers held land in trust for the community, avowed Labour, and putting it to full use was the farmer's most direct form of public service. Labour, of course, would have liked to nationalize the lot, and even more, to have persuaded the rural working classes as to the virtue of their cause. But in much of the country slick Conservative organization (and a little timely coercion) meant that trades unions notwithstanding, rural labourers remained overwhelmingly Tory voters.

Many inter-war commentators, in particular the likes of H. J. Massingham and Thomas Hennell, wrote of the decline of the rural crafts tradition. In Massingham's elegiac writings this was viewed as nothing short of catastrophic as men were cut off from nature, natural materials and, by extension, from God. Paul Brassley, in his thoughtful way, takes a rather more sober view. The crafts had certainly gone into steep decline before the war, but thereafter there was a period of stability. Diversification and attention to quality ensured the survival of some crafts into the present day while others fell by the wayside.

This is a curate's egg of a book wherein fresh insights jostle with rehashed and recycled views. While it presents the revisionist case and provides an abundance of material for debate, much work needs to be done before the realities of the inter-war countryside can be brought clearly into focus. I have no doubt that there were very wide regional and sectoral variations in response to the 'depression', to say nothing of differences between the constituent countries of Britain. The group meeting at Dartington have offered parts of a skeleton, which will need to be fleshed out by local studies and attention to complete new areas not addressed in this volume.

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Elsewhere and General

ANDREW CHAMBERLAIN, *Demography in archaeology* (CUP, 2006). xix + 235 pp. 19 tables; 45 figs. £45 (hbk); £17.99 (pbk).

'If I had ham, I'd have ham and eggs, if I had eggs.'

Archaeological demography is defined by its goal, the reconstruction of past populations from skeletal remains. This apparently simple goal is, however, difficult to reach. Chamberlain provides a useful road map but not a total solution to the problems.

The goal of reconstruction of the population from skeletal remains used to be out of reach not only because the evidence available is chronically short in supply, a biased sample of the original material, and difficult-to-impossible to read rightly, but also because few archaeologists understood enough about the concepts and measures and theories of demography to be able to apply it accurately to the available materials. That is no longer the case, as witnessed by the present volume by Andrew Chamberlain.

Chamberlain understands that the concepts of demography are unusually clear, for a social science, in definition and in the use of redundant information, so that if one has a reliable indicator of part of the population structure it is often possible to estimate other quantities by simple subtraction. Hence if you have an accurate age distribution for last year and this year, we can find the death rate for each age segment by looking at the difference (migration raises its ugly head, but demographers have techniques to avoid it). If your accurate data is for ten years ago and this year, we can do the same trick, with a wider range of possible error. And if we have an accurate age distribution from ten years ago, and the birth rate and death rate for the years intervening, we can not only make a good estimate of the age distribution today, but we might use that accurate estimate as a way of critiquing the results of a census. At the same time, demographers tend to work on large and fully described populations, so that results are not even based on random samples but often on full counts of the population. Naturally archaeologists are often attracted to the techniques of demography to try to solve problems on small populations and partial measurements.

Written for graduate students at the University of Sheffield, the volume under review is a well-written, clearly argued and lucidly explained textbook for archaeologists who want to or need to apply demographic models and methods to archeological problems. They will find the technical expertise and the examples they need to apply the concepts to their material. They will

also find intelligent discussions of side issues, and a 35-page bibliography that defines the field of archaeological demography. Chamberlain inspires confidence as he applies data and methods to isolated problems and produces new insights and clarity from the exercise. If I were still teaching graduate students demography, I wouldn't hesitate to adopt it for my course.

But alas, archaeologists applying demography to their analyses will still not be able to solve all their problems by the mastery of the contents of this book. Having a confident grasp of the concepts and methods certainly helps, but the difficulties in raw materials persist. If an archaeologist has a substantial collection of skeletal materials (100 plus individuals) that represent a living inbreeding population over some reasonably short period of time (like a decade or two), if there is reason to believe that the preservation of materials is more or less random, and if the material is in sufficiently good condition that one can have confidence in methods of aging and sexing, the methods of modern demography can take you a long way to understand many aspects of the life of the past population. Unfortunately, these conditions seldom apply, and yet the material is all the more valuable for its scarcity and ambiguity.

Demographic methods are based on the assumption that you have a census and vital statistics (births and deaths) registration. In archaeology, you have none of the three. Typically you have a fragmentary skeletal collection, which may have been collected over a wide range of territory and perhaps over a long period of deposition. If the skeletons are not from an inbreeding living population, there is little that can be generalized from the collection. One may note many interesting things – size of skeletons, healed fractures, signs of disease, teeth ware, etc. But these observations do not confer an ability to reconstruct the living population from which the skeletons were produced.

Readers are in good hands using Chamberlain's book to guide their research, but only optimists will expect to get all the way to the goal of population reconstruction.

NANCY HOWELL
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J. R. MCNEILL and VERENA WINIWARTER (eds), *Soils and societies. Perspectives from environmental history* (Strond, Isle of Harris: White Horse Press, 2006). xiv + 369 pp. £50.

With a title recalling US Department of Agriculture publications of long ago, this volume takes the position that soils have their own histories, both physical and human. Further, human histories of soil are both material and intellectual, intersecting with biogeochemistry as well as culture. Perception and (incomplete) understanding of soils and their dynamics are critical to rural decision-making and management. In historical perspective, changing comprehension of the soil resource is as challenging a pursuit as the inductive reconstruction of soil and erosional histories. The eleven chapters of this work explore both sides of that coin, and range across parts of six continents, making for a diverse and international menu.

To begin with an area of uncertainty, the contribution of Frank Uekoetter (Bielefeld) is an eye-opener to the rocky road of agricultural chemistry. Since the early 1900s, experts in Germany have continued to disagree as to plant nutrition and the application of mineral fertilizers; this has important implications for a range of issues, from industrial marketing pressures and the mixed response of farmers to expert opinion, as well as to organic farming, eutrophication, and sustainability. These tensions between popular and scientific 'truths' are still not fully resolved, as highlighted by the chapter on soil nutrient flows by Robert Shiel (Newcastle). Loading a soil with nitrates can exacerbate other management problems, such as reduced organic matter, poor soil structure, or leaching of nitrates into groundwater and rivers, not to mention proliferations of pests that require toxic pesticides. With an unusual range of experience in different environments and archaeological time ranges, as well as experimental projects, Shiel offers productive historical fare that should be made far more accessible. The use of crop rotation, manuring, and liming greatly improves crop yields – in combination with mineral fertilizers, which opens important, objective vistas on the long-term benefits of 'organic farming'.

The wide-ranging analysis of Verena Winiwarter (Vienna) examines the classical and medieval authors, to explicate a history of information and ideas. Her scholarship is impeccable, but not always sufficiently critical and cross-disciplinary. For example, the much-vaunted Piero di Crescenzi was not original, in part copying directly and without attribution from Albertus Magnus, whose own seventh book displays little innovation beyond a reworking of Palladius. But Wandalbert of Prüm (AD 848) is more important than his contemporaries because he successfully converted the agricultural calendars of the Roman authors into a calendar based on the regional ecology of the lower Rhine, predicated on different soils, climate and crop varieties, and an emphasis on the fencing of fields, stalling of animals, spreading of manure and cutting of hay.

The Islamic agronomists were much more than a foreign curiosity. They had developed Galenic humoural theory as a conceptual framework to explain how organic fertilizers and mineral remedies were used to temper or reinforce natural soil properties – 'doing right for the

wrong reasons'. They also set up royal experimental gardens and engaged in regional agricultural 'development'. Their influence inspired later Castilian writers, such as G. A. Herrera, and the 1751 Spanish translation of Jethro Tull included two chapters from Ibn al-Awwam, who in turn was resurrected by the French colonialists in Algeria (K. W. Butzer, 'The Islamic traditions of agroecology', *Ecumene* 1 (1994) pp. 7–50; Id., 'Environmental history in the Mediterranean world', *J. Archaeological Science* 33 (2005), pp. 1773–1800). The Roman authors also happen to be a major source for social history, and offer clues for the development of market gardening. Last but not least, there are hints in Theophrastus that ongoing rural innovations in his day informed the elite writings on agronomy, suggesting the possibility that such works recorded rather than proscribed changes in agrarian practice.

Against this background of ideas in agronomy we can now turn to the six historical chapters on soils in the landscape. Andreas Mieth and H. R. Bork (Kiel) address the ecological degradation of Easter Island, demonstrating the initial use of slash and burn agriculture by sedimentary profiles. As productivity declined, more and more work was invested in amelioration, beginning with organic mulching, and later the addition of charcoal and ash; soil protection by stone mulching at the surface was attempted as sheet and wind erosion accelerated in the wake of devegetation. These labour-intensive methods continued to be practised until the end of the Polynesian period, contrary to the popular narrative of thoughtless human misuse.

Tim Beach (Georgetown), Sheryl Luzadder-Beach (George Mason) and Nicholas Dunning (Cincinnati) offer an extensive and careful review of prehispanic soil erosion and terracing efforts in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean islands. They emphasize distinct patterns of clearance or post-abandonment impacts, or of recovery, in contrasting environments or among different prehistoric communities. A second article, by Luzadder-Beach and Beach, focuses on the interplay of soils, water and indigenous practices in New World wetlands. They highlight raised or ridged fields, chinampas, flood recessional cultivation, and problematic networks of drainage canals, bringing closure to some festering controversies. The range and scope of human soil and land manipulations so identified will serve as a benchmark for future research.

Kate Showers (Lesotho and Sussex) attempts a comprehensive soil history of Africa, discussing indigenous 'soil knowledge systems', livestock management, agricultural production in different biomes, soil conservation efforts, urbanization and mining prior to European intrusion. This superb canvas is then contrasted with the widespread environmental damage resulting from colonial practices and policies. While correct in general terms, concentrated indigenous populations in earlier times also created soil erosion problems (K. W. Butzer, 'Rise and fall of Axum, Ethiopia: a geo-archaeological interpretation', *American Antiquity* 46 (1981), pp. 471–95). The role of the recent demographic transition therefore cannot be ignored in assessing contemporary problems, unless of course we 'blame' the colonialists for that population growth.

Exploitation and conservation of soil on the Indian subcontinent is considered by R. J. Wasson (Darwin), who assembles a welcome panoply of indigenous concepts, and then constructively outlines the evolution of environmental measures and understanding after colonial intrusion. The same author also treats post-contact Australia by means of three current case studies that usefully illustrate processes, responses, and feedbacks.

Although the chapter organization is annoyingly obscure, the editors have assembled a significant book, that is both informative and thought-provoking. It will be welcomed by environmental historians and many other constituencies, including ecologists, geographers, and agronomists.

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JAMES GERBER and LEI GUANG (eds), *Agriculture and rural connections in the Pacific, 1500–1900* (Ashgate 2006). xxxvi + 387 pp. £75.

This volume is the thirteenth in the series 'The Pacific World: Lands, Peoples and History of the Pacific, 1500–1900'. Seventeen such volumes have been produced or are planned, including several others that may be of interest to readers of this journal, such as John McNeill's compilation *Environmental history in the Pacific world* (2001) and Tony Ballantyne's *Science, empire and the European exploration of the Pacific* (2004). The purpose of the series is to draw attention to the longer history of transpacific interactions, to counter what the general editors consider is the traditional conceptualization of 'this vast body of water as a colossal barrier to interchange until recent times' (p. xi). It draws together epidemiological, ecological, demographic and cultural studies, on the premise that 'Water connects cheaply and yet water geography remains an under-appreciated facet of history' (p. xiii). This is hardly a new idea – witness for example Oskar Spate's three volumes on the Pacific, beginning with *The Spanish lake* (1979), which are not referenced here – but it is one that deserves more attention.

Gerber and Guang have followed the format of the series, drawing together nineteen articles or chapters first published elsewhere, in this case between 1943 and

1999. The sources are mostly quite accessible, but are from a range of disciplines. The aim is to assemble in one place an anthology of materials on 'Pacific basin agriculture and transpacific rural linkages' (p. xv), organized around four themes. In the table of contents these are: 'The dispersion and diffusion of seeds and food plants', 'Systems of production and the impact of the Spanish conquest', 'Migration of rural people across the region', and 'Integration of markets and the stimulus to agriculture'. In the text however, the parts are neither individually introduced nor separated; instead there is a 22-page editorial introduction to the whole volume. This provides an excellent overview, albeit one that is referenced somewhat idiosyncratically.

The approach of the articles assembled, although this is never stated, is consistent with the relatively new approach to imperial history of relations understood as networks and webs, rather than as core and periphery. The first part of the book gives illuminating insights into the diverse routes by which plants and seeds were dispersed, from the Americas into China, for example, or from Japan into the United States. Sometimes it is also revealing on questions of agency. By the mid sixteenth century, maize was being brought to the court in Peking by western tribesmen as 'imperial wheat', i.e. as tribute. The transmission home of information about potential agricultural plants was part of the job of nineteenth-century American representatives in Japan. Members of the South American Commission of 1817–18 did much to arouse American interest in plants and crops from that region, the results being more lasting than those of their ostensible political mission.

The articles also put some emphasis on multiple agency and directions of movement, and on the impacts of those not involved in officially-sponsored business. Rural-to-rural migration around the Pacific is a focus, although this invariably occurred within organized frameworks. Chinese agriculturalists had moved into south-east Asia before any strong European influence was felt there, becoming market gardeners around Batavia and plantation producers in nineteenth century Siam. More Chinese lived in rural California than any other part of the United States throughout the nineteenth century: with the decline of mining from 1860, they became tenant farmers, paid farm labourers and fruit and vegetable sellers. Hawaiian planters came to rely on Japanese and Chinese labourers; there was contract emigration of Japanese to Peru from 1898 to 1924.

There are many more themes in this volume that reflect growing processes of interconnection. These the editors liken, somewhat loosely, to the seeds (literal and metaphorical) of historical globalization. Yet inevitably their book is likely to be only a library purchase, given its cover price. For such a price, one expects a high standard of production. It is well bound, but the individual articles are reproduced as scans of the originals and several are these are of poor quality, making figures hard to read. It is a little confusing to have a dual page numbering system (that of the originals plus the book's own). There is an index, but unfortunately nothing is said about the authors. However the anthology as a whole is a rewarding read. It does bring together materials that, with the aid of the editorial introduction, go a long way to meeting the goals of both volume and series.

ERIC PAWSON
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MICHAEL WILLIAMS, *Deforesting the Earth: from prehistory to global crisis. An abridgment* (Chicago UP, 2006). xviii + 543 pp. 27 tables; 45 plates; 78 figs. £16.

Geographers and historians alike have become quite familiar with the distinctive contribution made by Michael Williams to the interpretation of landscape transformation. Its remarkable scope includes a range of local, regional, national and global studies variously characterized by closely textured analyses, sweeping panoramas, deft insertions of biographical, economic, environmental, historiographical, political and other gleanings, and an enviable confidence in straightforward summation and illustration. Notwithstanding these precedents, and especially the author's anticipatory *Americans and their forests* (1989), *Deforesting the Earth* may have seemed stupendously ambitious in 2003, when it first appeared. In another sense, however, it encouraged the trend towards urgent scholarly engagement with rising anxieties about the environmental health of the planet and the maintenance of its resource endowment – pertinence disputing prematurity.

In the original version, the culpability issue was provocatively grounded in the story of human occupation following the widespread return of tree cover after the last Ice Age. Indeed, its overall commitment to a generous sweep through time and space served to rebut naïve characterizations of 'pristine' forests, and emphasized instead the pervasive effects on the world's tree cover of rural settlement expansion, diffusions of commercial agriculture and industry, and their amplification and diversification under European imperialism. In the process it questioned casual denigrations of certain forest users, notably the most 'traditional', least commercial managers. It also located deeper historical background for today's debates on the causes and significance of carbon emissions, though more evidence is now accumulating, and it brought the vexed story of denudation into the present era. The abridgment faithfully maintains these lines. Three years on, depth and complexity still seem

quite persuasively sampled across the prodigious global canvas: the same argument emerges for balancing the current privileging of tropical depredations with a focus on earlier transformations in the temperate zones; all of this continues to permit some critical inspection of the countervailing moves towards more sophisticated 'sustained yield' forestry, temperate and tropical, including influential progress during (and not necessarily because of) Britain's imperial aegis; and in the penultimate chapter there is effectively a repeat of a delayed allusion to the hazards posed for statistical inventory practice by disagreements on the very meaning of 'forest' cover, and by resort to widespread extrapolations from unsubtle aggregations.

So 'Abridgment' is appropriate; this is not presented as a comprehensive revision. The main difference appears to have involved a prudent tightening throughout, partly through a small condensation and refinement of the text, but more notably by sacrificing dozens of well-drafted figures and tabulations, and by replacing the lengthy bibliographical list with a small-print bibliographical essay. The latter section may provide the more convenient guide, not only for non-science readers; on the other hand, the apparent spate of productivity in this busy interdisciplinary area probably built expectations of an updating of the reference list as a separate task in itself. Yet importantly, Williams has seized the opportunity to modify the original discussion of the processes and patterns of early domestication in the light of new research findings, especially with a view to improvements in dating precision, and he appears to be more cautious about the spiraling effects of associations between forest disturbance and the spread of pathogens.

In its modest revisiting, *Deforesting the Earth* continues to offer an impressive and timely sieving of published, overwhelmingly anglophone works. Regional and local studies from around the world – accommodating more primary evidence, recovering more detail – should now test-run its combination of monumental template and interim contextualization. Perhaps that also applies to elaborations of palynological and other scientific techniques, which allow significantly increased access to quite recent pasts. Teachers and supervisors who feel inclined to protest the loss of so many instructive maps, diagrams and tables may be consoled by the retention of nearly all of the original fine plates; in any event, the omissions are readily tracked down in the hardback edition. Judicial pruning has delivered a slightly more compact, paperback volume, at a relatively cheap price which should recommend it to the discerning educated public as well as to libraries and students.

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DAVID B. DANBOM, *Born in the country. A history of rural America* (Johns Hopkins UP, sec. edn, 2006). xvi + 301 pp. £33.50 (hbk); £13.50 (pbk).

In the introduction to the first edition of this book (1995), Danbom explained that he had tried to integrate the recent outpouring of rural American social history with current political and economic history to provide a synthetic history that would serve as a text for courses in agricultural and rural history.

The text of the 2006 edition closely follows its predecessor through the first ten of the original twelve chapters, making minor changes in wording and revision or elimination of short passages. Subunits of these chapters examine rural life in early modern Europe, woodland culture in North America, the rural development of British North America, the maturing society, the revolution and political consequences, early nineteenth-century agriculture and economic growth, life in rural America and in the slave economy, post-Civil War southern agriculture, settlement of the Great Plains, and agrarian protest. At Chapter Eight we reach the Golden Age of Agriculture and the Country Life movement, followed by treatments of the difficult 1920s and the Great Depression and World War II developments.

The original Chapter Eleven described the production revolution that occurred after 1950 followed by a final chapter describing the federal farm policies of the 1970s and the depressed 1980s, concluding with a tribute to rural survivors. In 2006, Danbom merged their content into Chapter Eleven which describes the revolutionary improvements in crop and animal yields, machinery, and biotechnological innovations and their collective impact after the 1950s. The production revolution, Danbom maintains, transformed farming economics but 'failed to reverse the regression of agriculture from being central to the American economy to becoming marginal and, ultimately, trivial' (p. 257). An Afterword, 'A rural America without agriculture' highlights the loss of farm population and urbanization of rural values, using Union County, Illinois to illustrate the stages through which rural life in America has passed. It ends by asking 'can we even talk about rural life as distinctive any longer, or is it just "life"?' (p. 263). Both editions include a useful guide to further reading.

In his review in *Agricultural History* (70, 1996, pp. 682–3), Gilbert C. Fite described the first edition as 'authoritative and exciting,' 'must reading' for all seeking to understand the place of agriculture in American 'history, tradition, and culture,' and a rewarding change from current 'wormhole' history. Other reviewers offered praise with qualifications. Some topics, said Marilyn P. Watkins (*Western Historical Quarterly*, 27, 1996, p. 399), received no more attention than found in American

history survey texts, the unpleasant side of farm life was overemphasized while other aspects, especially the more positive ones, were ignored. Hal S. Barron, in the *American Historical Review* (102, 1997, pp. 167–8) believed that Danbom, failed to 'offer a "new … way of understanding"' the rural past, short changed the agricultural America west, and for the most part ignored the community aspects of farm life. Robert P. Swierenga, in the *Journal of American History* (83, 1996, pp. 171–2) detected a 'generally negative tone' and a narrative that disregarded behavioural approaches and slighted community processes.

Most of these same criticisms can be levelled to some degree at the second edition. This reviewer agrees that the book inadequately reflects regional differences, that the infrastructure of non-farm operators, of rural services and industries is largely missing, and that the community institutions and social structures of the last 150 years are slighted. I also believe that reading agriculture's current status as approaching triviality misreads the situation. These points made, the current book is an extremely well-written narrative that presents its information accurately. Its coverage goes well beyond that of previous one-volume histories of American agriculture. We still await an author who draws fully upon comparative and interdisciplinary perspectives in telling the story but in the meantime Danbom's book can well serve the classroom teacher and general reader – although it may convince some students that they do not wish to be part of the American agricultural experience ahead.

ALLAN G. BOGUE
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J. BOLÒS, A. JARNE and E. VICEDO (eds), *Condicions de vida al món rural* (Diputació de Lleida / Insitut d'Estudis Ilerencs, 2006). 764 pp. No price given.

This impressive and beautifully produced volume entitled 'The conditions of rural life' comprises 38 papers originally presented to the Fifth Congress on Agricultural Systems, Social Organization, and Local Power held in the history department of the University of Lleida in spring 2005. Divided into three historical periods (medieval, modern, and contemporary), the majority of the articles deal with various aspects of rural life in Catalonia and the Països Catalanes (Valencia, the Balearic islands), with a smattering of articles on western Europe and the rest of Spain. The collection ends with six studies on the uses of archaeology in agricultural history. Among the topics covered are income distribution, living standards, food, accommodation, health, veterinary medicine, and education. The book also boasts a number of detailed and up-to-date bibliographies, statistical data, maps and photographs.

Enric Tello, in his useful introductory piece, sets the ball rolling with a wide-ranging methodological overview which pays tribute to the writings of Edward Thompson, Joan Thirsk, Robert Allen, and Amartya Sen, among others. Although there are a number of studies by established scholars (Albert Carreras, Javier Moreno, José Miguel Martínez Carrión), the majority of the contributions consist of local studies from a group of promising young scholars. Working my way diligently through the volume, I could not but be impressed by the vast amount of primary information which these enthusiastic researchers have uncovered. In a short notice, it is impossible to do justice to individual contributions. However, in their totality, this invaluable collection of articles bears further witness to the vitality of agrarian history south of the Pyrenees, not least in the Principality of Catalonia. The University of Lleida is also to be congratulated for its continued support for the discipline.

JOSEPH HARRISON
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F. DÉMIER, J-C. FARCY, G. SANZ LAFUENTE, N. VIVIER and C. ZIMMERMAN, *Les sociétés rurales (1830–1930): historiographie, bibliographie, enjeux* (Paris: Éditions Belin, 2005). 220 pp. €19.

This textbook is designed to assist French students who are preparing to sit national competitive examinations prior to qualifying as history teachers in secondary schools. 'Rural societies' figure in the current syllabi of two of these demanding *concours* and recently the topic has given rise to several substantive textbooks covering France and adjacent countries. By contrast, *Les sociétés rurales (1830–1930)* focuses on the three elements of its subtitle: historiography, bibliographic assistance, plus selected but not identical research topics in four countries (France, Germany, Italy, and Spain). Co-ordinated by Nadine Vivier of the Université du Maine, Le Mans and written by four specialists on particular countries, this is not strictly speaking a comparative study. Under the rubric 'historiography', attention is drawn to theoretical approaches to the study of rural societies in the past and to the role of historical novels in elucidating rural life. The origins of 'rural history' *per se* are traced through the works of Henri Sée, Marc Bloch, Wilhelm Abel, André Siegfried and other pioneers. The numerous French doctoral theses after 1945 that traced life in the countryside immediately before and subsequent to the coming of the railway age are then reviewed. Developments in Germany, Italy and Spain are treated individually and more briefly than changes in France.

Part II does not attempt to assemble a detailed bibliography but rather directs readers to key books,

essential journals and websites before offering useful digests of major publications that relate to specific countries and component regions or, more rarely, convey international comparisons. An intriguing map on p. 53 plots the spatial pattern of rural history theses in France that cover the period under consideration. Of the three dozen works identified, one is by the geographer Philippe Roudié who analyzed changes in the vineyards of the Bordelais. But if one geographical thesis may be included one is left wondering what criteria were adopted to exclude all the others that relate to the French countryside in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Part III embraces about half of the total book and is comprised of essays that summarize recent research on land ownership and population change across western Europe as a whole (by Nadine Vivier) and then focus on specific themes in individual countries. Thus, Jean-Claude Farcy concentrates on rural migration in France, Clemens Zimmermann examines town-country relations in Germany (from the Rhine to East Prussia), Gloria Sanz Lafuente highlights social protest in rural Spain, and Francis Démier explores the role of large landowners in agrarian life in Italy. These last three chapters benefit from boxed sections that offer brief comparisons with conditions in France.

The text is complemented by a few evocative photographs, several statistical tables and some maps, albeit of varying precision. For example, I was surprised to see that the map on p.115 suggests that in 1900 nine-tenths of Italy had similar densities of population (40–80 persons per square kilometre). Did man/land relations in the mountains and valleys of the Alps really have similar expression to those across the hills and plains of Sicily, or is this an unwelcome example of cartographic oversimplification? Why, one wonders, does the mysterious composite map on p.108 depict Italy at a totally different scale from her neighbours, and why is Lorraine labelled 'Brie' and the Baltic states as 'Prusse' on p. 203? In the comparative chronology (pp. 204–212) did nothing of rural significance occur in France between 1750 and 1827, or in Germany between 1822 and 1848? Despite these quibbles and irritations on points of detail, this book is a helpful digest of information that certainly made me aware of a good number of publications with which I was not familiar. Without doubt it will be of special value to the next generation of history teachers in France for whom it is designed and to undergraduates pursuing advanced courses on European rural history.

HUGH CLOUT
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MARGARET E. DERRY, *Horses in society. A story of animal breeding and marketing culture, 1800–1920* (University of Toronto Press, 2006). xvii + 302 pp. 31 illus. £40.

Few animals have shaped European and North American history as much as the horse. Horses have catered to almost every human need, including labour, transportation, warfare, sport, companionship and food. Despite their importance, historians have only recently returned to grappling critically with the role horses have played in modern history. As someone who follows the history of agriculture, I have patiently waited for a grand synthesis of recent work that places horse breeding and training in the context of developments in agriculture, political economy, and warfare. Although Margaret E. Derry's *Horses in society* is not *that* grand synthesis, it is a valuable contribution to the growing body of equine scholarship. *Horses in society* is especially useful in its thorough presentation of new sources, such as contemporary horse breeding journals and government records.

Derry writes that the goal of her book is to investigate the relationship of horse breeding and technological development. Although she doesn't explicitly state which technological development she intends to investigate, one gets the idea that she is mostly interested in the unintuitive observation that the number of horses increased after the railroad was first introduced and didn't decrease again until after the First World War. Margaret Derry then spins this observation into a detailed history of the relationship between breeding theories and practices, the international trading of horse flesh, and the development of national transportation infrastructures. The scope of Derry's project is large, including an investigation into a number of different types of horses (sport and utility horses, for instance) as well as three major markets (US, Canada, and Great Britain – although other European countries are covered when appropriate), and she tells her story with little conceptual distance from her sources (only occasionally does she step back to put her claims into a cultural context). The large scope and the number of detailed observations makes following her argument difficult at times, although there are many reasons to persevere. I especially appreciated the chapters on the role of the horse in military engagement. This is a subject that has only been satisfactorily addressed by recent scholarship for the early modern period. Derry's work on this topic gives historians a valuable resource on the role of remounts in the Crimean, American Civil, Boer, First, and Second World Wars as well as an important reminder of how humans have forced other beasts to bear the burden of international strife.

The book is at its strongest when describing changes in equine breeding practices as depicted in the primary

sources. I found it a bit frustrating when Derry did reach to other domains, such as the history of technology and the history of biology, to place these sources in greater context. For instance, historians of technology will most likely wish that Derry had discussed in greater detail exactly which technologies were important to changing horse breeding, although it appears she is mostly interested in a broad trend of mechanization that marked the nineteenth and early twentieth century, especially as manifested in developments in transportation (read railroads) and labour (read tractors). Also, historians of biology may become a bit frustrated with her discussion of heredity and the horse, especially since her main concern is how horse breeding wasn't influenced by genetic theories. There is very little discussion, however, of recent work that documents how horse breeding conceptually and institutionally contributed to the rise of classical genetics. Greater attention to the secondary sources in these two cases would have added sophistication to her discussions.

Although this is not the major synthetic book on horses in agriculture that I initially hoped it would be, it is an important and informative book nonetheless. If someone does eventually write the large-scale overview of the relationship between political economy and horse breeding, they will have to use Margaret Derry's *Horses in society* as one of the major secondary sources.

PHILLIP THURTLE
University of Washington, Seattle

NEIL DAHLSTROM and JEREMY DAHLSTROM, *The John Deere story. A biography of plowmakers John and Charles Deere* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2005). xix + 204 pp. 22 illus. $24.

The name of John Deere is today known as the marque of the largest farm machinery manufacturer in the world. It is also the only one of the industry's great nineteenth-century enterprises to have remained independent. The present public view of the company is formed by seeing the green and yellow tractors and combine harvesters at work in the fields. Yet from 1837, when the elder John Deere made his first plough, until after the death of his son Charles in 1907, the enterprise was almost exclusively concerned with making ploughs. It was only after the death of Charles that it branched out into other lines of farm machinery, and, after the First World War, into the tractor business.

The book by Neil and Jeremy Dahlstrom is confined to the period of the plough business, and attempts to flesh out the characters, lives, and achievements of the two major actors: the founding father John (1804–86) and his son Charles (1837–1907). To do this they have made excellent use of a range of material extra to that deployed by the writer of the only substantial previous history of the firm, Wayne G. Broehl, whose *John Deere's company: A history of Deere & Company and its times* was published in 1984. Broehl's main source was the extensive Deere archive still held at the company's headquarters in Moline, Illinois. The Dahlstroms have supplemented the work of Broehl by extensive research in local and state historical society archives, and amongst the files of the many contemporary local newspapers.

The result of the Dahlstrom's researches is a much fuller picture of the internal workings of the firm, as operated by the leading personalities, and of their own lives and aspirations. One or two examples may be given. The personality of the elder Deere which emerges from the Dahlstroms' book is of a man driven to succeed, in spite of serious early setbacks which would have broken a lesser man. One might surmise that he was a man who probably never left off feeling insecure financially. This explains the convoluted paper transactions of 1857–9, which shifted ownership of the Deere partnership away from John and onto Charles, in order to make it impossible for creditors to seize the partners' assets in the event of collapse. 'No one would guess that Deere was sitting on a small fortune, largely because he never considered it secure from creditors, the next national financial crisis, or a poor business decision on his part' (p. 40).

When it comes to Charles, who was effectively in charge of the enterprise (changed from partnership to company in 1868) from the age of twenty-one in 1858, a much fuller picture emerges of the personality of the quiet, low-key individual who took the firm to the level of a national institution. He was clearly a very effective chief executive and planner, and had the good luck or judgement to appoint capable men to run the daily business. He was also, at least in the early days, an excellent hands-on salesman. He is given proper credit here for his inauguration of the branch business, which became an essential ingredient of the firm's growth, and for dealing with the problems posed by the Granger movement and the more frequent labour unrest, as the firm got larger, and intimate contact between masters and men became a thing of the past. However, as time went on his energies were diverted to other things; lobbying at Washington on tariffs, currency, and the (never built) Hennepin canal between Rock Island and Chicago, or promoting the amalgamation of the leading plough firms into a Plow Trust (along the lines of Standard Oil), which would have bolstered the farm machinery manufacturers against the steel suppliers. However, if it had succeeded, the Trust would have entailed the end of Deere as an independent company, although Deere would have had a commanding position in the new organization.

In all, this is a most useful addition to the literature on Deere and Company, and the environment in which the business operated.

PETER DEWEY
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MOON-HO JUNG, *Coolies and cane. Race, labor, and sugar in the age of emancipation* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2006). xi + 275 pp. £32.50.

While it is not so specified in the title, this book is about the controversy in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century over the employment of Chinese workers ('coolies') on the sugar plantations of the Caribbean region, with a focus on southern Louisiana. Originating not only from China but also India, coolies were first introduced in large numbers to the West Indies in the late 1830s as replacement workers for recently emancipated Africans. As the use of such labourers intensified, abolitionists in the U.S. denounced it as a new form of chattel slavery, and in February 1862, soon after the outbreak of the Civil War, convinced Congress to pass a law prohibiting American ships from engaging in the transportation of 'coolies' from China.

In Louisiana, after the Civil War and with the abolition of slavery, sugar growers were faced with a black work force that was no longer easily managed. Inspired by the experience of their fellow planters across the Gulf of Mexico, they too experimented with the importation of Asian, particularly Chinese, contract labourers as a possible solution to their labour troubles. They sought the Chinese initially from Cuba – from among those who had finished their eight-year contracts – then from southern China and finally from the west coast of the United States. As a result, by the early 1870s Chinese had become 'familiar sights on sugar plantations up and down the Mississippi River and its bayous' (p. 184).

Most of the Chinese in Louisiana, who totalled around two thousand, came originally as large 'gangs of low-wage workers' (p. 199) on three-year contracts. On arrival, however, they began protesting against their inferior pay and their harsh working conditions and quickly 'established a pattern of quitting work whenever they felt their rights violated' (p. 189). They soon 'remade themselves' as smaller 'independent, itinerant labor gangs that engaged with employers for brief periods or finite tasks' (p. 205) such as during the hectic grinding season. The planters, furious at their disobedience but desperate for farmhands, had no alternative but to take them on and also to pay them higher wages. The experiment with Chinese as replacement workers on the sugar plantations thus turned out to be a failure, at least in Louisiana.

Jung's book, however, is not so much about the Chinese workers themselves – only the sixth and last chapter focuses on them – as it is about how they were, as he puts it, 'imagined' by others. Americans of the period commonly referred to the Chinese as 'coolies.' A vaguely-defined term of uncertain origin, it carried the dual connotation of involuntary emigration and long-term (though not permanent) servitude, which were what motivated the enactment of the anti-coolie-trade law of 1862. Jung makes a persuasive argument that this little-known legislation was significant as 'the first federal statute to restrict immigration into the United States' (p. 37) as well as a direct precursor of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Similarly, it was by equating the Chinese with coolies that the anti-Chinese elements in American society were able in 1870 to deny them the right of naturalization. But Jung otherwise does not attempt to resolve the empirical question of to what extent the Chinese in Louisiana, regardless of how they might have been imagined, were in fact voluntary immigrants or involuntary 'coolies.' Instead, he is content to state that 'in a nation struggling to define slavery and freedom, coolies seemed to fall under neither yet both' (p. 6) and that they seemed to inhabit a 'netherworld between slavery and freedom' (p. 72).

Jung also argues that coolies played an important role in the social construction of 'whiteness' in the United States. Opponents of coolie labour in the post-bellum South sought an alternative work force in white immigrants from Europe; in the process, all Europeans – even such heretofore disdained groups as the Irish – came to be seen as 'white.' As Jung concludes, 'The movement to exclude coolies … eventually helped to forge a white national identity across regional and class divisions' (p. 223).

The book, a revision of a Cornell PhD thesis, is thoroughly researched. The author has scoured and made excellent use of a wide range of local and regional newspapers and periodicals, U.S. diplomatic correspondence and Congressional reports, contemporary books and pamphlets, and unpublished papers of planter families. The book is well organized and generally well written; its ideas, however, are not always clearly expressed, in part because of the author's rhetorical fondness for paradoxes.

The author, too, might have said more about the process of sugar cultivation and manufacture and the precise role that the Chinese labourers played in it. And he might have been more explicit about the terminal date of his study. Is it the end of Reconstruction in 1877, or the enactment of Chinese exclusion in 1882? Both are possibilities, but neither is highlighted. Instead, the book ends with the 'racial imaginings of coolies' (p. 222) and the ultimate fate of the Chinese in Louisiana

remains unresolved. It's a disappointing conclusion for an otherwise fascinating book.

EDWARD RHOADS
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RICHARD PERREN, *Taste, trade and technology. The development of the international meat industry since 1840* (Ashgate 2006). xxi + 285 pp. 39 tables. £55.

Trade, taste and technology is a compilation and analysis of a substantial amount of historical information on the important business of the international meat trade. Moving from the 1840s into the early twenty-first century, Richard Perren has skilfully organized an examination of colonial and post-colonial trade between Europe, especially the United Kingdom, and English and Hispanic speaking nations in newly settling lands. Drawing on his own extensive research, on contemporary and recent monographs and articles, and a range of government documents, publications of Non-Governmental Organisations and internet sources, he examines what happened to the meat carcass after slaughter. A complex web emerges in which individual entrepreneurs, large and multinational corporations, government bodies and consumers interacted to direct meat to feed millions of Europeans who were unable to supply themselves. While mainly welcomed, this meat trade at times was challenged on account of health and safety issues.

As with many agricultural industries, meat distribution has been subject to major technological changes as well as having to respond to economic fluctuations, natural hazards and consumer tastes. In the nineteenth century, which here spans the years from 1840 to 1914, it became possible to transport meat thousands of miles from the Americas, Australia and New Zealand to European markets initially because of salting and then canning techniques. But the development of refrigerated freight trains and ships from the 1870s extended not only the amount of meat carried either in chilled or frozen form, but shifted the emphasis to beef rather than pork or lamb. By this time big business was organizing the North American industry and soon its modernizing impact was felt in Argentina and Uruguay. Investment in South American operations meant that when the North American market absorbed more of its domestic product, North American firms could still dominate the transatlantic trade, primarily to the United Kingdom. Australia and New Zealand remained apart in international trading patterns in terms of their product, lamb and mutton, and their smaller corporate enterprises.

Two world wars interspersed with a major world depression disrupted market and trading patterns between 1914 and 1945. During these years governments intervened more actively to shape and manage the international meat business. In both world wars the British government, facing the need to import meat at higher cost, prioritized feeding military forces adequately while the civilian population faced rationing. In all European countries at war, livestock production was given a lower priority than arable production and grain was given the most assistance as cereals were perceived as being the most efficient use of resources under wartime conditions. During the inter-war years when there was a general overall growth in the meat industry, despite periodic fluctuations and downturns, the British government both supported home production at the same time as establishing an imperial preference system after 1930. The latter policy created some dilemmas as the government still wanted to sell manufactured goods to Argentina, one of its main beef suppliers.

In the late twentieth century, changes in consumption patterns, the marketing of new varieties and cuts of meat and new arrangements for processing meat intersected with government policies and economic fluctuations to suggest different directions for the meat trade. The long-term decline in red meat consumption, especially beef, and the rising popularity of fat free poultry, especially chickens, only partly explains recent developments. The meat industry, already under scrutiny from government regulations, shifted its emphasis from large urban packing units to rural areas where labour was non-unionized, innovative technologies could be more easily introduced and road transport was the main means of domestic shipment. Higher standards of living and the spread of the two wage-earner families in most western mature economies stimulated the demand for ready-prepared cuts of meat, convenience foods and an increase in eating out, often in fast food and restaurant chains. These new cuts of meat were increasingly supplied to supermarkets and fast food chains with a concomitant decline in butchers whether as chains, such as Dewhursts in the United Kingdom, or independents. Such a low-cost philosophy of sales did not, however, prevent the rise of new large processing firms such as Tyson Foods in the United States and Bernard Matthews in the United Kingdom. Though consumers have continued to eat meat, the industry has frequently been criticized, partly because of the intensive and inhumane methods of factory livestock farming, the appearance of animal diseases like foot and mouth and BSE and the perception that the agricultural sector has been given special governmental assistance.

Trade, taste and technology is a major contribution to economic history in general and to agricultural and commercial history in particular. It is a masterful synthesis of interdisciplinary research and could only have been written by someone with a deep and clear

understanding of both the history of meat processing and the workings of the international economy. Agricultural historians may find the chapters focusing on public policies, and regulating the meat industry to be of most direct interest to their own research, but there is something for any historian who wants to find out how industrializing and post-industrial nations managed to satisfy demands for meat when domestic supplies were inadequate. Certainly this in an anglocentric volume, but the United Kingdom was the main market for imported meat in Europe in the late nineteenth century and continued to import meat in bulk into the 1970s when entry into the European Economic Community marked some more changes of direction.

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ERIC W. MOGREN, *Native soil. A history of the DeKalb County Farm Bureau* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2005). xi + 228 pp. Illus. $24.95.

On 9 February 1912, Henry Parke stood before the assembled newspapermen of DeKalb County, Illinois, telling the throng of the newly founded Soil Improvement Association. Its intent, he said, was to work for 'making DeKalb County the banner county in the state … Let us all pull together – the editor, the banker and the farmer – and secure for DeKalb County that prize which surely will reward us [with] better farmers, larger yields, higher land values, better roads, better schools, better industrial conditions and a higher standard [of living] … We can make DeKalb County known around the world' (p. 54).

Eric Mogren's *Native soil* elucidates Parke's promise, which ultimately led to the transformation of the Soil Improvement Association into the DeKalb County Farm Bureau (DCFB), one of the earliest affiliates of the American Farm Bureau Federation and one of the most continuingly successful. Mogren is at his best in discussing the needs that brought the DCFB and its precursor into existence. As farmers struggled to make their once-fertile soil productive again via limestone and phosphates and the able assistance of their county extension agent William G. Eckhardt, so they grappled with their changing place in the politics and society of twentieth-century America.

Particularly telling is Mogren's chapter on the First World War and the disruption this brought not only to Illinois agriculture, but also to that of the world. With surpluses looming worldwide, the DCFB sought new ways to market its members' grain and livestock, as well as wool, poultry products and milk. They also turned to the federal government for assistance, contemplating the McNary-Haugen plans, the Agricultural Marketing Act and the arrival of Roosevelt's New Deal. Although the treatment of the DCFB from the 1930s to the 1970s is rather thin, a detailed portrait of a farmers' organization emerges.

Local history at its best, Mogren's work is meticulously researched, lavishly illustrated and exceptionally well written. If there are flaws, they arise from the author's failure to tie the local more directly to the regional and the national. For example, the Illinois Agricultural Association, the equivalent of state farm bureau federations in other states, is never given its due for aiding in the creation of the American Farm Bureau Federation. Nor does the American Farm Bureau Federation play much of a role in Mogren's work despite being the largest general farm organization in the United States, and the parent agency to the DCFB. Similarly, the role of the Country Life Movement in the genesis of the DCFB and its nationwide counterparts is not given its due, nor are Mogren's repeated general references to 'Progressive-era' movements and motivations especially helpful. A bit of contextualization would have been useful at points along the way.

Throughout the text, the challenges facing farmers and their responses to those challenges are given the foreground. The former included dubious markets, overwhelming surpluses and problems in input purchasing; the latter co-operative marketing, insurance, wool pooling, and purchasing guidance and collaboration. As Mogren closes his volume, however, he poses the most difficult question of all: What does the future hold?

In earlier chapters, Mogren had the benefit of the historical record to demonstrate what occurred when farm conditions deteriorated or when government policies worked to the disadvantage of agriculturalists. But it is in his final chapter, where he speculates about the future, that the author is at his finest, meriting the purchase price of *Native soil*. Chapter Six, 'The Future' begins by rehearsing the successes and failures of the DCFB through the better part of a century, then sets out the issues it and other farm organizations will face over the course of the twenty-first century. Among the problems the author foresees are the greying of the American farmer, the encroachment of suburbia on traditionally agricultural regions, changing diets, and ever-rising taxes. His belief that organizations like the DCFB can solve these problems is strong, nearly as strong as the faith of founding DeKalb County Soil Improvement Association member Henry Parke.

Native soil should attract a good number of readers, particularly those interested in Illinois history, the history of agricultural movements, and the history of agriculture itself.

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Conference Report
The Society's Winter Conference, 2006: 'Families and Farming'

by Jane Whittle

This year's Winter Conference explored the degree to which farming is not only an occupation for the main breadwinner, but for the whole family. With papers stretching from the medieval period to the twenty-first century, a strong theme of the married women's contribution to the farm emerged, Michael Winter's paper even going so far as to suggest that the recent withdrawal of wives from farm work had spelt the death of family farming.

The conference began with a paper by Jeremy Goldberg on 'Farming and the late medieval family economy: contextualising the "Tyrannical Husband"'. The 'Tyrannical Husband' is a fifteenth-century ballad which describes a husband and wife arguing about who does the most work in the farm and house, before agreeing to swap roles for day. Unfortunately, the second half of the story, describing the results of this experiment, does not survive (although as a member of the audience pointed out, in the pan-European folktale which bears many similarities to this ballad, the result is 'the cow on the roof' of the farmhouse after the husband fails to manage the farmyard tasks). Although the ballad presents a stylised version of farm work, for instance characterising the man's work solely as ploughing, failing to mention women's work in the fields, and exaggerating the household's degree of self-sufficiency, it does present a detailed list of the stereotypical forms of women's work in a farming household of this period. The wife not only did the everyday cooking, cleaning and child-care, but milked the cows, made butter and cheese, cared for the poultry, baked, brewed and made malt, and prepared, spun and wove woollen and linen cloth. Goldberg went on to use late medieval probate inventories to explore differences between rural and urban lifestyles and work patterns. Most of the household goods owned by rural individuals were either bedding or kitchen goods, leading to the conclusion that peasant houses were primarily for eating and sleeping. Work and leisure activities were mostly carried on outside. In contrast, urban houses were the normal location for work and sociability. Goldberg concluded that the division of labour between men and women was more marked in rural households than in towns. The domestic location of urban work meant that women were more likely to be involved in men's work and trade, and led to a more egalitarian relationship between husband and wife.

Elizabeth Griffiths took a rather different perspective by examining the roles played by members of a gentry family in 'A family management team: the Le Stranges of Hunstanton, 1600–1650'. Like many gentry families in the early seventeenth century, the Le Stranges sought to increase their income and reduce costs; but unlike other substantial gentry, they did so by eschewing the employment of stewards to run their household and estate, taking on these roles themselves. Even more unusually, much of the management was done by Lady Alice le Strange, rather than by her husband Hamon. Their personal approach resulted in a wealth of documents, particularly household accounts, notebooks and estate records, which allow the family's activities to be reconstructed in some detail. Alice took over the household accounts from Hamon in 1610, eight years after their marriage, and then gradually expanded her activities until she was running the whole estate. Her activities left Hamon free to concentrate on the more public face of the household, defending legal cases, holding political offices, undertaking extensive building works, and fighting as a Royalist in the Civil War, as well as pursuing a variety of sporting and cultural interests. The family team was completed by the eldest son, Nicholas, who remained resident at Hunstanton with his parents after his marriage in 1630. His particular contribution was to

drain the coastal marshes around Hunstanton, which he did by combining the vision and learning of his father with the careful accounting practices of his mother.

The second half of the conference brought us up to the modern day with two papers on the twentieth century. The first, by Nicola Verdon, explored 'The farmer's home: farm women, family life and the British farming press, 1919–39'. For this study, she concentrated on two publications, *Farmer and Stockbreeder*, which had a circulation of 100,000 in 1914, and *Farmer's Weekly*, which began printing in 1934. An inspection of the contents of their 'home pages' provides an impression of the expected role and behaviour of farm women in the inter-war years. Verdon drew out three main themes. First, as we might expect, was an emphasis on domesticity and the skills of housewifery, with articles on cooking, dressmaking, spring-cleaning and childcare. Both publications aimed to raise the status of domestic work by emphasising women's important educational role within the family, and the value of economy and thrift. A second, less predictable theme, was to connect farming women with wider, modern world. Articles provided guidance on fashion for shopping in town, reports on Ideal Home Exhibitions, and encouraged women to be not only 'home-makers but citizens'. Finally, there were articles which promoted various income-generating activities. These included raising or keeping small animals; growing and marketing fruit and vegetables, or processed food such as jam or pies; and taking in guests or roadside catering. Although these were promoted as 'interests' and 'hobbies' and not full-time occupations, the farmer's wife was were encouraged to have her own bank account in which to lodge the profits. There was also a concern to keep farmer's daughters within the farming economy, and counteract the lure of urban 'bright lights'. The farming press thus advocated college-based training in dairying, nursing and veterinary science, and advertised employment opportunities for young women on farms.

In the final paper Michael Winter considered 'Family farming in flux: reflections on fifty years of family farming research in British rural sociology'. He traced how the academic concern with the concept of 'family farming' has mirrored the rise and fall of family farming in Britain between the 1950s and the present day. The idea of the British 'family farm' emerged in the 1950s, from a particular political and cultural juncture. Economically, increased mechanisation reduced the need for hired labour, leaving the family to run the farm. This trend was reflected in a new strand of literature based on first-hand experience of farming, either offering practical advice or autobiographical or semi-fictional accounts of running a farm. For instance, George Henderson's books argued that family farming was not only possible as an occupation for returning service-men, but profitable and *virtuous*. At about the same, the National Farmers' Union began to use 'family farming' in its rhetoric, emphasising its representation of a broad range of farming interests and not just large landowners. There were also anthropological studies, such as W. M. Williams' study of Ashworthy in Devon. Family farming in 1950s and 1960s Devon was characterised by small mixed farms. A shortage of labour and limited mechanisation meant that women often played a large role on these farms, for instance caring for livestock, and growing fruit and vegetables on a commercial scale. Children were also expected to contribute before and after their school day. Winter revisited Williams' study in the late 1970s and again in 2002, interviewing farmers about their experiences. While a great deal of continuity was evident between the 1950s and 1970s, the change since then has been rapid and substantial. Membership of the communal organisations such as the Methodist church and the NFU has declined, along with other social activities. The intensity of farming has increased, but profits have slumped. Women no longer worked much on the farm, in part because their income from jobs outside farming is needed to support the farm. Children have also been excluded from farm work by technological change. As a result, family farming is now dead in many respects.

This year's Winter Conference demonstrated that the work of family members has been a vital support of farming households for hundreds of years, and, in a different way, remains so today. It seems unlikely that it will ever be appropriate to think about farming without considering the role of the wider farming family.

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Forthcoming Conferences

Winter Conference 15 December 2007

Approaches to the history of the rural landscape

The Winter Conference will be held at the Institute of Historical Research, London, on **15 December 2007**. Papers will include Dr Sam Turner on medieval Devon landscapes, Dr Tom Williamson on water meadows, Prof. Matthew Cragoe and Ian Waite on post-enclosure Midland landscapes and Prof. David Jeremiah on cars in the twentieth-century landscape.

Details and a booking form can be downloaded from the Society's website, BAHS.org.uk

Spring Conference 2008

The Society's Spring Conference for 2008 will be held at the University of Nottingham from Monday 31st March to Wednesday 2nd April. Speakers will cover a range of rural issues from the medieval to the twentieth century. A field trip to looking at aspects of the rural economy and changing environment of Sherwood Forest is planned. There will be a new researchers session. A full programme and registration form will be despatched to members of the Society during January, and will be available on the Society's web pages (www.bahs.org.uk) from the beginning of the year

Call for papers

Land, Landscape and the Environment, 1500–1700
Early Modern Research Centre, University of Reading, 14–16 July 2008

Readers are reminded of the call for papers which was printed in the last issue of the *Review*. The deadline for submissions is 1 February 2008. Proposals should be sent to Dr Adam Smyth, a.smyth@reading.ac.uk, from whom further details may be obtained.

The Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia and the origins and distribution of common fields*

by Susan Oosthuizen

Abstract:
This paper aims to explore the hypothesis that the agricultural layouts and organisation that had developed into common fields by the high middle ages may have had their origins in the 'long' eighth century, between about 670 and 840 AD. It begins by reiterating the distinction between medieval open and common fields, and the problems that inhibit current explanations for their period of origin and distribution. The distribution of common fields is reviewed and the coincidence with the kingdom of Mercia noted. Evidence pointing towards an earlier date for the origin of fields is reviewed. Current views of Mercia in the 'long' eighth century are discussed and it is shown that the kingdom had both the cultural and economic vitality to implement far-reaching landscape organisation. The proposition that early forms of these field systems may have originated in the 'long' eighth century is considered, and the paper concludes with suggestions for further research.

Open and common fields (a specialised form of open field) endured in the English landscape for over a thousand years and their physical remains still survive in many places. A great deal is known and understood about their distribution and physical appearance, about their management from their peak in the thirteenth century through the changes of the later medieval and early modern periods, and about how and when they disappeared. Their origins, however, present a continuing problem partly, at least, because of the difficulties in extrapolating information about such beginnings from documentary sources and upstanding earthworks that record – or fossilise – mature or even late field systems.

* The research on which this paper was based was undertaken during a period of sabbatical leave kindly granted by my department, the University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education. I am very grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper, which was also presented at the MANCASS conference in April 2007. Professor Brian Roberts and Stuart Wrathmell have been very generous in allowing me access to the electronic versions of their maps for the construction of the figures, and I am most grateful to them. Dr Rosamond Faith, Dr Debby Banham, Dr Chris Lewis, Mr A. E. Brown, Dr Peter Sarris, Dr Nicholas James, and Dr Mary Hesse have kindly discussed my ideas with me. Mrs Sarah Wroot created the figures using data provided by Professor Roberts as the base. All the figures use as their base a map of greater Mercia in the 'long' eighth century published in D. Hooke, 'Mercia: landscape and environment', in M. Brown and C. Farr (eds), *Mercia: an Anglo-Saxon kingdom in Europe* (2001), p. 160, combined with maps published in B. K. Roberts and S. Wrathmell, *Region and place* (2002). The interpretation of the figures in this paper is my own.

Over the past twenty years, a relative consensus has developed around the suggestion that open fields appeared during or by the tenth century, and it is generally assumed that this is true of common fields too. However, recent research in Somerset, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, and Cambridgeshire indicates the revolutionary possibility that early forms of open fields, divided into strips and sometimes demonstrating incipient features of common fields, may have emerged in the 'long' eighth century, between about 670 and 840, in areas dominated by the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia. This paper aims to explore the potential for further research of such an hypothesis.

I

Several composite terms – open fields, common fields, subdivided fields, townfields – are used to describe English medieval field systems. All four relate to arable lands whose internal divisions were not marked by hedges or ditches and which therefore had an 'open' appearance. However historians from Joan Thirsk onwards have drawn a distinction between 'open' and 'common' fields based on the distinctive patterns of distribution, layout, ownership and cropping that had emerged to characterize common fields by the thirteenth century.[1]

Open fields were found across most of England, including the south, south-east and the west, often lying in areas of 'ancient' countryside, and often alongside or including field systems with prehistoric or Roman antecedents (Figure 1). Common fields were restricted to central, southern England, to a countryside described as Midland or 'champion' and more recently defined as the Central Province.[2]

The layout of both open and common fields was 'open', that is, neither were internally divided by physical barriers. The physical framework of each was, however, distinct. Open-field arable might be subdivided into any number of fields, widely varying in size. Common-field arable was divided into just two or three very large fields of approximately equal size. Open fields were often, but not necessarily, further divided into furlongs (some fields were so small that there was no necessity for subdivision), but almost always into strips.[3] Furlongs and strips were integral features of common fields.

There were also differences between open and common fields in the distribution of holdings within the arable. In open-field systems, demesne arable was frequently held in blocks outside the open fields, separate from that of tenants and freeholders, whose holdings were inconsistently distributed among the arable and who may also have had additional arable holdings outside the open fields. The intermingling of holdings was not essential, and strips might be held in blocks, to the extent that some furlongs might even be held in severalty (individual ownership). Common fields were characterized by distinctive distributions of holdings, in which demesne

[1] J. Thirsk, 'The origin of the common fields', *Past and Present* 33 (1966), p. 144; H. S. A. Fox, 'Approaches to the adoption of the Midland system', in T. Rowley (ed.), *The origins of open field agriculture* (1981), pp. 83–4; Gray, *English field systems*, frontispiece and p. 403; W. O. Ault, *Open field farming in medieval England* (1972), p. 16.

[2] Roberts and Wrathmell, *Region and place*, p. 144; H. L. Gray, *English field systems* (1915), frontispiece and p. 403; O. Rackham, *The history of the countryside* (1986), p. 178; Roberts and Wrathmell, *Region and place*, p. 10; Fox, 'Approaches', p. 66.

[3] Strips were the smallest physical sub-divisions of open and common fields. They were units of cropping, and also units of tenure (selions).

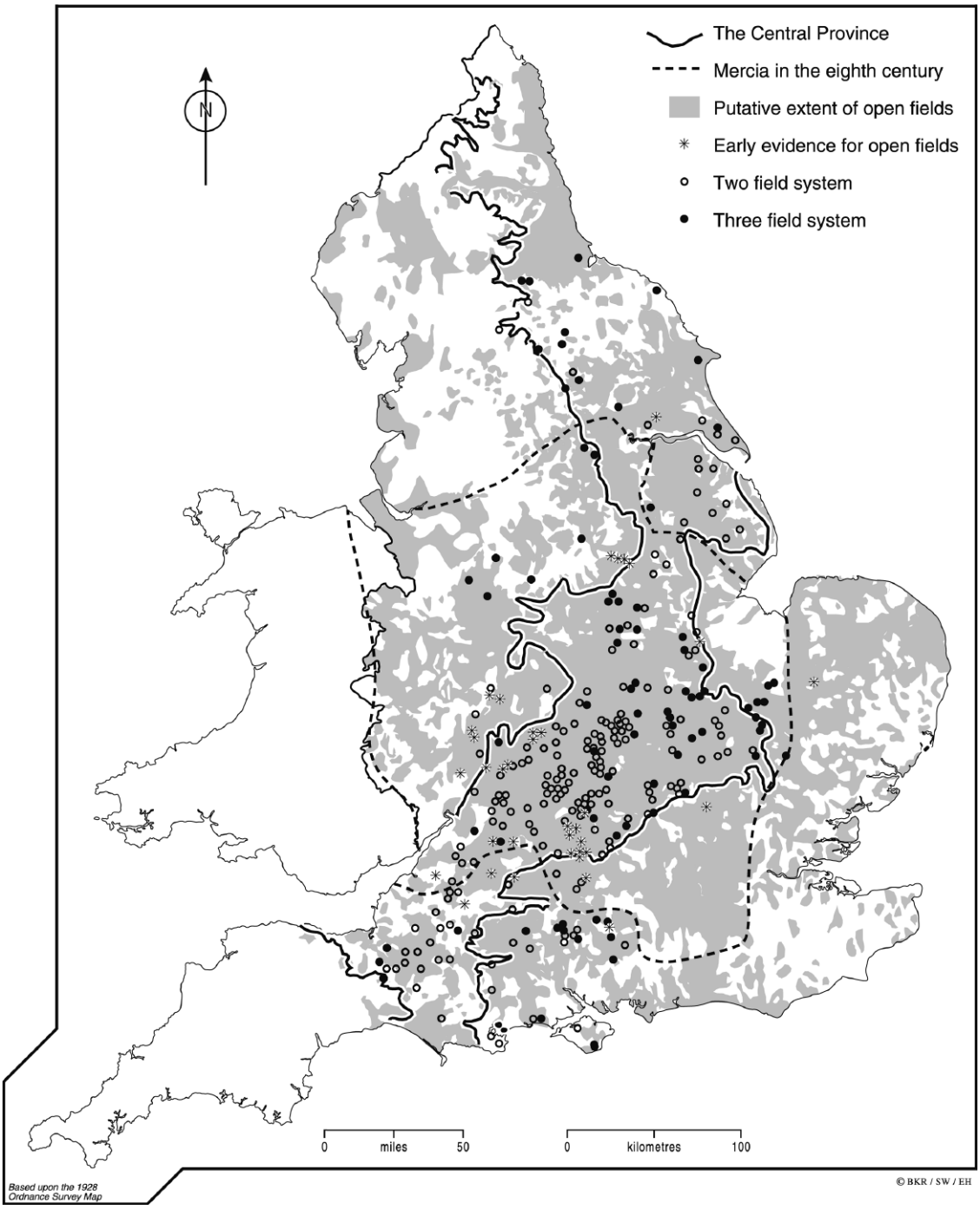


FIGURE 1. England: open and common fields

Note: This combines two maps of common-field and open-field systems published in Roberts and Wrathmell, *Region and place*, pp. 124, 144 with a map showing the boundary of 'greater' Mercia in the 'long' eighth century. These maps were based on H. L. Gray, *English field systems* (1915), G. Slater, *The English peasantry and the enclosure of common fields* (1907), C. S. Orwin and C. S. Orwin, *The open fields* (1938), R. Glasscock, 'England circa 1334', in H. C. Darby (ed.), *A new historical geography of England* (1973), pp. 136–85, D. Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon landscape of the Hwicce* (1985), and A. R. H. Baker and R. A. Butlin (eds), *Studies of field systems in the British Isles* (1973).

and tenant strips were more or less equally distributed between the two or three large fields, where they lay intermingled with those of other holders, sometimes in a regular sequence.[4]

Important as distinctions in layout and patterns of ownership may have been, the most significant differences may have lain in the organisation of cropping. In open-field systems, cropping patterns were variable, since the unit of cultivation was as frequently the furlong as the field. Cropping patterns might be arranged by field, by furlong or even within individual holdings. Because there was very often sufficient pasture for livestock within the vill, communally-regulated fallowing was not essential, and communal regulation of cropping was therefore inconsistently practised.[5] In common fields, cultivation followed a strict communally-regulated rotation that included a fallow year. Cropping was organized by field rather than by furlong. Either winter- or spring-sown crops were grown on all the strips in all the furlongs of a single field, while between a third and a half of the arable lay fallow each year to provide grazing for the village livestock. Communal regulation of the fallow may, indeed, have been *the* essential determinant of classic common-field systems.[6] This is because access to the stubbles and fallow field by the community's livestock could most easily be arranged if all the strips in a field were sown at the same time with a crop that took the same length of time to ripen for harvest. Common fields were a specialized form of open fields found only in a restricted zone in Midland England. The question to be explored in this paper is why the distribution of common-field systems should have been restricted in this way. We begin by reviewing the sources available and the methods which might be used to examine the question.

II

Although the scholarly literature on the period of origin of common and open fields has a long history, it has been bedevilled by an inconsistent terminology. A particular difficulty is that the composite terms (e.g. 'open fields', 'common fields', 'subdivided fields', 'townfields') that are used to describe open and common fields, do not distinguish between them.

It is difficult to discern early forms of layout and organisation of open or common fields in primary documentary evidence or in archaeological evidence, especially since the distinction is teleological. Most documentary sources are medieval in date, and record fully-formed rather than developing open- and common-field systems, while Anglo-Saxon law codes, charters and other documents that include references to fields or arable cultivation are usually inexact and susceptible to a range of interpretations.

The precise dating of field systems can be difficult. Ploughing is essentially a destructive activity which militates against the slow accretion of detailed stratigraphies; and, unlike ceramics or metalwork for example, the physical remains of ploughing – earthworks, like ridge and furrow, or ploughmarks in ploughsoil – tend to be dateable only in very general terms unless

[4] Fox, 'Approaches', pp. 64–5; B. K. Roberts, *The making of the English village* (1989), p. 51; D. Hall, 'Fieldwork and field books: studies in early layouts', in B. K. Roberts and R. E. Glasscock (eds), *Villages, fields and frontiers: studies in European rural settlements in the medieval and early modern periods* (1983), pp. 117–8.

[5] Fox, 'Approaches', pp. 66, 92; Ault, *Open field farming*, p. 16.

[6] Fox, 'Approaches' p. 66; Ault, *Open field farming*, p. 16.

they have some association with another more closely dateable feature. These characteristics pose particular problems for archaeological investigation through excavation or systematic field survey. Archaeological excavations are usually able to sample just a small fraction of any large agricultural layout, and this may make extrapolation or generalization difficult in relation to field systems. Field survey may reveal earthworks resulting from cultivation, and record the distribution of pottery scattered during manuring or artefacts from sites underlying fields. In this it can provide general evidence of cultivation and other activity over large areas in one or more periods, but it is a necessarily imprecise tool for close dating of field systems. A very large-scale ('total') excavation of a field system, supported by documentary and environmental analysis, is unlikely, although it has been recognised as an ideal for over 40 years.[7]

Topographical and morphological analysis of field systems, based on systematic field survey and documentary, archaeological and other evidence, may be useful in developing hypotheses about the development of such large-scale landscapes, especially where archaeological excavation is not possible. Unequivocal evidence for the origins and development of such landscapes, especially those for which written sources are sparse or non-existent, is rare. Topographical arguments therefore rely on the analysis and evaluation of a range of sources, none of which may be conclusive in itself, but together combining to provide a 'best fit' hypothesis for the explanation of a range of data.[8] They do not necessarily prove that a landscape was created in a particular period, or developed in a particular way; they simply suggest that, given the known evidence, their interpretation of the evidence provides the most likely explanation currently available.

III

To difficulties with sources and methods in the investigation of common fields may be added further problems relating to their distribution, the agencies involved in their origin, and their period of origin, each of which we now consider in turn.

(a) Distribution

There are well known differences in the distributions of English open- and common-field systems. Gray provided the first scholarly demonstration of the restricted distribution of common fields in 1915, in a map showing the 'Boundary of the Two- and Three-Field System'.[9] By the early 1980s the association between common fields and the English Midlands had led to the characterisation of the former as 'the Midland system'. Rackham called this area (and the nucleated settlements associated with it) 'planned' England, contrasting it with 'ancient' England in

[7] D. W. Wilson, 'Anglo-Saxon rural economy: a survey of the archaeological evidence and a suggestion', *AgHR* 10 (1962), pp. 78–9.

[8] See Fox, 'Approaches', p. 88. Now-classic examples of such studies include E. A. Pocock, 'The first fields in an Oxfordshire parish', *AgHR* 16 (1968), pp. 85–100; S. Bassett, 'Medieval Lichfield: a topographical review', *Trans. Staffs. Archaeological and Historical Soc.* 22 (1980–1), pp. 93–121; and T. Williamson, 'Early co-axial field systems on the East Anglian boulder clays', *Proc. Prehistoric Soc.* 53 (1987), pp. 419–31.

[9] Gray, *English field systems*, frontispiece and p. 403.

which common fields did not occur.[10] More recently, the area within which common fields are found has been defined as the 'Central Province'.[11]

Even within the Central Province, however, the distribution of evidence for common fields is not even (Figure 1).[12] By far the greatest concentration seems to have lain in a swathe across the central and eastern Midlands: eastern Warwickshire, southern Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Huntingdonshire and west Cambridgeshire; Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, north Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire. There appear to be secondary, but less dense, distributions in Somerset, Wiltshire and Hampshire, and in Lincolnshire and parts of Yorkshire.

(b) Agency

There have been many attempts to explain the distinctive restriction of common fields to the Central Province. Generally speaking, it does not appear to be 'related to any very obvious aspects of the natural environment, such as geology, climate or soils'.[13] Even allowing for the absence of common fields from the predominantly pastoral highlands and uplands of northern and western England where the soils are too thin and rocky, slopes are too steep, and/or fields are too high above sea level to allow a sufficient period for grain to grow and ripen, the restriction of common fields to the Central Province is puzzling. Good arable land was available far beyond the Central Province. There were as many plough-teams in east Norfolk in 1086, for example, as there were in parts of the Central Province, yet it is open but not common fields that are found in eastern England.[14] On the other hand, Williamson has demonstrated that the distribution of particularly difficult clay soils is generally co-incident with the Central Province. His argument relates principally to settlement nucleation, with which common fields are believed to be closely associated, rather than to common-field origins, but nonetheless provides a factor to be considered.[15]

The debate about the possibility of continuity between Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon landscapes began with Seebohm, who argued that the 'three field system' had evolved from Romano-British forms of cultivation.[16] He suggested that, since three-field systems were found

[10] Fox, 'Approaches', p. 66; Rackham, *Countryside*, p. 178.

[11] Roberts and Wrathmell, *Region and place*, p. 10. This paper provisionally accepts the boundaries of the Central Province in relation to common fields as mapped by Roberts and Wrathmell in *Region and place*, p. 124. More work still needs to be done before these boundaries can be traced more accurately. It seems likely, for example, that there were many more vills with two or three field layouts in Cambridgeshire in the high middle ages than the present boundaries of the Central Province acknowledge (cf. M. R. Postgate, 'The open fields of Cambridgeshire' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1964), App. 1).

[12] Roberts and Wrathmell, *Region and place*, p. 144.

[13] C. C. Taylor, 'Nucleated settlements: a view from the frontier', *Landscape Hist.* 24 (2002), p. 53; see also Roberts and Wrathmell, *Region and place*, pp. 32–9, 64.

[14] Roberts and Wrathmell, *Region and place*, p. 69.

[15] T. Williamson, *Shaping medieval landscapes* (2003), p. 6.

[16] F. Seebohm, *The English village community* (1883), pp. 410–1. More recent research indicates that part of Seebohm's premise was misplaced. While it is true that arable land in north-west Europe was often divided into three fields by the high middle ages, by the eighth century this may only have been happening on the highest status monastic demesnes: A. E. Verhulst, *The Carolingian economy* (2002), pp. 16–18. Even when the subdivision of arable into three fields had become more common, cropping was not undertaken communally nor was there intermingling of tenure. Open fields sometimes developed in Europe; common fields never.

only in Carolingian Europe, and since Anglo-Saxon migrants came from an area much larger than the Carolingian empire, not all Anglo-Saxons can have practised three-field cultivation in their homelands. Common fields were unlikely, therefore, to have been introduced by Anglo-Saxon migrants, and it was more probable that they had Romano-British or earlier antecedents. This view was almost entirely discounted until recently, on the grounds of paucity of evidence for the re-use of prehistoric or Roman land divisions in the boundaries and internal divisions of common fields. There is, however, a growing body of evidence now that such continuity did sometimes occur within the Central Province, and the question of continuity with earlier landscapes has been revitalized, although continuity in the use of boundaries does not necessarily imply continuity of cultivation.[17]

Other scholars have suggested that areas of Romano-British arable which either continued to be cultivated into the Anglo-Saxon period or which remained cleared as pasture, provided favourable conditions for the accelerating extension of arable from the early eighth century onwards.[18] On the other hand, maps (however tentative) showing areas that seem to have been predominantly cleared in or by the middle Anglo-Saxon period, or showing the distribution of Romanized buildings and villas, do not show unequivocal concentrations of either in the Central Province.[19]

Variations in early medieval demography across the country are generally unhelpful in explaining common-field distribution. There are inherent problems in using Domesday Book as a source of population statistics, since it cannot be assumed that everyone was recorded; nor, since it is a record of property rather than a census, that everyone who was recorded was only recorded once. It is, however, the earliest source of demographic data that can lay any claim to national coverage, and perhaps, if the flaws in their collection were more or less universal, the same margins of error may apply across England. If this is the case, then, however flawed the data may be, there appears to have been nothing distinctive about the density of population in the Central Province compared with other parts of England, at least in the eleventh century.[20]

Nor does lordship in the same period seem to have been a factor. That is, there is no evidence to show that the places in which common fields developed were more or less manorialized in 1086, or that they were characterized by particular forms of late Anglo-Saxon manorial structure. Freemen and sokemen (as opposed to villeins), while concentrated in eastern England, were found inside and outside the Central Province.[21]

Yet others have suggested that cultural factors may have been at work. Such cultural explanations take two forms: one is related to ethnicity, and the other to a model of cultural change. To

Note 16 continued
See, for example, J. Renes, 'Some aspects of open fields in the southern part of the province of Limburg (the Netherlands)', *Geografiska Annaler* 70B (1988), p. 164; Verhulst, *Carolingian economy*, pp. 16–18.

[17] Bassett, 'Lichfield', pp. 93–121; S. Bassett, 'Beyond the edge of excavation: the topographical context of Goltho', in H. Mayr-Harting and R. I. Moore (eds), *Studies in medieval history* (1981), pp. 21–39; S. Upex, 'Landscape continuity and fossilisation of Roman fields', *Archaeological J.* 159 (2002), pp. 77–108; S. Oosthuizen, *Landscapes decoded* (2006), ch. 6.

[18] D. Hooke, *The landscape of Anglo-Saxon England* (1998), p. 116.

[19] Roberts and Wrathmell, *Region and place*, pp. 78–9.

[20] D. Hill, *Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England* (1981), p. 19.

[21] Roberts and Wrathmell, *Region and place*, p. 127; Williamson, *Shaping*, p. 47.

consider the question of ethnicity first, although the view that common fields evolved from a system of land allotment and cultivation introduced during the Anglo-Saxon migrations is no longer accepted, the debate about the influence of ethnicity persists in arguments concerning the influence of the Scandinavian migrations of the ninth and tenth centuries.[22] Hodges, for example, proposed that common fields may have resulted from new attitudes to landholding imported by Danish migrants. Hart came to a similar conclusion, arguing that the collective decision-making that underpinned common-field cultivation was derived from Scandinavian social structures. These views have had difficulty in finding general acceptance and Banham, in a recent review of the evidence, has expressed the objections most clearly: the Scandinavians 'didn't introduce [common-field cultivation] everywhere they lived, and someone must have introduced it into other areas'.[23]

The second cultural explanation for the distribution of common fields is based on the assumption that their appearance was part of the same process of cultural diffusion in which dispersed settlement in the Central Province was replaced by nucleated settlement. Rackham, for example, suggested that the differential distribution of common fields and nucleated settlement resulted from a tide which left 'the English Midlands submerged … [while parts of ancient countryside] such as south Essex were not reached at all'.[24] Taylor and Roberts and Wrathmell concur, arguing that the phenomenon spread outwards across central, southern England from an epicentre, perhaps in the Midlands, from the tenth century onwards, until it petered out under the economic and demographic strains of the fourteenth century.[25] Even that hypothesis, however, while explaining why common fields did not appear throughout England, does not illuminate either why they developed at all, why they should have developed in the Midlands, or why they should have been adopted in some places and not in others.

(c) Period of origin

Common and open fields across England seem to have achieved full maturity by the thirteenth century at the latest. Charters and other documentary sources, supported by some archaeological evidence, show that open fields divided into intermingled holdings could be found in tenth-century landscapes. This is generally taken as evidence for open and common fields, although (as Thirsk has observed) there is no evidence for *communally-regulated* crop rotations at this date, and therefore – by extension – no evidence for common-field cultivation.[26]

[22] F. W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and beyond* (1897), pp. 365–6 and 515–8; W. G. Hoskins, *The making of the English landscape* (1955, 1988 edn), pp. 45–7; F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (1971), p. 280.

[23] R. Hodges, *The Anglo-Saxon achievement* (1989), p. 154; C. R. Hart, 'The Danes', in A. Kirby and S. Oosthuizen (eds), *An atlas of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire history* (2000), p. 30; also C. R. Hart, 'The Aldewerke and minster at Shelford, Cambridgeshire', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 8 (1995), p. 47, and C. R. Hart, 'Strip cultivation and the Danes', unpublished paper dated 1996; D. Banham, 'Race and tillage: Scandinavian influence on Anglo-Saxon agriculture?', in M. Kilpiö (ed.), *Proc. International Soc. Anglo-Saxonists Congress, Helsinki, 2001* (forthcoming), my additions.

[24] Rackham, *Countryside*, p. 178, my additions.

[25] Taylor, 'Nucleated settlements', pp. 53–5; Roberts and Wrathmell, *Region and place*, pp. 145–6.

[26] cf. J. Thirsk, 'The common fields', *Past and Present* 29 (1964), pp. 3–25; Thirsk, 'Origin', pp. 142–7; Ault, *Open field farming*, p. 18; Fox, 'Approaches', pp. 83–4; D. Hooke, 'Early forms of open-field agriculture', *Geografiska Annaler* 70B (1988), pp. 123–31; D. Hooke, *Anglo-Saxon landscapes of the west Midlands: the charter evidence* (1981), pp. 121 and 206–7; G. Campbell, 'The preliminary

The debate for even earlier origins is more contentious. As long ago as 1883, Seebohm held that common fields could be found in the middle Anglo-Saxon period. Basing his argument on an interpretation of that famous clause in the Laws of Ine (688 x 694), which described 'common … land divided into strips', he concluded that 'in the seventh century the fields of Wessex were common open fields'.[27] This interpretation has since been supported by Finberg, Hoskins, Stenton and Fox, Stenton going so far as to suggest that open fields (in which term he appears to have included common fields) existed not only in seventh-century Wessex but also in the Midlands, Lindsey and Deira.[28]

Scepticism about such early beginnings for common fields was first expressed by Maitland, and remains a *leitmotif* in modern scholarship, although it is accepted that the Laws may describe intermingled holdings in some form of open field.[29] 'Nothing', Maitland wrote, '… could be rasher than the assumption that the "three-course system" of tillage was common in the England of the seventh century'.[30] He conceded that there was 'a little evidence' of its existence in the eleventh century, and 'perhaps some evidence, that it was not unknown in the ninth', but was prepared to go no further.[31]

Such doubts about an early or middle Anglo-Saxon date for the origins of common fields are supported by the results of archaeological fieldwalking in Northamptonshire where common-field furlongs and strips overlay abandoned middle Anglo-Saxon settlements.[32] Discarded pottery sherds from these settlements appeared to indicate that 'the furrows of the strip fields cannot be earlier than the ninth century'.[33] Similar or slightly later dates have been suggested for the origin of field systems in Holderness (Yorks.)[34] The conclusion, also derived from Hall's work, that common fields and nucleated settlements developed in the same period as interlinked facets of a single process of large-scale replanning of the landscape, has provided an apparently solid foundation over the past twenty years for the attribution of a tenth-century date (or later) and a common origin for the introduction of both common fields and nucleated settlement.

There is a common-sense element to this view. If common fields were laid out across most of each parish in one dramatic event, as Hall's conclusions indicate, the inhabitants of the dispersed settlements that underlay them would have had to have moved elsewhere. This provided a good explanation for the emergence of nucleated settlement in the Central Province in the

Note 26 continued
archaeobotanical results from Anglo-Saxon West Cotton and Raunds', in J. Rackham (ed.), *Environment and economy in Anglo-Saxon England* (1994), pp. 67–75, 81; H. Hamerow, *Early medieval settlement. The archaeology of rural communities in north-west Europe, 400–900* (2002), pp. 152–5.

[27] Seebohm, *English village comunity*, p. 110.

[28] H. P. R. Finberg, *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, I (ii), *43–1042* (1972), pp. 416–7; Hoskins, *English landscape*, p. 45; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 280; Fox, 'Approaches', pp. 87–8.

[29] Maitland, *Domesday Book*, p. 365. For more modern views, see e.g. Thirsk, 'Common fields', pp. 4–5 and Thirsk, 'Origin', pp. 143–4; Hooke, *Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 114–5; P. J. Fowler, *Farming in the first millennium* (2000), p. 270.

[30] Maitland, *Domesday Book*, p. 365.

[31] Ibid., pp. 365–6, 515–8.

[32] P. Addyman, 'A Dark Age settlement at Maxey, Northants.', *Medieval Arch.* 8 (1964), p. 24; D. Hall, *The open fields of Northamptonshire* (1995), pp. 129–30.

[33] Ibid., p. 130.

[34] M. Harvey, 'Planned field systems in eastern Yorkshire: some thoughts on their origin', *AgHR* 31 (1983), pp. 91–103, and id., 'The development of open fields in the central vale of York: a reconsideration', *Geografiska Annaler* 67B (1985), pp. 35–44.

later Anglo-Saxon period. Hooke's summary speaks for most current scholarship: 'by the late ninth and tenth centuries nucleated settlements at the core of several large open arable fields were gradually replacing earlier scattered farmsteads'.[35]

More recently-published archaeological research, however, suggests that the link between nucleation and common-field creation is becoming less certain. The change in settlement pattern from dispersed to nucleated on *low status, rural sites* is emerging as a more hesitant, staged, complex and longer-term process than had hitherto been realized.[36] The planned, nucleated settlements of the tenth century, of which landscape it was assumed that planned field systems were an integral part, appear to have been preceded by at least one phase in which some nucleation might have occurred, but in which such settlement was informal and unplanned, and which may have co-existed with dispersal: 'settlements very close to later villages but apparently of a formless nature and unrelated in morphology to the subsequent [planned] layout'.[37] At the end of that period, planned settlements in low status rural vills in eleventh-century Cambridgeshire, for example, were being laid out over common-field furlongs that clearly predated them.[38] As Jones and Page have observed in a similar context, 'what cannot be substantiated anywhere but in a few special cases, either because the evidence remains too vague or because it simply did not happen, is a link between nucleation and the abandonment of outlying farmsteads, the freeing-up of the countryside, and the laying out of the open fields'.[39] By contrast, there is evidence on *high status, rural sites* of planned settlement nucleation from the late seventh century onwards at places like North Elmham (Norfolk), Flixborough (Lincs.), Whitby (Yorks.), Pennyland (Bucks.), Raunds (Northants.), Yarnton (Oxon.), Ely (Cambs.) and Brandon (Suffolk) – many at ecclesiastical or royal estate centres.[40]

This leaves the question of the link between the origins of nucleated settlement and common fields in a state of flux. The possibility of a longer-term, more complex, process of settlement nucleation in which settlement status also played a part, suggests that the apparently straightforward relationship between the origins of nucleation and the origins of common fields may need to be reconsidered.

The possibility of an earlier origin for elements of common-field cultivation has recently received new stimulus from both historians and archaeologists. Economic historians have demonstrated the rapid, often planned, growth of north-western European economies during the 'long' eighth century, and the primary role of agriculture in producing the surplus that stimu-

[35] Hooke, *Anglo-Saxon landscapes*, p. 115.

[36] A. E. Brown and G. Foard, 'The Saxon landscape: a regional perspective', in P. Everson and T. Williamson (eds), *The archaeology of landscape* (1998), p. 76; Oosthuizen, *Landscapes decoded*, pp. 145–8; R. Jones and M. Page, *Medieval villages in an English landscape: beginnings and ends* (2006), pp. 88–92 and 104.

[37] C. C. Taylor, *Village and farmstead* (1983), p. 122, my insertion.

[38] S. Oosthuizen, 'Medieval settlement relocation in west Cambridgeshire: three case-studies', *Landscape Hist.* 19 (1997), pp. 43–55.

[39] Jones and Page, *Medieval villages*, p. 104.

[40] For North Elmham, see P. Wade-Martins, 'North Elmham 1', *East Anglian Arch.*, 9 (1980), pp. 122–3; for Flixborough, see K. Ulmschneider, 'Settlement, economy and the "productive" site: middle Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire, AD 650–780', *Medieval Arch.* 44 (2000), pp. 53–79; for Whitby, see S. Denison, 'Anglo-Saxon "planned town" revealed this month', *British Arch.*, 64 (2002), p. 4; for Pennyland and Raunds, see Brown and Foard, 'Saxon landscape', p. 77; for Yarnton and Ely, see J. Blair, *The church in Anglo-Saxon society* (2005), p. 255; for Brandon, see R. Carr, A. Tester and P. Murphy, 'The middle Saxon settlement at Staunch Meadow, Brandon', *Antiquity*, 62 (1988), pp. 371–7.

lated such growth.[41] In many cases, it seems that the lead in the production of such surpluses in the middle Anglo-Saxon period may have been taken by ecclesiastical communities which established specialist trading centres on their estates.[42]

Such economic models have received support from the identification in the Middle Anglo-Saxon landscape, generally by archaeologists, of two related types of field system: blocks of land which may have been used as core demesnes, and early strip fields. Topographical, documentary and field survey studies have identified Middle Anglo-Saxon 'block demesnes' in Suffolk at, for example, Hinton Hall and Wenhaston Old Hall; compact 'demesne blocks' or 'inlands' have been proposed in Northamptonshire at Wollaston, Kislingbury, Hardingstone, Raunds and Higham Ferrers, and in Cambridgeshire at Bourn and Whaddon, in both latter counties apparently predating common-field systems.[43] Pollen evidence indicates that open fields 'defined by roughly oval, lobe-shaped or sub-rectangular enclosures', sometimes apparently divided into strips, appear to have emerged in the south-west during the late sixth and seventh centuries, at least two centuries earlier than the currently accepted dates for open-field cultivation.[44] At West Cotton (Northants.) strip fields were laid out between 600 and 850, predating a ninth-century manorial complex. A similar date, placed somewhere in the 'long' eighth century, has been suggested for a huge, proto-common field, apparently divided into furlongs and strips from the outset, laid out over four parishes near Cambridge. It is remarkably like the possible middle Anglo-Saxon field systems at Dorchester and Sherborne (both Dorset), identified through similar methods.[45]

Indirect evidence from Whittlewood (lying across the boundaries of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire) also suggested a middle Middle Anglo-Saxon date for the beginnings of common fields. There, fieldwalking evidence suggested that arable cores were laid out in each parish between about 850 and 1000, gradually accreting new furlongs over subsequent centuries. However, the researchers concluded that 'this form of farming arrived relatively late' in Whittlewood.[46] As the Whittlewood parishes lay across a pastoral area peripheral to

[41] J. Moreland, 'The significance of production in eighth-century England', in I. L. Hansen and C. Wickham (eds), *The 'long' eighth century* (2000), pp. 69–104; Hamerow, *Early medieval settlements*, p. 170; M. McCormick, *Origins of the European economy* (2001), p. 784.

[42] P. Crabtree, 'Production and consumption in an early complex society: animal use in middle Saxon East Anglia', *World Arch*., 28 (1996), pp. 58–75; Ulmschneider, 'Settlement, economy', pp. 72–9; P. Blinkhorn, 'Of cabbages and kings: production, trade and consumption in middle-Saxon England', in M. Anderton (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon trading centres: beyond the emporia* (1999), pp. 18–19; J. Newman, 'Wics, trade, and the hinterlands – the Ipswich region', in Anderton (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon trading centres*, pp. 32–47; T. Pestell, 'The afterlife of "productive" sites in East Anglia', in Ulmschneider and Pestell (eds.), *Markets*, pp. 133–7; Blair, *Church*, p. 261.

[43] For Suffolk, see P. Warner, *Greens, commons and clayland colonization* (1987), pp. 30–3; for Northants., see a number of papers by D. Hall, 'Fieldwork and field books', pp. 115–31; *Medieval fields* (1983), p. 117; 'Fieldwork and documentary evidence for the layout and organization of early medieval estates in the English midlands', in K. Biddick (ed.), *Archaeological approaches to medieval Europe* (1984), pp. 43–68; 'The late Saxon countryside: villages and their fields', in D. Hooke (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon settlements* (1988), pp. 114–5; for Cambs., see Oosthuizen, *Landscapes decoded*, pp. 125–6; S. Oosthuizen, 'Saxon commons in south Cambridgeshire', *Proc. Cambridge Antiquarian Soc*., 82 (1993), pp. 93–100.

[44] S. J. Rippon, R. M. Fife and A. G. Brown, 'Beyond villages and open fields: the origins and development of a historic landscape characterized by dispersed settlement in south-west England', *Medieval Arch*. 50 (2006), pp. 58–9.

[45] For West Cotton, see Campbell, 'Raunds', p. 65; for Cambridge, see S. Oosthuizen, 'New light on the origins of open field farming?', *Medieval Arch*. 49 (2005), pp. 165–93; for Dorset, see L. Keen, 'The towns of Dorset', in J. Haslam (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon towns in southern England* (1984), pp. 206, 217, 236–8.

[46] Jones and Page, *Medieval villages*, p. 94.

regions of primary arable cultivation, the suggestion of a late introduction of common fields is sensible. The implication, however, is that common-field systems in the more arable parishes surrounding Whittlewood were laid out earlier, that is, before about 850.

The conclusions of landscape historians that areas of core arable may have been laid out in the 'long' eighth century may provide a physical context for proposals by economic and social historians that middle Anglo-Saxon lords began to introduce onto their estates a 'directly exploited core area', sometimes also called 'inland' or 'inner estate', which were centres of specialized agricultural production, and which might, for example, be protected by exemption from taxation.[47]

As the foregoing review has demonstrated, the origins of common fields are most commonly attributed to the tenth century and later, partly because of the supposed link with the emergence of nucleated settlement, and partly because of the difficulties in finding reliable early documentary evidence for them. None of these explanations is entirely satisfactory. Following the lead of more recent research summarised above, would explanations located in the 'long' eighth century be any more successful?

IV

The proposition that the mature common fields of the thirteenth century may have had their origins in the 'long' eighth century is contentious. The exploration presented here is simply intended to investigate the viability of further research, rather than to attempt to prove such a suggestion.

The exploration of the proposition begins here by examining the characteristic distribution of common fields. Most common-field systems seem to have been found across the central and eastern Midlands, from eastern Warwickshire to west Cambridgeshire. In the 'long' eighth century they would have lain squarely within central and eastern Mercia, the Anglo-Saxon kingdom that dominated England throughout this period (Figure 1).

If the Mercian kingdom has a relevance to the origin of common fields, however, three characteristics of middle Anglo-Saxon England in the 'long' eighth century should be noted. The first is the frequent communication, in which Mercia played a leading role, between Anglo-Saxon England and the Carolingian kingdom of the Franks. As Story has concluded, 'although the ruling elite of other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms … had independent connections with the Carolingians, much of the Frankish response to them was conditioned by the state of Frankish diplomacy with Mercia'.[48] Such communication was underpinned by frequent travel between England and the continent, by churchmen, royal and other emissaries, traders, and high status secular and ecclesiastical travellers, enabling elite groups on both sides of the Channel to participate in the lively cultural renaissance that characterises the period.[49]

The second relevant characteristic of the 'long' eighth century is that it coincided with a period in which Mercian state-building was unique in England in its acceleration and consolidation.

[47] R. Faith, *The English peasantry and the growth of lordship* (1997), pp. 20, 30.

[48] J. Storey, *Carolingian connections* (2003), p. 169.

[49] e.g. D. Whitelock, 'The pre-Viking age church in East Anglia', *Anglo-Saxon England* 1 (1972), pp. 1–22; Blair, *Church*, pp. 150–1; Storey, *Connections*, p. 169.

By the reign of Offa (ruled 757–795), of all the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, only Mercia 'could adequately be characterised by most of [the] … list of features' by which an 'ideal' state might be recognised.[50] Grants of enormous estates by charter – principally to members of the royal families and to high-ranking churchmen, but also to ealdormen, and initially almost exclusively for the foundation of ecclesiastical houses – although not a Mercian innovation, was creatively used by the Mercian kings in the construction and consolidation of their kingdom. As Bassett has observed, such grants offered at least a partial solution to 'one of the hardest problems which faced a successful early medieval ruler – how to hold the kingdom together once it had outgrown what he and those around him could control in person'.[51] The vast estates and the charters that accompanied them performed this role in a number of ways.[52] First, because the founders and/or abbots/abbesses of many of the ecclesiastical houses (generally minsters) that received such charters were overwhelmingly drawn from the ruling families, being of either royal or noble birth, they were able to use their dynastic and secular connections strategically, often on behalf of their families, to achieve long-term 'power and wealth based on the exclusive control of land'.[53] The inalienability of such estates was often enhanced by the development of a saintly cult focused on a member of the founder's family, which was very often royal. The monastic house at Wenlock is a typical example of 'a branch of the Mercian royal family, characterized by distinctive alliterating names, which established a dynastic monastery in its own province, and entrusted to it one of its own members, quickly recognized as a saint'.[54] It was founded in the mid- to late seventh century by Merewalh, a son of Penda, whose daughter Mildburg later became the abbess. The minster estate eventually swelled to 220 hides, receiving further grants from Mildburg's two brothers, Merchelm and Mildfrith, and her relation, King Ceolred. The Abbess of Minster-in-Thanet, Æbbe (died 694) is another example: she was 'daughter of King Eormenred of Kent, sister of three saints … and mother of four others'.[55] Second, grants of land by charter could be used by the Mercian kings as a means to 'insert their own men within, and assert their own authority over, the kingdoms that bordered their own', bringing into greater Mercia at various times over the 'long' eighth century previously peripheral regions like Middle Anglia, or extending their overlordship over kingdoms like Kent, the Hwicce and the South Saxons.[56] Third, the innovative requirement from the mid-eighth century for the owners of such very large 'bookland' estates to contribute to the three 'common burdens' (provision of men for the Mercian army, for the construction and repair of public fortifications, and of roads and bridges) provided a vested interest for private estates in their public obligations since they also benefited from the protection of the local armies they helped to maintain. The safeguards of

[50] This sentence is heavily based on C. Wickham, *Framing the early middle ages*, (2005), pp. 303–4. The criteria he proposes are: the centralisation of justice and the army; the development of governmental roles in which the office was permanent and more important than the office-holder; the concept of a public power; independent and stable resources for rulers; and 'a class-based system of surplus extraction and stratification' (p. 303). For a critique of Wickham's use of archaeological material, see C. Hills, 'History and archaeology: the state of play in early medieval Europe', *Antiquity* 81 (2007), pp. 191–200.

[51] S. Bassett, 'Divide and rule? The military infrastructure of eighth- and ninth-century Mercia', *Early Medieval Europe* 15 (2007), p. 84.

[52] Blair, *Church*, pp. 85–91.

[53] Wickham, *Framing*, p. 303; see also Blair, *Church*, p. 85.

[54] A. Thacker, 'Kings, saints and monasteries in pre-Viking Mercia', *Midland Hist.*, 10 (1985), p. 5.

[55] Blair, *Church*, p. 144.

[56] Storey, *Connections*, p. 174.

state authority therefore became at least partially embedded in privatized and inalienable land ownership.[57]

The third pertinent aspect of the 'long' eighth century is that this was a period in which the transition from a predominantly pastoral to a predominantly arable rural economy really got under way. This same period saw rapid economic growth and burgeoning national and international trade, fuelled by increasingly specialized agricultural production and rural industry on minster and other estates owned or controlled by royal kin, high-ranking churchmen, and the secular aristocracy.[58] By the middle of the eighth century, there was a growing group of kings, nobles and churchmen, many connected by kinship and sharing a common religious and classical culture, who had an interest in managing and extending the economic efficiency and profitability of their newly-acquired vast estates, and especially of their core demesnes. Their estate centres may also have acted as centres for trade and exchange within regional, national and international networks.[59] The potential for field systems to contribute to the new economic order may therefore be worth investigating further.

The proposition that some elements of field systems that eventually matured into common-field systems may have had their origin in the 'long' eighth century is not a straightforward one. It might be argued, for example, the period of the 'Carolingian renaissance' in Mercia was relatively brief, perhaps coinciding only with the reigns of Offa and Coenwulf (ruled 796–821), and its brevity makes the potential for the introduction of new techniques of agricultural innovation difficult to argue convincingly. The work of historians of the early medieval period, however, suggests that 'by the 730s, and probably a good deal earlier, Mercian dominance south of the Humber was well established and generally recognized'.[60] The Mercian kings of the period before 730 were no less energetic – Æthelbald (ruled 716–757), for example, in the first year of his reign already demonstrated the 'calculating commercial and fiscal mentality' which was to characterize Mercian kings for the next century at least.[61] And it has been argued that Mercian dominance over London and Droitwich was already clear by the 660s, and lost only between 675 and 704.[62] If it is argued that the 'long' eighth century was too short a period in which new elements of field organisation might develop, it might be remembered that the period of the 'long' eighth century between 670 and 840 covers over 150 years, and the period of the 'Mercian supremacy' is even longer, extending to 890.[63] Either is at least equivalent in length to that between 850 and 1000 to which the origins of common fields are most commonly ascribed.

The possibility of a Mercian origin for common fields raises two further questions, that

[57] Bassett, 'Divide and rule', pp. 57–8.

[58] Moreland, 'Significance of production', pp. 69–104; Hamerow, *Early medieval settlements*, pp. 110–12, 152–5 and 170; McCormick, *Origins*, p. 604. See also pp. 171–5 below.

[59] e.g. Blinkhorn, 'Cabbages', p. 11; B. Palmer, 'The hinterlands of three southern English Emporia: some common themes', in Ulmschneider and Pestell (eds), *Markets*, pp. 51–3; Blair, *Church*, pp. 251–61; J. Naylor, *An archaeology of trade in middle Saxon England* (2004), p. 204.

[60] J. R. Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich, *c*.650–750: trade, industry and the rise of Mercia', *Anglo-Saxon England* 34 (2005), pp. 7–59. See also D. Dumville, 'Essex, Middle Anglia and the expansion of Mercia in the south-east Midlands', in S. Bassett (ed.), *The origins of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms* (1989), p. 136; B. Yorke, *Kings and kingdoms of early Anglo-Saxon England* (1990), pp. 105–10.

[61] Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich', p. 57.

[62] Ibid., pp. 16, 24.

[63] Dumville, 'Essex, Middle Anglia', p. 136.

is, whether Mercian kings and high-ranking churchmen, their kin and other noble families demonstrated the necessary capacity for innovation in that period; and second, whether there is any evidence for the deliberate development in Mercia over the long eighth century of strategies and techniques for estate management. What follows is not an attempt to prove the proposition that common fields originated in eighth-century Mercia. It is simply a way of testing the practicability of such an hypothesis as a framework for future research. If Mercia was not an area of innovation in the 'long' eighth century, then the introduction of new forms of agricultural organisation would be unlikely; and if the region was characterized by economic stagnation, then common field origins would be equally improbable. In fact all the evidence points to the buoyancy of Mercia and a considerable capacity within Mercian society for innovation.

V

The Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia dominated southern England between 680 and 890 (Figure 2).[64] Its borders stretched from south of the Thames to the Humber, and from Wales to the Cam. Beyond its frontiers, East Anglia, Essex, Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Wessex and even parts of Wales all recognized its overlordship for most of that period. One of the most marked attributes of the Mercian kings, and particularly of Offa, seems to have been their engagement first with the Merovingian kingdom and then, especially, with its imperial Carolingian successor. Yet there is little evidence that Mercians aped Carolingians, or *vice versa*. Although 'the resemblances are found to be numerous, yet in no case [are they] so strong as to suggest the direct indebtedness of one country to another'.[65] Instead, throughout the 'long' eighth century, kings, the nobility and leading churchmen on both sides of the Channel appear to have contributed actively to the development of a shared and vibrant culture through which they expressed their status, authority and belief.

References to a Roman imperial past, shared with Carolingian Europe, provided a rich store of real or constructed precedent that could be used creatively to bolster Anglo-Saxon royal authority. For example, the grants of land by charter that were so strategically used by Mercian kings to institutionalize structures of ownership and rights over property may have had Roman antecedents.[66] Nelson has suggested that the Theodosian code may have formed the basis for the imposition in eighth-century Mercia (and ninth-century Francia) of the 'three universal obligations' of military service, the maintenance of roads and bridges, and the construction of public defences.[67] Offa was pro-active in using the structures of the Roman church to underpin the

[64] Ibid., p. 136.

[65] H. Cam, *Local government in Francia and England. A comparison of the local administration and jurisdiction of the Carolingian empire with that of the West Saxon kingdom* (1912), p. 64. See also J. Nelson, 'Carolingian contacts', in Brown and Farr (eds), *Mercia*, pp. 126–43; id., 'England and the continent in the ninth century: ends and beginnings', *Trans. Royal Historical Soc.*, sixth ser., 12 (2002), pp. 1–21; J. Storey, 'Charlemagne and the Anglo-Saxons', in J. Storey (ed.), *Charlemagne: empire and society* (2005), pp. 195–210; S. Oosthuizen, 'Open and common fields in their European context' (submitted for publication).

[66] J. Nelson, *The Frankish world* (1996), p. 90; Wickham, *Framing*, p. 328.

[67] Nelson, *Frankish world*, p. 95; Nelson, 'Carolingian contacts', p. 128.

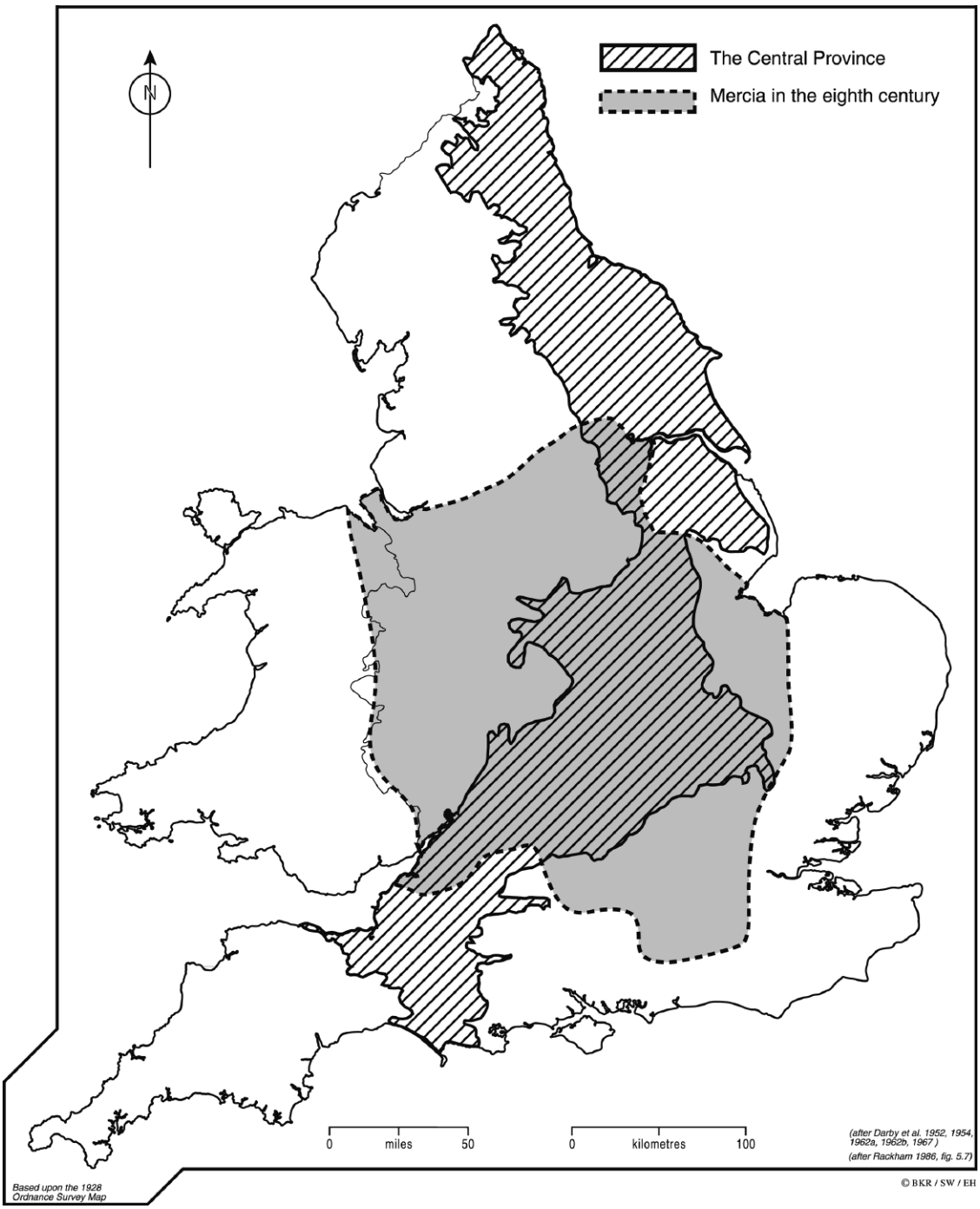


FIGURE 2. England, the Central Province and Mercia in the eighth century

Note: Figure 2 combines that of Mercia in the 'long' eighth century, with the map of the Central Province in Roberts and Wrathmell, *Region and place*, p. 120.

political authority and legitimacy of his crown, for example, by establishing an Archbishopric of Mercia at Lichfield, and at the same time arranging for the consecration of his son, Ecgfrith, by the new Archbishop (shortly after Charlemagne's own sons had been consecrated by the Pope in Rome). The influence of Rome can also be found in dedications of royal churches to St Peter, like that adjoining the palatial hall at Northampton, annual payments to the church in Rome, and the foundation of royal saintly cults which underscored the close relationship between kingship and godliness.[68] Blair has argued that minsters themselves, 'like the charters which safeguarded their lands, were ready-made imports from an urban and bureaucratic Mediterranean world'.[69]

The construction of mechanisms for formal control of the English economy was a Mercian innovation with, for example, Offa's reform and standardisation of coinage in 792 (following Charlemagne's example of 771), and his establishment of royal mints.[70] The importance of Mercia's international trade is underlined by the coincident distribution of Rhenish quernstones and Mercian *sceattas*, and it is notable that, when Offa and Charlemagne were at odds, each sought to punish the other by imposing embargoes on trade with the other kingdom. Naylor has argued that tolls at ports and at inland trading centres were likely to have provided a significant source of revenue for the Mercian kings and a noticeable tax burden for estate owners, since exemption from tolls was a prized attribute of charters from the mid-eighth century onwards.[71]

Mercian material culture was as innovative, frequently sharing many of the same elements or sources with contemporary Carolingian structures and artefacts, even if their interpretation was often distinctively Anglo-Saxon. Mercian kings and the members of their courts constructed churches and palaces using constructional techniques copied, and materials plundered, from Roman buildings, just as was being done on continental Europe. The seventh-century church at Brixworth, for example, re-uses Roman materials in patterns replicating Roman masonry, and in design and ambition it ranks on a par with Carolingian royal churches. Other similar Mercian churches were constructed at Wing, Cirencester, Deerhurst and Leicester (where eighth-century bishops may have re-used part of the structure of the Roman baths in the construction of their new cathedral). The plan of the royal mausoleum at Repton, one of the primary cult sites of the Mercian kings, was derived from those of ecclesiastical buildings in Rome.[72] The enormous eighth-century stone hall at Northampton appears

[68] Hodges, *Anglo-Saxon achievement*, p. 121; Nelson, 'Carolingian contacts', p. 134; Hill, *Atlas*, pp. 121–3; Yorke, *Kings and kingdoms*, p. 95.

[69] Blair, *Church*, p. 282.

[70] Nelson, 'Carolingian contacts', p. 132; S. Coupland, 'Charlemagne's coinage: ideology and economy', in Storey (ed.), *Charlemagne*, pp. 211–2.

[71] Hill, *Atlas*, p. 121; Storey, 'Charlemagne and the Anglo-Saxons', pp. 206–7; Naylor, *Trade*, p. 130.

[72] M. Carver, 'Environment and commodity in Anglo-Saxon England', in Rackham (ed.), *Environment and economy*, p. 2; for Brixworth, see T. Eaton, 'Old ruins new world', *British Arch*. 60 (2001), p. 19; D. Parsons, 'The Mercian church: archaeology and topography', in Brown and Farr (eds), *Mercia*, p. 66; for Wing, Cirencester, and Deerhurst, see Parsons, 'Mercian church', pp. 66–9; for Leicester, see J. Blair, 'Leicester', in M. Lapidge, J. Blair, S. Keynes and D. Scragg (eds), *Blackwell encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England* (1999), p. 281; for Repton, see D. M. Deliyannis, 'Church burial in Anglo-Saxon England: the prerogative of kings', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 29 (1995), pp. 114–5; H. M. Taylor, 'St Wystan's church, Repton, Derbyshire. A reconstructive essay', *Archaeological J*. 144 (1987), p. 220; M. Biddle and B. Kjølbye-Biddle, 'The Repton stone', *Anglo-Saxon England* 14 (1985), p. 235.

to have been modelled on late eighth-century Carolingian palaces, reflecting 'Carolingian influence and patronage at the highest level'.[73] Even constructional techniques were shared: the large cement mixers found at Northampton (Northants.), Duxford (Cambs.) and (outside Mercia) at Wearmouth (Northumb.), with dates ranging from the late seventh to the tenth centuries, are exactly like those excavated at similar sites in Europe. Anglo-Saxon architecture in this period, and especially that of Mercia, reveals unusually high ambitions, being most nearly paralleled not by English structures, but by those built by Carolingian kings at places like St Denis, Aachen and Paderborn. Offa's Dyke, whose origin in Offa's reign is not contested, is an appropriate monument to a man who believed himself to be Charlemagne's equal. It runs from coast to coast over almost 150 miles along the Mercian boundary with Wales, an earthwork twice as long as Hadrian's wall.[74]

The compositions of most surviving middle Anglo-Saxon sculpted stone are based on or include references to late antique or Byzantine forms and, perhaps significantly, most are Mercian, like those at Breedon-on-the-Hill, the Lichfield Angel (apparently carved in the late eighth century for Offa's new cathedral), or the warrior horseman of the Repton stone (perhaps representing Æthelbald of Mercia). The Repton stone demonstrates a confident fusion of English and continental influences, and of the past and the present: it shows a rider dressed in Germanic armour, with a Roman hairstyle and diadem, seated on a horse in a pose borrowed from Byzantium.[75]

The Mercian kings, and the secular and ecclesiastical elites who surrounded them, were therefore active members of a north-west European culture. They were neither insular nor parochial, but confident innovators and contributors. High quality art and architecture continued to be produced in other parts of Anglo-Saxon England, but it was in Mercia that they blossomed during the 'long' eighth century. Northumbria had bloomed in the seventh century; the primacy of Wessex was yet to come. The leading role of Mercian kings, nobles and churchmen in developing new cultural forms during the 'long' eighth century means that it is possible that the earliest forms of common-field cultivation may also have been one of their innovations. It is important, however, to avoid the syllogism that, because Mercians were innovators, and because common fields were an innovation, the latter were a Mercian innovation. The proposition is only possible, not proven.

[73] J. Blair, 'Northampton', in Lapidge *et al.* (eds), *Blackwell encyclopaedia*, p. 333; see also J. Williams, 'From "palace" to "town": Northampton and urban origins', *Anglo-Saxon England* 13 (1984), pp. 124–5, 135–6; C. P. Loveluck, 'Rural settlement hierarchy in the age of Charlemagne', in Storey (ed.), *Charlemagne*, p. 247. For an alternative interpretation, see J. Blair, 'Palaces or minsters? Northampton and Cheddar reconsidered', *Anglo-Saxon England* 25 (1996), p. 104.

[74] For cement mixers at Northampton and Wearmoth, see Loveluck, 'Settlement hierarchy', p. 247; for a cement mixer at Duxford, see Anon., 'Rare Iron Age temple excavated near Cambridge', *British Arch.* 66 (2002), p. 7; for Northampton, see Blair, 'Northampton', pp. 332–3; for Carolingian palaces, see Loveluck, 'Settlement hierarchy', pp. 237–9; for Offa's Dyke, see M. Gelling, *The West Midlands in the early middle ages* (1992), pp. 102–3.

[75] R. Jewell, 'Classicism of Southumbrian sculpture', in Brown and Farr (eds), *Mercia*, pp. 250, 262; J. Hawkes, 'Constructing iconographies: questions of identity in Mercian sculpture', in Brown and Farr (eds), *Mercia*, p. 245; for the Lichfield Angel, see Anon., '"Find of several lifetimes" – cathedral archaeologist', *British Arch.* 88 (2006), p. 7; for the Repton stone, see Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton stone', pp. 233–92.

VI

The archaeology of England suggests that the 'long' eighth century was not merely a period of cultural innovation but also of rapid economic innovation and growth. Mercian economic policy lies within the context of a monetary system that was 'not only integrated regionally, with the *wic* as the focal point, but it also displayed the free movement of currency between regions (and between kingdoms)' in a complex trading system operating through a hierarchy of economic centres at local, regional, national and international level.[76] The centres of the huge, largely ecclesiastical, estates, whose piously-drafted charters may have underplayed their economic potential, seem to have made significant contributions to such growth not only through the production of surpluses of agricultural goods, but also by acting as foci for trade and exchange.[77] The link between estate centres and the wider economy has been concisely expressed by Moreland: 'By the beginning of the eighth century (at the latest) central places had emerged in the English countryside in and through which secular and ecclesiastical elites channelled the fruits of regional production *and* long-distance trade'.[78]

There is growing archaeological evidence for an interest in agricultural efficiency, increased productivity and technological innovation on middle Anglo-Saxon estates, not least in Mercia, as more arable land was being brought into cultivation during a decisive shift from pastoral to arable production.[79] At their least efficient, agricultural surpluses were required to support estate owners and their entourages. But estate management aimed far higher than this. Of the 84 mills on the manors of the royal Carolingian Abbey of St Germaine-des-Prés in Francia, for example, 22 ground sufficient grain to feed the abbey; the income derived from the sale or exchange of grain processed by the other 62 contributed to the disposable income of the estate which might in turn be re-invested or used for luxury goods. An example of such an item might be the peregrine falcon found at Brandon (Suffolk), possibly an estate of the middle Anglo-Saxon minster at Ely, and a specialised production centre and market for making and selling woven and dyed woollen textiles.[80]

Markets and trading networks at local, regional and national levels may have provided the outlets for the 'surpluses sold by minsters [which] would mainly have comprised agrarian bulk goods', even though international trade was probably made up of 'small volume, high value' goods such as textiles, weapons, pottery, glassware and millstones.[81] The high-status, rural industrial site at Brandon (Suffolk), for example, imported grain which had already

[76] M. Metcalf, 'Variations in the composition of the currency at different places in England', in Ulmschneider and Pestell (eds), *Markets*, p. 47.

[77] Palmer, 'Hinterlands', pp. 49, 57; Blair, *Church*, pp. 87, 296, 260–1; Blinkhorn, 'Cabbages', pp. 18–19; Crabtree, 'Production and consumption', p. 64; Hodges, *Achievement*, pp. 139–42.

[78] Moreland, 'Significance of production', p. 102, his emphasis. Wickham (*Framing*, p. 349) suggests that this did not occur for at least another century, but see the critique by Hills ('History and archaeology') of his use of archaeological evidence.

[79] Moreland, 'Significance of production', pp. 65–104; Pestell, 'Afterlife of "productive" sites', in Ulmschneider and Pestell (eds), *Markets*, p. 137; Blair, *Church*, p. 253.

[80] Verhulst, *Carolingian economy*, pp. 68–9; Pestell, 'Afterlife of "productive" sites', pp. 131–2. For the peregrine falcon, see Crabtree, 'Production and consumption', p. 72.

[81] Blair, *Church*, p. 258, my addition. This view is supported by Palmer, 'Hinterlands', pp. 55–7, Blinkhorn, 'Cabbages', pp. 11–16; Moreland, 'Significance of production', pp. 68–104; Naylor, *Trade*, p. 129. See also McCormick, *Origins*, p. 794.

been cleaned.[82] The low species diversity driven into and consumed in the emporia, and the consistently high age and physical homogeneity within species of such animals, offers another example of such large-scale networks of trade linking estate centres and emporia. As this seems to have been the case for animals eaten in emporia across England from Hamwic, through London and Ipswich to York, the adoption of agricultural specialisation as an economic and managerial strategy by the owners of extensive estates seems not to have been a localised phenomenon.[83]

An integrated hierarchy of trading networks has been suggested for middle Anglo-Saxon England, ranging from the great emporia at Hamwih, London, Ipswich and York, through ecclesiastical estate centres and 'productive' sites, to rural sites specialising in particular products, and even temporary markets or fairs set up in fields for a few days a year, each with its own greater or smaller hinterland.[84] The network of *burhs* almost certainly constructed across greater Mercia in the 'long' eighth century must have been part of this hierarchy.[85] While they would have generated demand for agricultural surpluses, at very least to feed the labour required for the construction and maintenance of their defences, it is probable that they also provided locally- and regionally-important markets and centres for trade, protected within the walls of the *burh*. At Hereford, for example, the *burh* included an industrial and trading centre; of the other likely Mercian *burhs*, almost all have survived as county towns drawing produce in from, and distributing goods within, their hinterlands, and linking local and regional markets to national (and international) trading networks.[86] Minster estate centres, too, functioned at a number of levels, each function supporting the others: 'estate and production centres, markets, protected zones, shrines, mausolea of the great, and sources of charity'.[87] At the same time, the first known post-Roman investment in roads and bridges through the three common burdens supplied by the great estates created a land-based transport infrastructure to support, and provide access to, trade by river and sea.[88]

There is growing evidence of specialisation in agricultural production. A more diverse range of arable crops was introduced in this period, with breadwheat in particular, then barley, rye and oats, displacing the previous dominance of emmer and spelt. Some estates specialised in particular crops – at Raunds and West Cotton (both Northants.), for example, the main cereal crop produced in this period appears to have been threshing wheat; some specialisation in malting and brewing may also have occurred at the same sites, where oats and barley may have been grown together for this purpose; and structures tentatively interpreted as granaries have

[82] P. Murphy, 'The Anglo-Saxon landscape and rural economy: some results from sites in East Anglia and Essex', in Rackham (ed.), *Environment and economy*, p. 35.

[83] Crabtree, 'Production and consumption', pp. 58–75; J. Bourdillon, 'The animal provisioning of Saxon Southampton', in Rackham (ed.), *Environment and economy*, p. 123; T. O'Connor, 'Eighth–eleventh-century economy and environment in York', in Rackham (ed.), *Environment and economy*, p. 139.

[84] Palmer, 'Hinterlands', pp. 53–6; Blair, *Church*, p. 261. 'Productive' sites are those which are characterised by an unusual volume of Anglo-Saxon coins and metal-work.

[85] Bassett, 'Divide and rule', p. 83.

[86] Bassett suggests that they included Nottingham, Derby, Leicester, Lincoln, Stamford, Leicester, Lincoln, Northampton, Bedford, Cambridge and Huntingdon (Bassett, 'Divide and rule', pp. 65, 78–81).

[87] Blair, *Church*, p. 261.

[88] Bassett, 'Divide and rule', p. 82; Blair, *Church*, pp. 256–7. See also N. Brooks, *Communities and warfare, 700–1400* (2000), pp. 11–13, 20–2.

been excavated at Yarnton (Oxon.) and West Heslerton (Yorks.).[89] Other places focused on the production of meat and/or animal products. The homogeneity in size, and consistency in age, of animals eaten in Southampton suggest 'planning and control', that is, that these animals were bred for market.[90] Such specialist farms, providing animals for more local centres, may have included Pennylands (Bucks.), Riby Crossroads (Lincs.), Flixborough (Lincs.), and at York and South Newbald (both Yorks.), where intensive stock raising replaced subsistence agriculture in this period. Specialist beef rearing and pork pickling in brine were undertaken at Walpole St Andrew and Terrington St Clements (both Norfolk), while St Albans (Herts.) and Wicken Bonhunt (Essex) were centres for pig breeding and export.[91]

Innovative investment in agricultural production was undertaken in the introduction and/or proliferation of complex and expensive technologies, especially the heavy plough and the watermill. The new crops are, it is claimed, a 'direct record of the ecological impact of the transition from ard cultivation to deep ploughing'.[92] The proliferation of watermills, many with more than one wheel, and with construction dates from the late seventh century onwards, are regarded as a 'key indicator of investment for agricultural productivity', intended for large-scale processing of grain on or near estate centres.[93] Fowler has suggested that 'watermills were intended to cope with much more grain than that either grown or needed by the monastic community alone'.[94] The implication is that both demesnes and other cultivators were producing grain surpluses beyond their own requirements for trading. Exemptions from toll, in these circumstances, may have made a significant difference to profits for estate owners, and may help to explain how why they were so highly prized.[95] Middle Anglo-Saxon mills (not all Mercian), some with multiple wheels, have been excavated at Wareham (Dorset), Old Windsor (Berks.), Nailsworth (Glos.), Wellington (Herefords.) Tamworth (Staffs.), Barking (Essex), Ebbsfleet and Northfleet (Kent), and Corbridge (Northumberland).[96] Further ninth-century mills were recorded in place-names or charters in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, and in Wessex and Kent.[97]

[89] Fowler, *Farming*, pp. 213–4. See also M. Bell, 'Environmental archaeology as an index of continuity and change in the medieval landscape', in M. Aston, D. Austin and C. Dyer (eds), *The rural settlements of medieval England* (1989), pp. 269–86; for Raunds and West Cotton, see Campbell, 'Raunds', p. 67; for Yarnton and West Heslerton, see Blinkhorn, 'Cabbages', p. 16, and Hamerow, *Early medieval settlements*, p. 154; Rippon *et al*, 'Beyond villages', pp. 31–70.

[90] Bourdillon, 'Animal provisioning', p. 123.

[91] For Pennylands, Riby Crossroads and Walpole St Andrew, see Blinkhorn, 'Cabbages', pp. 11–16; for Flixborough, Cottam, York and South Newbald, and Terrington St Clement, see Moreland, 'Significance of production', pp. 87–96; for Wicken Bonhunt, see Crabtree, 'Production and consumption', p. 69; for Wicken Bonhunt and St Albans, see P. Crabtree, 'Animal exploitation in East Anglian villages', in Rackham (ed.), *Environment and economy*, pp. 43, 50.

[92] M. Jones quoted in Fowler, *Farming*, pp. 213–4.

[93] McCormick, *Origins*, p. 10. The earliest known watermill is that at Wareham (Dorset), dated to between 664 and 709 (Blair, *Church*, p. 256); dendrochronology suggests that the mill at Barking was constructed in 705 (K. MacGowan, 'Barking Abbey', *Current Arch*. 149 (1996), p. 175).

[94] Fowler, *Farming*, p. 176.

[95] Naylor, *Trade*, p. 130.

[96] For Wareham, Nailsworth and Northfleet, see Blair, *Church*, p. 256; for Old Windsor and Tamworth, see P. Rhatz and R. Meeson, *An Anglo-Saxon watermill at Tamworth* (1992), p. 15; for Ebbsfleet, see Anon., 'Saxon Watermill', *British Arch*. 66 (2002), p. 6; for Barking, see MacGowan, 'Barking Abbey', p. 175; for Corbridge, see Anon., 'Anglo-Saxon watermill found on Tyne', *British Arch*. 11 (1995), p. 5; for Wellington, see R. Jackson, 'Anglo-Saxon Mill, Wellington', Herefordshire County Council Historic Environment Record, (www.smr.herefordshire.gov.uk/saxon_viking/mill_wellington.htm, 2000, accessed July 2006).

[97] Hooke, *Anglo-Saxon landscapes*, pp. 267–8; Hill, *Atlas*, p. 114.

There is also plentiful evidence of a wide-ranging interest in other forms of rural industrial production often, but not always, in the Central Province, of which the following are just some examples. The production of wool and woollen textiles was a major activity at Cottam (Yorks.), Flixborough (Lincs.), Castor (Cambs.), Brandon (Suffolk), Barking (Essex) and on estates in the Cotswolds.[98] Iron-smelting was undertaken at Maxey (Northants.), Romsey (Hants.), Gillingham (Dorset) and Ramsbury (Wilts.); salt production in Droitwich (Cheshire) and also on the silt fen edge; and leather was produced at Cottam (Yorks.) and Flixborough (Lincs).[99] Place-name specialists, too, have argued that place-names derived from particular crops, animals or animal products may record centres of specialized agricultural production.[100]

An interest in economic innovation, shared with Carolingian estate owners, was also evident in the organisation and administration of extensive estates, and especially of demesnes in the 'long' eighth century. Both English and Frankish demesnes seem to have been located in a single block in each vill, even if the demesne of each extensive estate was dispersed across a number of vills within the estate. Such areas of demesne varied considerably in area. That at Aston Magna (Glos.) was only about 20 or 30 acres in extent, similar to those in Somerset; block demesnes in Suffolk tended to be around 200 acres; while the field systems of Dorset and Cambridgeshire were more extensive, each covering several square miles; those in Northamptonshire have not been quantified in print.[101] Such arable was most frequently organized into one, large open field; both furlongs and strips were sometimes present – the former more frequently on the demesnes, and the latter more commonly associated with peasant holdings; there are hints that crop rotation may have been practised, but generally only on individual holdings or on tightly-administered 'inlands'.[102] The relationship between such field systems, patterns of lordship and social relations, and patterns of production, are questions that urgently need further research.[103]

[98] For Cottam, see J. Richards, 'The Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian sites at Cottam, East Yorkshire' in Ulmschneider and Pestell (eds), *Markets*, p. 165; for Flixborough, see Naylor, *Trade*, p. 118; for Castor and Brandon, see Blinkhorn, 'Cabbages', p. 17; for Barking, see MacGowan, 'Barking', p. 174; for Cotswolds, see Metcalf, 'Variations', pp. 43–4.

[99] For Maxey, see Blinkhorn, 'Cabbages', p. 19; for Romsey, see F. Green, 'Cereals and plant foods: a re-assessment of the Saxon economic evidence from Wessex', in Rackham (ed.), *Environment and economy*, p. 85; for Gillingham, see Moreland, 'Significance of production', pp. 98–9; for Ramsbury, see J. Haslam, 'A middle Saxon iron smelting site at Ramsbury, Wiltshire', *Medieval Arch.* 24 (1980), pp. 1–68; for Droitwich, see Maddicott, 'London and Droitwich', pp. 24–33; for salt-making on the silt fens, see Blinkhorn, 'Cabbages', p. 11; for Cottam, see Ulmschneider, 'Settlement, economy', p. 65; for Flixborough, see Loveluck, 'Settlement hierarchy', pp. 243, 252–3.

[100] For example, M. Costen, 'The Late Saxon landscape', in M. Aston (ed.), *Aspects of the medieval landscape of Somerset* (1988), pp. 33–48.

[101] For Aston Magna, see Faith, *English peasantry*, pp. 171–2; for Somerset, see Rippon *et al*., 'Beyond villages', p. 63; for Suffolk, see Warner, *Clayland colonization*, p. 31; for Dorset, see Keen, 'Dorset', pp. 206, 217; for Cambs., see Oosthuizen, 'New Light', p. 174; for Northants., see Hall's papers cited in n. 43 above.

[102] Hall, 'Fieldwork', p. 117; Hamerow, *Early medieval settlements*, p. 154; Verhulst, *Carolingian economy*, pp. 16–18; Rippon *et al*, 'Beyond villages', pp. 31–70; Fox, 'Approaches', pp. 87–8; Hooke, *Anglo-Saxon landscapes*, pp. 207, 348–352; Hall, 'Fieldwork', p. 50; Warner, *Clayland colonization*, pp. 30–3.

[103] The most authoritative current works on lordship and social relations in England are Faith, *English peasantry*, Wickham, *Framing* and S. Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals* (1994). See also P. Sarris, 'The origins of the manorial economy: new insights from late antiquity', *English Historical Rev.*, 119 (2004), pp. 279–311. For economic relations, see Hansen and Wickham (eds), *'Long' eighth century*, and Wickham, *Framing*.

Royal, ecclesiastical and secular owners may, then, have sought common solutions to the challenges of ensuring the agricultural profitability and efficiency of their extensive estates over the 'long' eighth century. The adoption of open fields across England, by or from the seventh century onwards, in a distribution that ignores the Central Province, suggests that such forms of arable layout and organisation pre-dated common fields. Only in the Central Province were open fields replaced by common fields, whether by evolution or revolution, in the extension and intensification of arable cultivation to create 'an extremely stable grain producing machine, with yields secured by the scale of formal rotations and the integration of arable, meadow and pasture'.[104] Such conclusions raise, but do not answer, important questions about the changing roles of communities and lords, and the relations between them, as well as the part played by each in the production of surpluses.

Much, but by no means all, the evidence cited above, is derived from Anglo-Saxon Mercia. Nor does evidence for strategic organisation and management, and agricultural innovation, predominantly (although not exclusively) on middle Anglo-Saxon Mercian estates, prove that common fields were a Mercian invention. It simply means that the proposition that they may have been has not been disproven.

VII

There is, however, a problem with the argument that common fields – or, rather, the introduction of some elements of field organisation and layout that eventually led to the emergence of medieval common fields – were a Mercian introduction. By the high middle ages, common fields had developed only in central and eastern Mercia, and not in the west of the kingdom. To paraphrase Debby Banham, if the Mercians did introduce common fields, they did not introduce them throughout Mercia and other people must have introduced them in those part of the Central Province outside the kingdom (Figure 1).[105] If the ascription of the earliest elements of common-field cultivation to the 'long' eighth century is correct, then other influences on Mercian estate owners must be sought to explain why common fields developed in some parts of Mercia and not in others.

One such potential factor is contemporary land-use within estates at the time when arable productivity was becoming an issue. Hooke has suggested that 'in general the open fields appear to have been laid out across land that was already open and cultivated in Roman times and in some valley regions of southern England it seems unlikely that the land which was to remain under cultivation ever went out of use'.[106] Is it possible that the agricultural strategies leading to common-field layouts was particularly focused on areas in which grain production was *already* an important part of the local economy?

Maps of the distribution of cleared land in middle Anglo-Saxon England must still be contentious, particularly since the coverage by pollen analysis of the Central Province over the 'long'

[104] Roberts and Wrathmell, *Region and place*, p. 136. See, for example, Fox, 'Approaches', pp. 64–5 for an outline of the phases through which common fields may have developed from open fields.

[105] Banham, 'Race and tillage'.

[106] Hooke, *Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 116. Although 'open' is used here, the context suggests that common fields may be under discussion.

eighth century is still in its infancy. It has been suggested that it may be possible to deduce the distribution of cleared land between *c.*730 and 1086 from the gaps on maps of Anglo-Saxon woodland and woodpasture, and mid-twentieth century commons and wastes.[107] Such evidence is fraught with difficulties.[108] Nonetheless, there does seem to have been more arable or grass land, and lower densities of woodland, inside the Central Province than outside (Figure 3). More significantly, the areas with the most clearances appear to have been in central and parts of eastern Mercia, particularly in northern Oxfordshire, south-eastern Warwickshire, Leicestershire, south-western Northamptonshire, and Cambridgeshire – just those areas in which the distribution of evidence for common fields is most dense (Figures 1 and 3). It is therefore certainly feasible that existing arable was a stimulus to estate owners in central and eastern Mercia for introducing new forms of land and workforce management, and arable cultivation, on their estates.

Hooke has also suggested that Romanization might be a factor in the distribution of common-field systems.[109] Romanized buildings and villas have been found across the central and southern parts of the Central Province, and across south-east England in general (Figure 4).[110] In this case the correlation between Romanized landscapes and common fields is less clear. On the one hand, Romanized buildings and villas do seem to have been most densely distributed in those parts of central and eastern Mercia in which common fields were most frequently found. On the other, they also appear to be clustered in areas in which there was more woodland than in other parts of the Central Province (even if these densities were lower than outside the Central Province). It is difficult to draw firm conclusions about whether and why a history of Romanization might have influenced common field origins without further investigation.[111]

A further area for investigation is suggested by indications that the middle Anglo-Saxon economy may have had a regional bias: trading networks in eastern England appear to have been both more developed and more complex than those in the west. The distribution of *sceattas*, for example, shows a preponderance of finds in eastern and parts of central England, and most 'productive' sites also lie in eastern England, between Reculver and Whitby.[112] Most *sceattas* and foreign coins have been found on sites within 15 km of the sea or a navigable river.[113] The direction of flow of most of those rivers is towards the North Sea, linking ports and estate centres along the eastern seaboard of England both with each other and with the

[107] Roberts and Wrathmell, *Region and place*, p. 28.

[108] Ibid., pp. 27–30. It cannot always be certain, of course, where woodland recorded within a vill may actually have stood. In some cases it may have been at some distance. Nor does the distribution make a distinction between managed stands of woodland, which may have been quite small, and tracts of unmanaged wood or wood pasture.

[109] Hooke, *Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 116.

[110] Roberts and Wrathmell, *Region and place*, pp. 78–9.

[111] Although estate structures in some parts of Carolingian Europe may have been derived from late Roman antecedents, evidence of similar continuity in England is more equivocal: Sarris, 'Origins of the manorial economy', pp. 309–10; McCormick, *Origins*, p. 7.

[112] Metcalf, 'Variation', pp. 42–7; M. Blackburn, '"Productive" sites and the pattern of coin loss in England, 600–1180', in Ulmschneider and Pestell, *Markets*, p. 22. See also Madicott, 'London and Droitwich', p. 13; D. Griffiths, 'Markets and "productive" sites: a view from western Britain', in Ulmschneider and Pestell, *Markets*, pp. 62–72.

[113] Blair, *Church*, pp. 193, 257–8; Palmer, 'Hinterlands', p. 52; Naylor, *Archaeology*, pp. 123, 127.

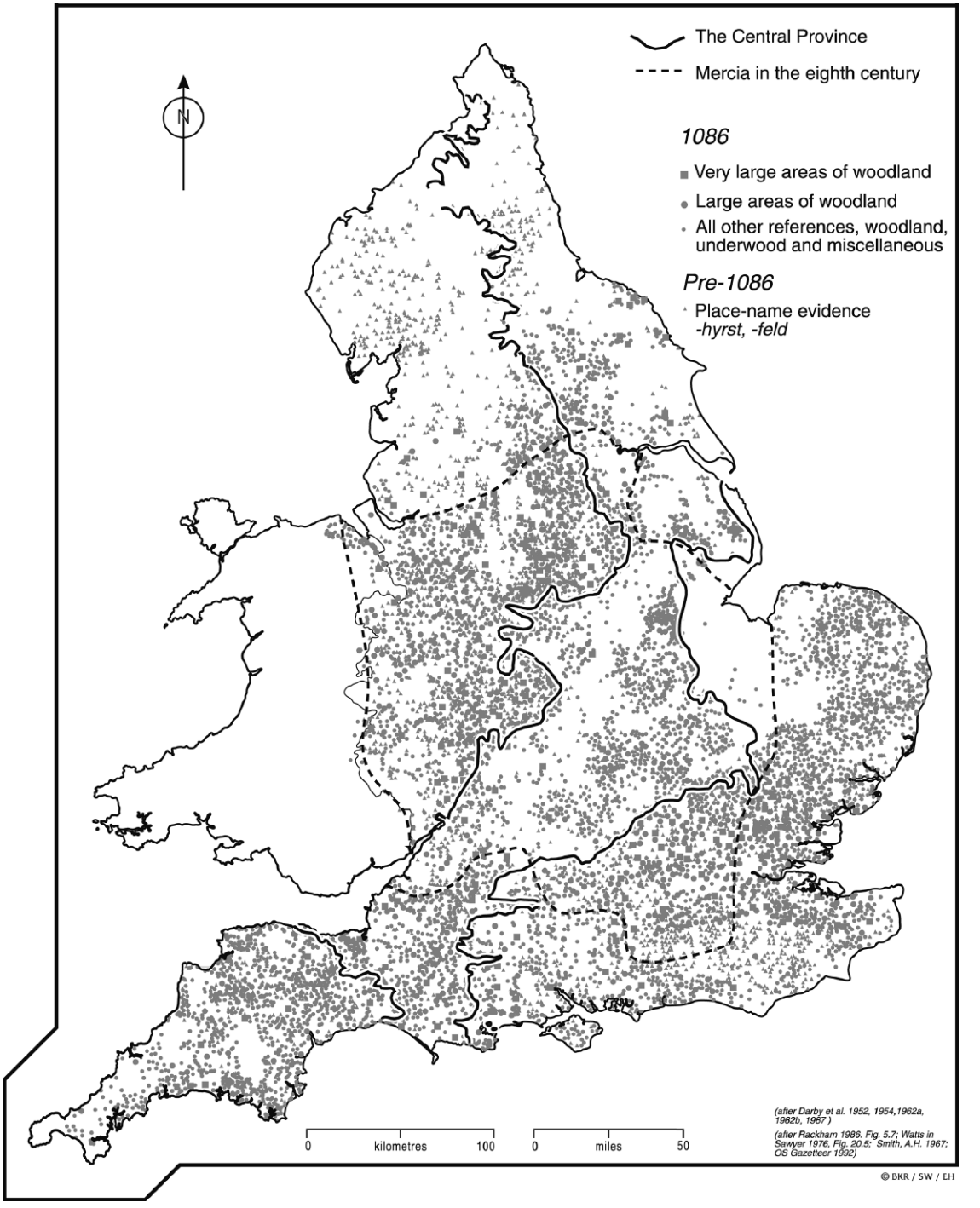


FIGURE 3. England: presence of woodland, *c.*730–1066

Note: this shows, together with the boundaries of 'greater' Mercia and the Central Province, the presence of woodland in England *c.*730–1086, from Roberts and Wrathmell, *Region and place*, p. 28. The latter is based on common lands and woods surviving in England in the 1930s, references to woodland in Domesday Book, and place-names ending in *–leah*, *–hyrst*, *–feld* and *–thveit*

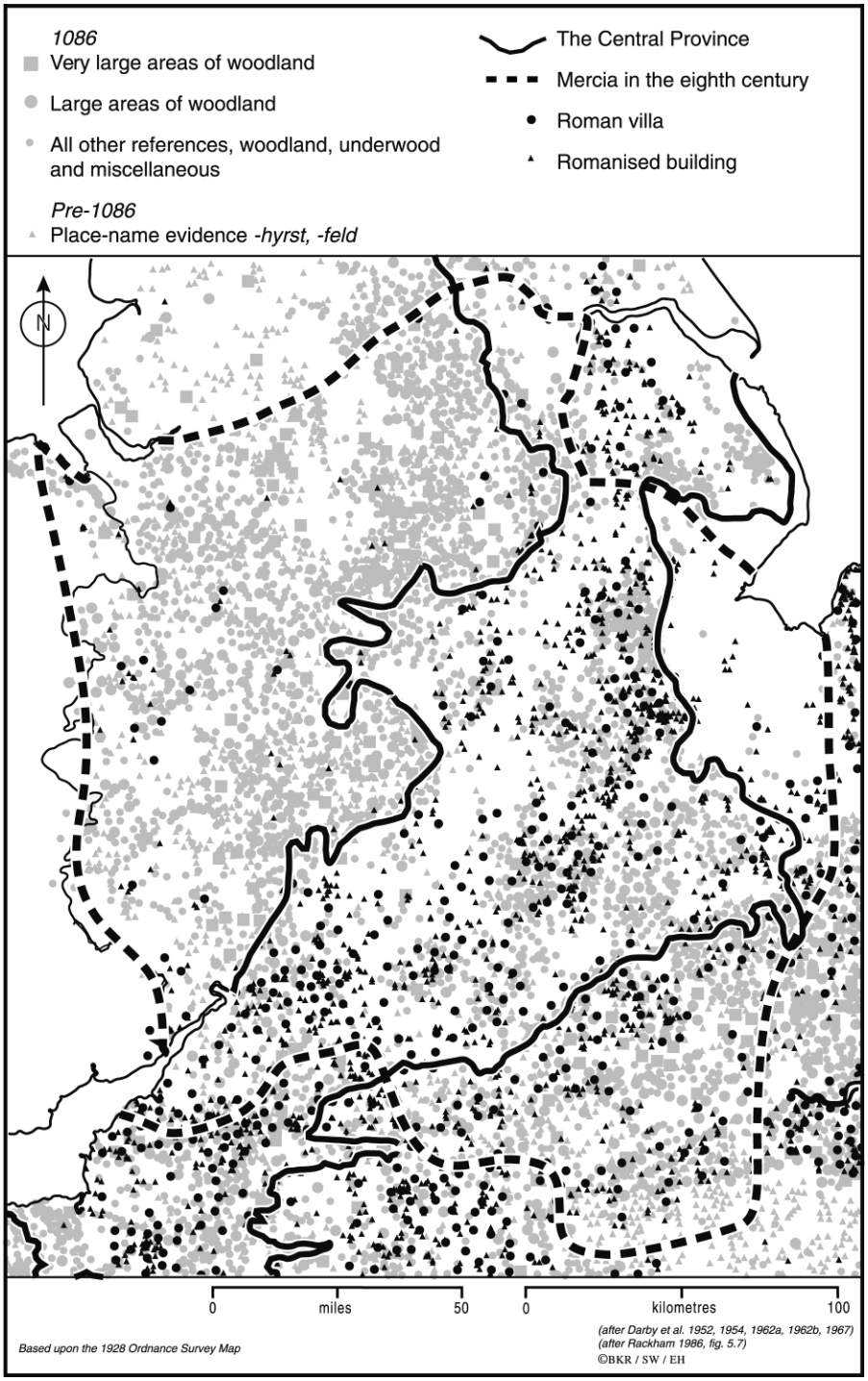


FIGURE 4. Mercia in the eighth century: Roman villas and substantial Romanised buildings

Note: Figure 4 combines the data shown on Figure 3 with two maps showing Romanized buildings and Roman villas, from Roberts and Wrathmell, *Region and place*, pp. 78 (Romanized buildings) and 79 (Roman villas). The additional Roman material in these maps is based on E. Scott, *A gazetteer of Roman villas in Britain* (1993), and A. L. F. Rivet, *The Roman villa in Britain* (1969).

Continent, as well as with inland minster estates and embryonic burhs, both frequently sited on or near rivers or the coast. Ipswich ware, for example, the wheel-made, kiln-fired pottery produced on an industrial scale in Ipswich from about 720 onwards, has been found across eastern England from York to Kent, and inland as far west as Northamptonshire, principally (but not exclusively) on sites in royal or ecclesiastical ownership, in a complex distribution linking geography, economy and status.[114] Further work is needed to explore the degree to which the Mercian Central Province is coincident with the overlap between greater Mercia and the middle Anglo-Saxon economy of eastern England.

VIII

The proposition therefore still seems sufficiently feasible to justify further research that, during the 'long' eighth century, Mercian kings, nobles and churchmen, innovatory in outlook and active participants in a vigorous economy and a dynamic north-west European cultural renaissance, may have developed strategies and techniques for the arable layout, tenure and cropping on the core areas of their estates which eventually led to the development of common fields. In particular, it may be suggested that there are four interdependent issues of particular interest through which the proposition of a Mercian origin for common fields might be explored.

First, who were the owners of middle Anglo-Saxon estates in central and eastern Mercia? Were they of sufficiently high status to be able to undertake capital intensive economic and agricultural innovations? Did owners of ecclesiastical estates follow the same policies of estate management as secular owners? And were early characteristics of common fields more likely to develop on high status than low status rural sites? Second, how important were soil, pasture and existing arable in the innovatory introduction of the early elements that later developed into common fields? And how influential was the persistence of features of the Romano-British landscape into the middle Anglo-Saxon period? Third, how important for Mercian estates in the Central Province was easy access by water (and, to a lesser extent by road) to trading networks with other parts of England and with north-west Europe? And finally, one of the most intriguing coincidences of this study has been the identification of strip cultivation, and the managerial organisation of cropping, with peasant cultivation of Carolingian demesnes. This raises important questions about the role of lordship and of the peasant community in the development of the organisation of common fields, of the role and structure of peasant labour in the production of demesne surpluses, as well as of the contribution to economic growth by peasant production. Such questions will need, too, to be set within the context of the Roman and early Anglo-Saxon periods, in order to assess the influence of the past as well as the degree of innovation involved in early open- and common-field structures.

It is not possible at this stage to suggest whether any of these approaches will be successful. Even if the 'long' eighth century does prove to provide a *locus* for the origins of the elements that eventually resulted in mature common-field systems, it is likely that a complex combination of contributing influences is likely to emerge, each of different weights and possibly varying in relative importance over the period, rather than one single cause.

[114] Blinkhorn, 'Cabbages', pp. 5–8.

There are a number of current models for the process of introduction of common-fields: the slow accretion by assart of further furlongs around an earlier, possibly Roman, arable core; the laying out of huge furlongs taking up almost all the land of each vill in one substantive event; the creation of an intensively cultivated infield – possibly an inland – surrounded by common pastures, over which the common fields were later extended.[115] Such models lie within the wider context of questions concerning explanations for cultural change and innovation. This paper has attempted nothing more than the development of a research agenda over the coming years for the investigation of these questions through a study of common fields in the 'long' eighth century.

[115] Roberts, *English village*, p. 51; Upex, 'Landscape continuity', pp. 77–108; S. Oosthuizen, 'Prehistoric fields into medieval furlongs: Evidence from Caxton, south Cambridgeshire', *Proc. Cambridgeshire Antiquarian Soc*. 86 (1998), pp. 145–52; Hall, *Northamptonshire*, pp. 125–39; Oosthuizen, 'New light'.

The Poor Law Commission and publicly-owned housing in the English countryside, 1834–47

by Roger Wells

Abstract

This paper addresses aspects of the Poor Law Commission's policy of encouraging parishes to dispose of their often considerable stock of social housing, in some cases built up over many years, and a topic previously analysed in this *Review* by John Broad. Policy was in part conditioned by the cost of new workhouses required in many of the unions created under the 1834 New Poor Law. This fell on individual parishes' ratepayers; sales of their real estate would lighten, and sometimes remove, the financial pain. It also arose out of the Commission's commitment to engineering able-bodied workers' independence through the abolition of all non-medical aid funded from the poor rate, which had traditionally included the provision of domestic accommodation at no or nominal rents by overseers of the poor. But, while putting the Commission in charge of sales by parishes, parliamentarians insisted that the owners and occupiers of property in each parish, had to vote to sell or retain, some or all, of their housing stock. The stipulation of compulsory disposals, which Broad erroneously assumed, remained a political impossibility.

In a paper published some years ago in this *Review*, John Broad showed how on the eve of the New Poor Law, some parishes in southern England had accumulated considerable stocks of 'social' housing in which they housed their poor, rent-free or at notional rents.[1] In Bedfordshire 56 per cent of parishes had some housing of this sort at their disposal, in Buckinghamshire 50 per cent. A little over a fifth of all parishes in these two counties were found to own five or more houses. This housing stock, Broad suggested, was largely sold off in the early years of the New Poor Law. 'Once outdoor relief became an anathema, pauper housing was redundant. Logically the only thing to do with such housing was to sell it off.'[2] Parishes were compelled to do this under the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and a further clarifying statute of 1835.[3] Hence the extent of publicly-owned housing has been largely overlooked as very little of it remained in the hands of parishes by mid-century. However, Broad was able to measure the extent of this housing from the documentation parishes supplied to the Poor Law Commission (PLC) and which remains in the Commission's correspondence files in MH 12 at the National Archives.[4]

[1] J. Broad, 'Housing the rural poor in southern England, 1650–1850', *AgHR* 48 (2000), pp. 151–70.

[2] Ibid., p. 170.

[3] Ibid., p. 167.

[4] Unless otherwise noticed, all archival references are to the records of the Poor Law Commission (PLC) held at the National Archives.

The surprise Broad's paper occasioned, both when read as a conference paper and on publication, derives directly from the very weak historiography on the subject of housing accommodation for the rural poor, with the partial exception of an interest in those landlords who rebuilt villages, or used funds available under various land improvement statutes to include labourers' cottages when rebuilding farms; both largely occurred after 1850.[5] While a few Old Poor Law historians have made passing reference to interventions in housing by rural parishes, apart from workhouses and poor-houses, most have not and Broad is to be congratulated on opening up this important but historiographically-neglected subject.[6] One of his principal sources, the massive MH 12 series in the National Archives, which contains the correspondence between the Poor Law Commission at Somerset House and its successors and each New Poor Law Union, has previously been drawn on by a number of scholars concerned with the implementation and subsequent history of the notorious Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834.[7]

Parochial poor law authorities had means other than outright ownership to provide housing for the poor. As Broad showed, some were able to draw on parochial charities which owned houses. Parish vestries and their overseers commonly assisted tenants paying rents to private proprietors, and increasingly directly rented housing accommodation from them – often at no or nominal cost to the occupiers.[8] The authors of the 1834 Poor Law Report condemned this

[5] A. D. M. Phillips, 'Landlord investment in farm buildings in the English Midlands in the mid-nineteenth century', in B. A. Holderness and M. Turner (eds), *Land, labour and agriculture, 1700–1921* (1991), esp. pp. 193, 196–9.

[6] Among the local historians who have picked up on parochial purchases and erection of housing property is J. Saynor, 'The parish administration of Shoreham', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 87 (1972), p. 197, and E. Melling (ed.), *Kentish Sources*, IV, *The Poor* (1964), pp. 11–2, 17, 33–4, 116, 119, 143–4, 162–5. Cf. C. Muldrew and S. King, 'Cash, wages and the economy of makeshifts in England, 1650–1800', in C. Scholliers and L. Schwarz (eds), *Experiencing Wages. Social and cultural aspects of wage forms in Europe since 1500* (2003), p. 170. W. A. Armstrong, *Farmworkers. A social and economic history, 1770–1980* (1988), makes a number of brief points about their domestic accommodation before 1850, most notably about pressures leading to subdivisions of cottages, pp. 56–7; elsewhere, he devotes five pages to plebeian housing in a discussion of workers' 'Food, shelter and self help', in G. E. Mingay (ed.), *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, V, *1750–1850* (1989), pp. 743–8, but here provision by public authorities is absent. The omission is not rectified in J. P. Huzel, 'The labourer and the poor law, 1750–1850', Ibid., pp. 755–809. Cf. M. W. Barley, 'Rural housing in England', in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, IV, *1500–1640* (1967), pp. 696–766, which deals with all categories of dwelling, but only the last seven pages address labourers' accommodation, reflecting evidential scarcity.

[7] Examples of historians who have drawn on MH 12 include N. C. Edsall, *The anti-Poor Law movement, 1834–44* (1971); D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the nineteenth century* (1976); A. Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (1978); A. Brundage, *The making of the New Poor Law. The politics of inquiry, enactment and implementation* (1978); M. Crowther, *The Workhouse System. The history of an English social institution* (1981) and F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism. The workhouse system, 1834–1884* (1993).

In 1990 these and other records were consulted by the present writer in a relatively brief examination of the accretion and use of property by village vestries between *c.*1700 and 1834, which focused on south-east England, namely the historic counties of Kent, Surrey and Sussex. For the early results of that work, R. Wells, 'Social protest, class, conflict and consciousness in the English Countryside, 1700–1880', and M. Reed and R. Wells, 'An agenda for modern English rural history', both in Reed and Wells (eds), *Class, conflict and protest in the English Countryside, 1700–1880* (1990), esp. pp. 139–41, 149–52, and 220–1 where a plea for further engagement with this history was jointly made by the editors. I have more recently explored the accretion and disposal of parish property in my 'Andover antecedents: New Poor Law scandals in Hampshire, 1834–42', *Southern Hist.*, 24 (2002), esp. pp. 127–8, 172–9.

[8] Broad, 'Housing the rural poor', pp. 164–5. Cf. Melling, *Kentish Sources*, IV, pp. 108–9, 143; F. G. Emmison, *Relief of the poor at Eaton Socon, Bedfordshire, 1706–1834* (Bedfordshire Historical Record Soc. 15 1933), pp. 19–20; S. A. Ottoway, 'Providing for the elderly in

practice as a source of significant rent inflation during the enduring post-war agricultural depression. The Report also quoted an official investigator's cogent claim that 'when one pauper has been accustomed to receive' such aid, 'another thinks he is ill-used if it be not allowed to him'. Perhaps surprisingly, *public ownership* and their commonly rent-free tenancies were virtually ignored by the Report, only mentioned – and then in passing – in a substantial quotation from the Rector of Haselbury Bryan in Dorset.[9] If the Report argued that rents would decline if assistance was terminated, one of the main objectives of the new PLC – the eradication of all non-medical outdoor relief to the able-bodied – would be severely compromised if these forms of housing benefit were not stopped in the cause of transforming them into 'independent labourers'.

The Commissioners' lengthy instructions to their original small core of assistants when they commenced operations in their districts during the late autumn of 1834, required them to assess existing workhouse provision, with a view to identifying buildings which could be used – if necessary together, and at least temporarily – to create expeditiously the 'Workhouse System' once the constituent parishes were identified in each new Union. These functionaries were also to comment on public assistance towards meeting the rents charged by private proprietors.[10] Given these parts of their brief, the assistant commissioners reported their surprise at the scale of parochially-owned cottages and tenement buildings, often former village workhouses, with many tenants paying low or token rents, and a considerable proportion, none. Originally, the PLC hoped to minimise the numbers of Unions requiring new and expensive central workhouses, but once this proved optimistic, it speedily perceived that considerable funding could be realised if parish-owned property – as opposed to accommodation, notably almshouses, administered by charitable trustees – was sold. Disposals would also expedite the process of making the able-bodied independent. Monies accruing from parochial sales of real estate might significantly reduce the otherwise politically-sensitive and substantial loans which would be needed to finance new institutions. However, Broad's assumption that the disposal of parochial real estate was compulsory under the 1834 and 1835 acts is erroneous. He wrongly asserts, first that it 'laid down that all parish housing should be sold off to pay for the building of the new

Note 8 continued
eighteenth-century England', *Continuity and Change* 13 (1998), p. 410; Muldrew and King, 'Cash, wages … and makeshifts'; D. R. Mills, 'The poor laws and the distribution of population, *c*.1600–1860, with special reference to Lincolnshire', *Trans. Institute of British Geographers* 26 (1959), p. 186 and J. V. Moseley, 'Poor Law administration in England and Wales, 1834 to 1850, with special reference to the problem of able-bodied pauperism' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1975), p. 15. Very curiously, K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor. Social change and agrarian England, 1660–1900* (1985), p. 105, mentions rents paid by overseers but once and that in a considerable list of benefits illustrative of his surprise over 'the generous and widely encompassing nature of relief' under the Old Poor Law; the range of encompassing is indeed accurate, though observing policy consistently is another matter.

[9] S. G. and E. O. A. Checkland (eds), *The Poor Law Report of 1834* (1974 edn), pp. 82–8, 106, 367–9. Elsewhere, I am examining Old Poor Law practices of direct hirings of accommodation from private landlords, and underwriting rents paid to them by poor tenants.

[10] The Commissioners anticipated that each of several workhouses in a new Union could be 'made to constitute the wards of one common Workhouse', at least initially. PLC instructional circular to the assistant commissioners, and 'Preliminary Considerations – a Memorandum of Essentials', PLC minutes, 4 Nov. [1834]; assistant commissioners Hawley, and A'Court, to PLC, 24 Dec. 1834 and 25 Mar. 1835; MH 1/1, pp. 54–77: MH 12/10669: MH 32/38. British Parliamentary Papers, (hereafter BPP), 1836, XXIX (i), 'PLC Second Annual Report', pp. 16–17, and appendix B.2, assistant commissioner Kay's report on Suffolk and Norfolk.

workhouses', secondly that 'parish housing became redundant, since outdoor relief was prohibited',[11] and thirdly that 'parishes were required to inform the central authority of property they owned'.[12] In fact, property owners and ratepayers had to vote for *or against* proposals to sell all or some of their cottage and other domestic accommodation, at the *parochial level*, a topic to which we return. Hence the voluminous papers relating to disposals in MH 12 are not portfolios of parish properties preceding compulsory and entire disposals, but the list of whatever real estate parish electorates had decided to sell. Some are full lists of community-owned accommodation, compiled after decisions to dispose of it all, but other electorates opted for partial sales and some determined against any sales. In some communities the issue – if raised at all – never reached their formal agendas.[13]

This paper therefore seeks to make a further contribution to the later history of parish housing in southern England. Part I traces the tangled statutory background to the sales, showing how the PLC never sought the power to compel sales (a political impossibility) and the way in which the power of sale remained vested in the owners and occupiers of each parish. The second part queries Broad's view that parishes which entered into Gilbert Unions had little housing property. Part III examines the practical problems which vestries had to overcome in selling property and offers reasons why parishes should often have wished to retain some or all of their housing stock. A short conclusion completes the paper.

I

The Poor Law Amendment Act gave the Commissioners powers effectively to commandeer suitable workhouses 'or any building capable of being converted into one' belonging to individual parishes once they had been allocated to the new Unions. That Act also re-affirmed the powers bestowed by the 1819 Select Vestry Act for parishes to sell 'insufficient' buildings, previously done on the authority 'of the inhabitants in Vestry assembled' expressed through the plural voting system introduced in 1818, and the consent of two magistrates subsequently secured: but the 1834 statute stipulated that sale transactions were to be 'under the control, and subject to the rules, orders, and regulations' which the PLC had the power ostensibly to introduce and enforce. The interpretation section of the statute also firmly stated that whenever the word 'workhouse' appeared in the preceding 108 sections it should be construed as 'any house or

[11] In fact, outdoor relief remained the norm for the elderly able to look after themselves, and was never wholly prohibited to able-bodied males and their families, who remained eligible for publicly-funded medical assistance, even in Unions under able-bodied outdoor relief prohibitory orders; their specific exemption of medical aid endured, and – perhaps ironically in the context of our topic – constituted the first statutorily-underwritten expression of a national health service available to those unable to afford private health care.

[12] Broad, 'Housing the rural poor', p. 167.

[13] These volumes of bound papers of all descriptions, vary in thickness between four and twelve inches, which partially reflects the varying volume of correspondence between individual Unions and Somerset House. Many items are annotated by individual Commissioners, their assistants and other Somerset House staff, respecting the answer, *including important statements of policy*, among them elements which are *not* included in the PLC's annual published reports. Hardly any volumes are foliated, though the papers are mostly in chronological order, which means that providing references in easily accessible form necessitates a brief description of documents cited.

building purchased, erected, hired, or used at the expence of the poor rate' by local authorities 'for the reception, employment, classification, or relief of any poor person'.[14]

In common with many statutes passed at this time, the New Poor Law was poorly-drafted, requiring initial amendment in the short and partly clarificatory Parish Property Act of 1835.[15] Further defects in both acts subsequently emerged though the weakness of Melbourne's parliamentary position meant that certain additional statutory changes, including extra powers for the Commission, were politically unrealisable before Peel's accession to the premiership in August 1841: some were embraced in acts of 1842 and 1844.

The closely inter-related issues of the provision of adequate workhouses and the disposal of other parochial real estate rapidly became problematic from early 1835. The New Poor Law's section which permitted Unions to requisition suitable parish buildings unsurprisingly provoked enquiries during the preliminary discussions between the assistant commissioners and various local representatives about the rents to be paid: the Act was silent on the issue. By mid-January 1835 the Commissioners were in receipt of 'repeated representations of the unequal operation of this section of the Act', not least because a vestry whose workhouse was adequate for its former needs 'might be partially deprived of it', with ratepayers liable to meet the costs of alterations. However, the Commissioners persuaded themselves, after an examination of the two relevant sections of the Act, that they could authorize the payment of rents by the Unions for requisitioned real-estate, adding – in an instructional letter to their assistants on 27 January – that if that interpretation was not fully born out, the PLC would seek statutory amendment. As yet the Commissioners continued cavalierly to encourage and sanction the sale of non-requisitioned properties. For example, on the Rector's report of Great Missenden's unanimous vestry vote for the sale of parish houses in January 1835, he was informed of 'no difficulty' in proceeding, and that the issue of valuations remained the ratepayers' prerogative. Over the winter of 1834–5, assistant commissioner Colonel A'Court unilaterally received permission from Commissioner Lefevre to orchestrate the disposal of all parochial real estate in the new seven-unit Lymington Union (Dorset), which was soon extended to the eleven parishes comprised in its Droxford counterpart, before either jurisdiction had even reached the stage of electing their new Guardians; assistant commissioner Hawley received similar instructions. This produced unregulated and unsupervised sales by some communities. Indeed, when an illegal sale was driven through in February 1835 by the parish officers of Castle Donington (Leics.) against the advice of local grandees who then informed Somerset House, the Commissioners declared that they were too busy to intervene.[16]

In addition, some parishes pre-emptively disposed of buildings they feared might be appropriated.[17] In late February, in undisclosed circumstances, the Commissioners discovered that

[14] 4 & 5 William IV, c. 76, esp. sections 21–3, 25–6 and 109.

[15] 5 & 6 William IV, c. 69, cited Broad, 'Housing the rural poor', p. 167.

[16] PLC minutes, 27 Jan. and 9 Mar. [1835]: letters to PLC from Rev. Capper, Great Missenden, 23 Jan., and draft reply; J. Bakewell, Castle Donington, and draft reply, 9 Feb.; several Amersham Guardians, and draft reply, n.d., but 5 June; Clerk, Amersham, 7 June and 24 Sept.; W. A. Lewis, Basingstoke, and Commissioner Lefevre's annotations, 11 and 16 Apr.: A'Court, 31 Jan., 22 and 28 May, and 17 Sept. 1835: Hawley to Lefevre, 24 Dec. 1834, and to Commissioner Nicholls, 9 and 19 Mar.; Lefevre to A'Court, 5 Feb. (and undated reply), and 8 Sept.: A'Court to Lefevre, 5 Feb., 22 May and 30 Aug. 1835: MH 1/2, pp. 39–40, 115–8: 12/380; 2060; 10669: 32/2; 38.

[17] Assistant overseer, Southwick, to PLC, 15 May 1835, and Lefevre's annotations, MH 12/10767.

they had neither the power to sanction Union rental payments, nor to authorize the sale of buildings *not* required by Unions. On 9 March this intelligence was circulated to their assistants in yet another 'Letter of Instructions', together with confirmation that amending powers were to be sought. In the critical interest of not retarding the accelerating process of declarations of new Unions and the launch of their administrations, the assistants were advised to reveal the Commissioners' desire for remedial legislation, though they were not to 'pledge' that the law would be changed. The PLC concluded – with uncustomary resignation – that it would 'interfere eventually to ensure substantial justice to all parties, even though [political] circumstances should prevent or postpone an alteration of the [1834] Act'. The assistants were also ordered not to raise the question of property disposals unless 'it was forced upon them'. Predictably, it was: A'Court was gravely embarrassed, while Hawley reported 'incessant' questions on the issue and 'much difficulty' in delivering plausible answers. Applications to sell from some individual parishes, among them one sent by the Rector of Framfield (Sussex), were officially sanctioned as late as July 1835. The assistants were also to ensure that at the inaugural meetings of Union Boards, Guardians should pool their local intelligence to enable a collective decision over which buildings they would need, and identify those surplus to their requirements. This was a tall order, especially for Guardians representing parishes with many properties, including rows of cottages under one roof, and it is likely that discussions focused on substantial buildings, namely poor- and workhouses. This was certainly the case at Eton (Berks.), whose Board appointed a sub-committee to view all larger buildings, and make recommendations to their assembled colleagues on those to be retained and used as at least temporary workhouses, intelligence which would also help determine a decision over constructing a central institution.[18]

In the meantime the Commissioners commenced urgent and secretive representations to the government for a statutory amendment, with retrospective components, to escape their predicament, while in the meantime duly registering sales authorised to date and also sanctioning the payment of rents by Unions for the use of individual parish workhouses.[19] Once the government had agreed to seek legislation, further sales applicants were simply informed that there would be a delay.[20] The Parish Property Act was quietly passed at the end of the parliamentary session in early September 1835. It attracted little press coverage at the time,[21] and has been virtually

[18] BPP, 1835, XXV, 'PLC First Annual Report', p. 18. PLC minutes, 27 Jan., 9 Mar., 6 and 20 July: assistant commissioner Gulson to PLC, 1 Apr. and 7 June; PLC reply to Amersham Guardians, *c.*10 June: A'Court to PLC, 18 Jan., and to Lefevre, 5 Feb.; copy, Framfield vestry minutes, enclosed Rev. Smith to PLC, 9 and 14 July; Nicholls to Hawley, and reply 16 and 19 July 1835, MH 1/2, pp. 39–40, 115–8, and unpaginated: 12/380; 10751; 13157: 32/2.

[19] Hawley to PLC, 2 Mar. 1835, MH 12/13046. Basingstoke Union minutes, 27 May and 5 June 1835, Hampshire RO (hereafter HRO), PL III/5/1. Wells, 'Andover antecedents …', pp. 125–7.

[20] Lewis, Basingstoke, to PLC, and reply, 11 and 25 July 1835, MH 12/10669.

[21] Introduced in the Commons on 14 August, it passed the Lords on 7 September. One of the few mentions in the press, on the second reading in the Lords, reveals that the government's spokesman, Lord Lansdowne, ignored the real issue in favour of a brief triumphant account of implementation of the New Poor Law to date, and the considerable reductions of expenditure in the 122 functioning new Unions, while Lord Chancellor Brougham delivered a short eulogy on the Commissioners' new migration scheme whereby rural workers from the South and East Anglia were supported in moving to secure jobs in the industrial North. Brougham also admitted – pompously – that he had had but ten minutes 'to run his eye' over the Bill. *The Times*, 8 Sept. 1835; *Commons J.* 90 (1835), pp. 552, 574, 585, 604–5, 625, 650, 657 and *Hansard*, Lords, third ser. 90 (1835), cols. 746, 1190.

ignored by even specialist historians. The embarrassment persisted. In his later poor law history, former Commissioner Nicholls briefly explained that additional 'powers were much needed' principally 'to obtain convenient sites' for substantial new institutions, or to otherwise 'provide the necessary workhouse accommodation' in the new Unions. These assertions constitute a partial misrepresentation of the Act's purpose.[22]

The Act retrospectively legalised completed property sales and Union rent payments for hired parish workhouses; it also gave Unions the option of renting or purchasing parish workhouses 'on fair and equitable terms', responsibilities delegated by the Commissioners to the assistant commissioners. Formal appropriation orders for Union requisitions were subsequently issued by the Commission. The Act also acknowledged that parish real estate was legally vested in the parish officers on behalf of the occupiers and owners of private property in the parish. It re-affirmed voting arrangements and the requirement to secure the Commissioners' sanction, but added that conveyances of parish property were to be authenticated by their seal. The Commissioners were also compelled to keep a register of all property sales (which apparently has not survived). In a circular, the Commissioners significantly stressed that their assistants must 'follow' the majority view expressed by parish voters, suggesting that Somerset House had been privately and rightly accused of orchestrating pressure in favour of disposals. Officials also made clear that no general order – which would have necessitated forty days' advance notice from the Commission to parliament – for property disposals was to be expected. After the Bill's passage, the Commission 'for the sake of uniformity … decided on all applications for sale being made by a majority of Parish Officers, and some of the [ratepaying and owning] Inhabitants' on a provided form to apply through the relevant Board of Guardians. Their clerks were to notify Somerset House, whereupon a series of printed forms would be sent requiring completion at the parish level: 'addit[iona]l marginal instructions' went on an amended version of the forms from mid-1836, requiring the estimation of the values and/or the present rents of properties listed for sale. A further amendment introduced from 1837 listed five main categories of legitimate use of the funds realised, and an extended list of specific questions about the properties, including the identities of interested manorial lords, but the basic *procedure* remained. Due advance public notice – at least three clear days – of the initial vestry or other parish meeting to decide on sales, was to be recorded, as was the intended use of proceeds. The latter had to comply with the 1835 Act's requirement of consistency with the criterion 'for the permanent improvement of the parish'. The incumbent and the parish officers had to confirm that the required vote had been obtained, and that the details had been entered into vestry minute books. Parish paperwork then went first to the Board of Guardians who were required to confirm (by the signatures of a majority of Guardians) that the property was not needed for Union purposes, whereupon the documentation was to be forwarded to the Commission for its sanction. The Commissioners – rather than the Act – stipulated that the funds realised were to be initially paid to Union Treasurers, usually bankers holding the Union account, with an obligation placed on them to ensure that the proceeds were used in conformity with stated intentions, which speaks volumes about Somerset House's perception of parish officers' integrity. Surpluses were to be retained by the Union, or in the case

[22] G. Nicholls, *A history of the English Poor Laws* (3 vols., new edition ed. H. G. Willink, 1898,), III, p. 308. Cf. 'PLC First Annual Report', p. 18.

of parishes without debts, to be invested in government stocks or other loans to statutory bodies, including the new Unions; the interest was to subsidise individual *parishes'* poor rates.[23]

Ironically the 1835 Act also proved deficient. Although passed during the last few days of an parliamentary session unusually extended into early September, long after most members of both houses had returned to the country, it beggars belief that even depleted houses stuffed with lords of manors did not specifically include authorisation of the sale of copyhold property: the oversight went unnoticed until March 1836, when the realisation negated numerous sales actually in progress.[24] Nor was 'permanent improvement' defined, until after much confusion and the matter's belated referral to the Attorney General in May 1837.[25] A government bill addressing the copyhold issue was postponed in 1836 to the next Session in obscure circumstances. It became the first of the two short amending Acts passed in 1837 and 1838; the second, delayed by a year owing to the death of William IV, permitted funds realised from sales to pay-off illegally-incurred parish debts, which were often substantial, and – after Nicholls' early suggestion that they be liquidated through voluntary rates paid by the affluent proved hopelessly optimistic[26] – a source of 'great uneasiness' to the Commission. It was clearly relieved once the government committed itself in earnest to the new short Bill, and publicly exuded confidence in its enactment as early as 3 March, which proved realistic, with the statute's relatively expeditious passage to become law from 11 June. In the case of funds from property sales being used to pay off illegal debts, a *further* vote by the ratepayers and owners was required, and in contrast to the printed form used for agreements to sell, this

[23] For the context of the central register's disappearance, see below, p. 197. 5 & 6 William IV, c. 69. PLC circular to assistant commissioners, accompanying copies of the Act; appropriation order, Aylsham and Erpingham Union, PLC minutes, 28 Sept. 1835 and 19 May 1836: PLC to Gloucestershire justice Hayward, 14 May; Clerk, Uckfield, to PLC, 28 Sept. 1835; PLC to Chairman, Midhurst Union, and Clerk, Basingstoke, to Chadwick, 14 Mar. and 12 Sept.; lithographed letter, Chadwick to Aston Clinton overseers, dated 15 Aug.; draft, Chadwick to Iping parish officers, and annotation on Trotton parish officers to PLC, 14 Mar. and 20 Apr.; Chadwick to Clerk, Aylesbury, 12 July; Silchester sale application, and draft reply, 1 Nov. 1836, and 6 May 1837; copy, PLC to Helmsley Clerk, 23 Nov. 1839, MH 1/4, unpaginated; 6, p. 286: 12/405; 4073; 10670; 13028; 14483. BPP, 1837, XXI, 'PLC Third Annual Report', App. A1, instructional letter to Boards of Guardians on their formation. Chairman, Midhurst Union, to Lefevre, 29 Mar. 1838, House of Lords RO (hereafter HLRO), SLF 1/6.

[24] North Walsham sale application, 30 Nov. 1835, and sale sanction annotation, 17 Jan.; PLC to Union Clerks of Banbury, Winslow and Basingstoke, 4 and 6 Apr., and 9 May, and to North Walsham parish officers, 18 Aug.; Clerks, Droxford, and Fareham, to PLC, and replies, 10 and 19 Apr., and 15 and 28 Apr. 1836: Tufnell to Nicholls, 10 Mar. 1837, MH 12/512; 9577; 10669; 10670; 10751; 10767; 13157: 32/69.

[25] He decided that monies so realised could be used for the erection of vestry rooms, provision of parish pumps, school-houses, fire-stations and lock-ups; any repair costs for churches, graveyard extensions and new walls, had to be met from the increasingly contentious church rate. PLC minutes, 6 and 19 May 1837, MH 1/11, pp. 62–3, 189.

[26] Nicholls, draft reply to Midhurst auditor, Mason, February: PLC minutes, 10 Mar. 1836, MH 1/5, p. 399: 12/13028. At Hellingly, the vestry – probably under pressure from the Earl of Chichester, one of the grandest East Sussex landowners with a considerable interest in the parish – agreed that its colossal debt, much of it incurred in obtaining the substantial portfolio of cottage accommodation, should be paid off by an annual £100 raised through a 'Voluntary Assessment'. The first, eight months later, raised but £55 whereupon £45 was handed over – illegally – by the waywardens from the highway rate. The voluntary scheme was abandoned after the next levy raised a paltry £25, by which time the trustees of the biggest lender, 'the late Elizabeth Neaves', had threatened to sue for the recovery of £500, which dictated moves to sell much of the remaining parish property. Vestry minutes, 28 Dec. 1837, 2 Aug. 1838, 13 June 1839, 8 and 24 Jan. 1842, East Sussex RO (hereafter ESRO), Par. 375/12/6.

document stipulated that the voters be identified by name and their votes cast for and against. These details were also to be minuted by vestries.[27]

However, subsequent experiences with property disposals and illegal debt liquidations, including parish officers who misled Union Treasurers, revealed further statutory inadequacies. When challenged in 1839, the Commissioners' assumptions that the 1838 Act enabled them to sanction the repayment of technically illegal debts, and deemed 'to constitute fair and just claims against' a parish, were rejected by the Crown's law officers. Their grounds were that the 1838 'enactment is limited by the preamble', which in fact ostensibly stipulated that only debts incurred in financing the purchases of land and buildings for *post-1834* '[work] houses for the reception of the poor', were commensurate with the 'permanent improvement of the parish' criteria. Somerset House lawyers responded by noting the New Poor Law's legitimisation of funding emigration, and the 1835 Act's use of the phrase 'liquidisation of any debt contracted … for the permanent advantage of the parish', and on referral to the Crown's law officers that point was conceded, namely that pre-1834 debts incurred for emigration purposes, could be repaid from the proceeds of property sales.[28] But other issues remained unresolved, including those over sales of workhouses owned by dissolved Gilbert Unions (and other incorporations), and the discharge of bonded debts incurred by individual parishes – up to sixty years previously under Gilbert's Act – when making their contributions towards the costs of then new workhouse erection. The 1782 statute's stipulation that loans – raised on £50 bonds issued to individual lenders – was refined by an amending Act of 1803, which required these to be paid off over twenty years.[29] If many in the newer Gilbert Unions were still covered by that timescale, hundreds of parishes had paid only the interest; if others had liquidated some bonds, most were faced by the advancing prospect of the repayment of a considerable capital sum under the twenty-year rule. Conversely, in the older Unions, many bonds remained unpaid, and were commonly held by the heirs of the original lenders; more had changed hands at some point in the past. If the Commission eventually conceded that these remained legally-enforceable liabilities, the legality of interest payments on them remained ambiguous – it had been challenged by some New Poor Law auditors – with the result that unpaid interest inflated the original debt.[30]

[27] 1 Vic. c. 50. 1 & 2 Vic. c. 25. BPP, 1837–8, XXVIII, 'PLC Fourth Annual Report', p. 35. Nicholls to Mason as cited in previous note; draft reply, PLC to the overseer of the poor, Buckland, Buckinghamshire, 23 Aug. 1836; Framfield, renewed application for sale of copyhold property, and reply re. Lord of Manor, enclosing copy of relevant manorial roll entries, 12 July and 12 Sept. 1837: Tufnell to PLC, 4 July: Chadwick to Aylesbury Clerk, 3 Mar. 1838: application forms for repayment of illegal debts, Uckfield parish, 23 Feb. and 25 Sept. 1839, MH 12/405, 406; 13158; 13159: 32/70. For an example of vote to repay illegal debts, see Framfield vestry minutes, 22 Nov. 1838, ESRO, Par. 343/12/2.

[28] PLC minutes, 6 May 1839, MH 1/17, pp. 350–1. The attorney general additionally confirmed that the financing of new schools from the proceeds of sales – the wish of some parishes with funds surplus to debt liquidations, and another item on this referral – was a legitimate 'permanent improvement'. 1 & 2 Vic. c. 25, sect. 1. The case and responses are detailed in PLC, *Official Circular*, 1, 8 Jan. 1840, pp. 13–5.

[29] 43 Geo. III, c. 110.

[30] Interim initiatives under the PLC's presumed prerogatives which succeeded only in spawning confusion, included an 1838 stipulation that 'new loans' guaranteed by the Union, not the parish, could be obtained to clear previously illegal debts, newly designated as 'fair' but 'not strictly legal', yet not extending to outstanding interest owed. Clerk, Midhurst, to PLC, and draft reply, 25 and 29 June: Clerk, Sevenoaks, to PLC, and draft reply, 14 and 19 Sept. 1838, MH 12/5316; 13029. BPP, 1840, XVII, 'Report of the Poor Law Commissioners … on the continuance of the Poor Law Commission and on some further amendments of the laws relating to the relief of the poor', p. 59.

An Act of 1842 'to explain and amend the Acts regulating the Sale of Parish Property', again retrospectively applied to property sold under the Commission's auspices – including legitimating dissolved Gilbert Union workhouses purchased by new Unions or otherwise disposed of – and also extended the provisions respecting the repayment of illegal debts by all parishes, irrespective of their previous status. These were broadened to include 'recognised *bonâ fide* Debts' incurred by parish officers at least one year before the passage of the New Poor Law, and specifically added those derived from unpaid interest past *and* future. These could be liquidated by the sale of parish real estate, *or* through calculating the total debt and repaying it from the poor rates over the following ten years. Alternatively, and quite critically, the Act also enabled parish officers to liquidate current debts by borrowing the necessary funds; new loans for these purposes were to be paid off over the same timescale. These were *optional* provisions, and the initiative lay with the ratepayers and owners voting which alternative to adopt, or none at all. The mode of addressing the problem of debt eradication – through the rates or by a new loan and the time span – required the Commissioners' sanction.[31]

Other matters were resolved – usually protractedly – by the courts. Two examples will suffice. The Windsor Union (Berks.) quickly identified the best site for a new workhouse as being four acres of land owned by Old Windsor parish; on it were several buildings, part of the largest being a sometime modest workhouse, now converted into tenements, each with a little land as gardens, with the rest used as allotments since 1798, of which there were 33 in 1835. The buildings' trajectory unambiguously conformed to the interpretation clause of the 1834 Act – that the use of the word workhouse therein meant any building previously used to accommodate paupers – and thus the Union could take it over. However, a narrow majority of ratepayers – none too clandestinely mobilised by the Incumbent – objected to the prospect of hosting a Union workhouse, and the loss of the allotments, on which labouring tenants grew significant volumes of vegetables, even more important for wretchedly-paid agricultural labourers with large families, once Unions with or without formal PLC prohibitive orders against (non-medical) outdoor relief to the able-bodied, replaced customary allowances in-aid-of wages by workhouse orders. It subsequently emerged – allegedly – that part of the land had charitable status, whereupon the Commissioners unilaterally decided to seek a ruling from the slow-moving Court of Common Pleas, which delayed the decision in favour of the parish until early 1838.[32] That year also

[31] 5 & 6 Vic. c.18. The evidential basis for this Act, was provided through a PLC circular to all parishes in England and Wales requiring their officers to state outstanding debts. The replies do not appear to have survived, though parish-by-parish totals were published. BPP, 1842, XIX (i), 'PLC Eighth Annual Report', pp. 21–2; cf. BPP, 1843, XXI (i), 'PLC Ninth Annual Report', p. 19. But this Act's provisions, generated conflict between auditors and others, with one experienced Union Clerk complaining as late as 1846 that finalising the issue proved 'by far the most troublesome business I have had to contend with as Clerk'. Copy, printed PLC circular, 1 Aug. 1842, re. application of this Act, and Clerk, Shardlow, to PLC, esp. 10 Jan., 7 Feb. and 13 Mar. 1846; Chilwell, voters' consent to pay illegal debts under the 1842 Act, 7 Mar.: PLC draft minutes, 3 June 1846, MH 2/21: 12/2062. The key circular went unpublished in the PLC's *Official Circular*, until no. 22 (Jan. 1843), pp. 20–2, 25.

[32] The PLC did not even inform the Union Board, and then initially insisted that the cost of the lost action – £430 – be paid by the Union rather than from the PLC's contingency fund. The case can be followed in PLC minutes, 20 Jan., 8, 11, 18 and 27 Feb., 2 and 28 Mar. 1836, 9 Feb. and 24 Oct. 1837, 3 Feb. and 18 May 1838, and in its correspondence with the Union: Old Windsor parish officers to Union Chairman Ward, 23 Nov., and their undated memorial to PLC; Ward to PLC, 3, 4 and 23 Nov.; Ward, and parish officers, to Gilbert, 23 and 30 Nov. 1835; PLC to Clerk, 22 Jan.; legal opinion, J Meadows White, 27 Feb., and White to Ward, 2 Nov. 1836;

witnessed another action in a 'matter of doubt' over whether the Parish Property Act 'vested the title of parish houses' in Union Boards, or retained the customary title of the current parish officers: Queen's Bench ruled – relatively expeditiously – in 1839 in the latter's favour.[33]

It is worthwhile outlining further reasons why none of Broad's three statements quoted before is correct. Although the leaderships of both the Whigs and Tories supported the 1834 Amendment Bill, both parties divided over the issue, notably the Tories, and in both Houses. If those fundamentally opposed MPs, usually on ideological grounds, and with some Radicals among them, were in minorities, others were hostile to specific components and brought forward a significant number of amendments at the committee stage in both Houses. In the Lords the dangerous original proposal to illegalise the payment of all non-medical outdoor relief to the able-bodied from 1 July 1835 was dropped, while only Edwin Chadwick's behind-the scenes vehemence persuaded Althorp, the ministry's pilot in the Commons, not to exclude London.[34] Securing the latter propelled him to assert that the Commission would not intrude into well-run big urban poor-law administrations, many of them under local acts, including several in the metropolis, more in ancient cities (among them Oxford and Norwich), their more recent counterparts (notably Birmingham) and fast-developing new towns (exemplified by Brighton). Under the recent Reform Act, the latter two had become two-seat parliamentary boroughs, together with others such as the new Middlesex constituencies of Finsbury and Marylebone; their electorates expected their new MPs to protect the autonomy created by the expensive process of obtaining local acts which in some senses were embryonic expressions of municipal pride, not least because they often extended – sometimes extensively – beyond poor-law administration.[35] That was also the case in older cities with their ancient borough constituency status, again represented by Oxford and Norwich, to which we could add Exeter, and many more with local acts respecting their poor. Althorp's statement was repeatedly recalled by hostile MPs once the Commission sought to extend its remit over these authorities.[36]

Both Althorp's statement and alterations to the Bill reflect the fact that the measure was a compromise. The administrative revolution represented by the Commissioners themselves, was – to degrees – balanced by the preservation of some local autonomy. That was reflected in the capacity of the new Boards of Guardians to requisition parish properties, balanced by

Note 32 continued
assistant commissioner Hall to Nicholls, 7 Feb.; Clerk to PLC, 17 May and reply, 17 June; copies, Windsor minutes, 22 June 1838, and 17 Aug. 1797 agreement re. use of the land: churchwardens' sworn statement re. subsequent use of land and buildings, 15 Feb. 1836; MH 1/4, pp. 113–5, 223–4, 241–2, 277, 333–4, 356, 523; 9, pp. 390–1; 13, p. 142; 14, pp. 123, 463–4: 12/335, 336.

[33] Clerk, Louth, to PLC, 17 Apr., and reply, 18 May; PLC to Clerk, Helmsley, 23 Nov. 1839, MH 12/6738; 14483.

[34] The best account of the Act's parliamentary passage is Brundage, *Making of the New Poor Law*, ch. 3; cf. S. E. Finer, *The life and times of Sir Edwin Chadwick* (1972 edn), Book 2, ch. IV. Subsequently, Lansdowne also acknowledged politicians' 'strong prejudices and apprehensions' during the period of the Bill's protracted parliamentary progress. *The Times*, 8 Sept. 1835.

[35] The PLC partly conceded the point about municipal pride, but complained that its survey of Local Acts revealed 'almost every form of municipal constitution that can be conceived', exemplified by places where the authorities' personnel was controlled by annual 'popular elections' of candidates irrespective of their socio-economic status, whereas others were nepotistically appointed for life by 'self-containing Boards'; both constituted horrific circumstances, especially in Whig perceptions. 'PLC Fourth Annual …', pp. 14–6.

[36] Althorp's 1834 speech was still being quoted in 1844, ironically by Tory MPs attacking Peel. *Hansard*, Commons, third ser., 76 (1844), cols. 353–7.

parish-by-parish ratepayers' and owners' (not invariably one and the same) right to vote to dispose of – or not – *their* un-requisitioned public property, not the Union's or the state's. The same parochial procedure was also adopted over decisions to fund emigration – or not.[37]

Peel's secure majority from 1841 proved inadequate to legislate for the compulsory dissolution of obdurate Gilbert Unions, whose sterling – if as yet historiographically obscure – campaign, involving Whig, Tory and Radical MPs, resonated traditional English localism. No late Georgian or early Victorian government was going to compel the sale of parish property by statute, least of all a Tory one, as revealed by the 1842 Act's *increasing* occupying ratepayers' powers over those of non-resident owners in decisions to sell or retain properties. Political realities deterred the PLC from *ever* putting compulsion on its shopping list of additional powers. The nearest the Commissioners came to that was the inclusion in their Annual Report for 1840 of a letter from the Clerk of the Langport Union, who accurately claimed that the 'retention of parish houses' was a 'great abuse' of outdoor relief prohibitory orders to the able-bodied, and unpragmatically argued that the PLC should have the power to force Boards of Guardians to compel sales, 'even if in opposition to the parish authorities'. The Commissioners repeatedly emphasised in correspondence with local authorities that they had no powers to compel disposal. Among the assistant commissioners who were disconcerted on receipt of this news in 1835, Tufnell complained that ratepayers would use their 'detestable powers' to demand excessive rents for workhouses taken over by Unions, or force them to buy the properties at extortionate prices by refusing to alter the buildings to meet Somerset House regulations, because the New Poor Law itself limited the Commissioners' authority to compel alterations to those costing under £50. Hawley simply – but accurately – observed that the Parish Property Act gave 'vexatious' ratepayers a 'dangerous advantage' over Boards of Guardians, which he calculated could have been persuaded – by members of his corps – to sell parish properties if Boards had been given the power. These functionaries exuded frustration, but not surprise, at yet another politically diplomatic compromise.[38] Their irritation was shared by others, including some grandees, represented by the Midhurst Union's chairman's view that the disposal of these 'generally unproductive' assets would have 'a very beneficial effect' generally, if compulsory. This also reflects the fact that Boards of Guardians' powers were themselves limited. For example, when the Helmsley Board (Yorkshire) summoned the obdurate overseers of three townships over their refusal to collect rents for retained parish properties before it, Somerset House was obliged to rule that they did not have this power *unless* the properties in question were required for the Union's purposes; nor could the Guardians compel parochial officials to use their powers under the 1819 Select Vestries Act to legally evict their tenants, except in the same circumstances.[39]

II

In his paper, Broad also argues that parishes comprised in Gilbert Unions appear to have had little, if any, publicly-owned housing accommodation, which he attributed to the permissory

[37] For example, the application form completed by Quainton parish, Beds., for PLC sanction for a £100 loan for emigration, 3 May 1836, MH 12/405.

[38] Hawley to Lefevre, 25 Oct. 1835; Tufnell to PLC, 11 Feb. 1836, MH 32/38; 69.

[39] Letters to PLC from Hasler Hollest, 27 Aug. 1836, and Clerk, Helmsley, and reply, 9 and 23 Nov. 1839, MH 12/13028; 14483.

1782 statute's section enabling the disposal of parochial housing to help fund workhouse provision. In fact, two other sections of the statute *prohibited* the institutionalisation of adult people able to earn a living, and directed that parish Guardians find work for the unemployed near to their homes, and, in the event of receiving wages insufficient for families' maintenance, pay a subsidy. This provision was greatly castigated by utilitarians as the first statutory legitimisation of allowances in-aid-of wages, but the disposal of parish housing tenanted by the able-bodied might well compromise this requirement. Moreover, the situation was further complicated as some Gilbert Unions were dissolved – wholly or partly – after disagreements, and there is no comprehensive record of pre-1834 dissolutions. More complications derived from the New Poor Law itself, under which Gilbert Unions were only to be dissolved after a two-thirds majority of votes in *their* Boards of Guardians. Although most did dissolve, others did not, among them East Preston and Sutton in West Sussex, and Alstonefield which straddled the Derbyshire/Staffordshire border – respectively dominated by anti-Poor Law Amendment Act grandees the Earl of Egremont and Sir Henry Fitzherbert Bt; there were also concentrations of obdurate Gilbert Unions in other regions, notably the West Riding. If a mixture of court decisions and statutory amendments over a decade extended the PLC's remit over them, these survivors retained their hostility and degrees of *de facto* independence until their statutory abolition in 1869.[40]

A closer examination of some Gilbert parishes reveals a different picture from Broad's. Certain downland parishes were in the hands of a single gentleman farmer or squire with miniscule populations. Stopham in West Sussex, with a population of just 129 in 1831, typically had 'neither workhouse, poorhouse or [parish] cottage', and even if some of these places hired small houses to accommodate handfuls of 'Infirm Persons', they were thus representative of other such parishes which were in Gilbert Unions. In the principally downland Westhampnett Union for example, ten of the eleven parishes had no property, though Barham on the coastal plain had no less than eleven cottages housing 65 people in the mid-1830s. In the six-parish Thakeham Union, two had no property, and though the largest, Washington, with a population of 793 had but one cottage, more lightly-peopled Ashington and Sullington (respectively 285 and 320) had five cottages apiece, the former's accommodating 27 and the latter 33 'of all Classes and Ages crowded together' in 1835. Of the ten parishes in the Easebourne Union, six – not all downland – had no property, though the rest had a total of ten cottages between them accommodating at least fifty people. Moreover, Woolbeding had borrowed £139 to build two cottages in 1823–4, on

[40] Broad, 'Housing the rural poor', pp. 167–8. 22 Geo. III, c. 83, sect. 22, 29 and 43. There is no authoritative study of Gilbert Unions. They are mentioned in passing by J. R. Poynter, *Society and pauperism. English ideas on poor relief, 1795–1834* (1969), esp. pp. 77–8, while Edsall, *Anti-Poor Law movement*, pp. 133–6, has a cursory glance at the refusal of a minority to vote themselves out of existence. Driver, *Power and pauperism*, pp. 42–7, maps some of the resultant geographical impacts. See also S. and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History*, I, *The Old Poor Law* (1927), esp. pp. 170–2, 272–6, and II, *The last hundred years* (1963 edn), I, pp. 115–6, and 119, n. 1; id., *Statutory authorities for special purposes* (1922), ch. 2. For a typical utilitarian critique, see 'PLC Ninth Annual Report', App. A2, assistant commissioner Twisleton's report on the history of Old Poor Law incorporations. BPP, 1844, X (i), 'Report from the Select Committee on Poor Relief (Gilbert Unions)'; BPP, 1845, XIII (i), 'Select Committee on Poor Relief (Gilbert Unions)'. This, and the following four paragraphs are also influenced by my current work into Gilbert Unions 1782–1834, and the semi-successful – indeed dogged – post-1835 campaign by obdurate non-dissolutionist authorities.

bonds guaranteed by the Union's Visitor and Guardians, which probably reflected the vestry's parlous financial state or legal uncertainty, and possibly both.[41]

Component parishes and townships in Midland and northern Gilbert Unions also possessed property. The township of Shardlow (Derb.), a developing inland port where the Trent and Mersey Canal joined the former river and the cargoes of sea-going vessels were switched to longboats and *vice-versa*, was the centre of a five-unit Gilbert Union from 1811–2, equipped with a new House of Industry. Frustrated by Gilbert's stipulation that no component township was to be more than ten miles from it, a Local Act was obtained in 1816 naming over thirty townships to be embraced in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire. Thereafter, the Shardlow vestry anticipated that it could reduce the numbers of cottages directly rented from its lord of the manor. This not only failed to materialise, but when the lord decided to divest himself of this estate in 1823, the township determined to 'endeavour to purchase' the cottages and secured the first 'refusal in preference to any purchaser'.[42] In the Union centred on Great Glen in Leicestershire, which had a 'tolerably good Workhouse' used by twelve parishes, Great Glen itself also owned 'six cottages with the [framework-knitter's] shop, gardens and appurtances thereto' at the 'Top End', and a further eight similar establishments elsewhere; other member parishes known to have had properties included Smeeton Westerby with at least eleven cottages, Kibworth Beauchamp with seven, and Wilbarton which owned twelve – typically divided into no less than thirty tenements. Another 'small' incorporation at Stretton, also in Leicestershire, had 'a small ordinary poor house' – perhaps surprisingly as the originator here was a former county MP – and 'other parish tenements'.[43] In the West Riding, Lofthouse-cum-Carlton became the centre of a Gilbert Union in 1822, and by 1841 embraced 41 townships; many of them had properties, though various trustees were mostly dead, 'diligent searches' failed to locate deeds, with conveyances unrecorded at the Wakefield Land Registry, and manorial documentation was useless as few were built on wastes. The lawyer trying to sort out this mess claimed that many tenants 'regularly' paid rents and properties were kept in repair from the poor rate, though some were nevertheless in need of attention, including re-roofing.[44] Parishes in the great East Anglian Incorporations of Hundreds also both owned and directly rented tenement accommodation, one of the reasons in an assistant commissioner's analysis why Blything's enormous workhouse, capable of holding a thousand inmates, was but a quarter full in 1835.[45]

Nor did the erection of new Gilbert workhouses ironically dictate the sale of member

[41] Clerk, Eastbourne Union, to PLC, 4 July; Pilkington reports on 'intended' Midhurst, Thakeham, and Steyning Unions, 28 Mar., nd., but 30 Apr., and 15 July 1835: Woolbeding sale application, Oct.; bondholder, widow Knight, Midhurst, and B. Pentress, Iping, to PLC, 28 June and 4 Aug. 1837, MH 12/12854; 13028; 13029; 13099; 13128.

[42] Local Act, 56 Geo. III, c. 66, which retained the obligation on allowances in-aid-of wages for the able-bodied, but inadequately paid. 'Shardlow Journal' (i.e. vestry minutes), esp. 30 Sept. 1812 and 8 May 1823, Derbyshire RO (hereafter DRO), D1326A/PM, 1.

[43] Hall to PLC, 10 Mar. 1836: property sale applications, Sapcote, Smeeton Westerby, Kibworth Beauchamp, and Wilbarton, Feb. 1836, and Great Glen, 26 June 1837, MH 12/6413; 6581.

[44] Letters to PLC from Clerk, Carlton Gilbert Union Board, 6 Mar., and attorney Brown of Wakefield, 15 June, 10 Aug., 14 Oct., 15 Nov. and 13 Dec., and Otley parish officers, 12 Oct.; Lofthouse-cum-Carlton sale application, Nov. 1843, MH 12/15286.

[45] 'PLC First Annual Report', App. B2, assistant commissioner Mott's report, 26 Feb. 1835. Suffolk sale applications, Carlton, 25 Nov. 1837, and Holton, 13 July 1838, MH 12/11732; 11733.

parishes' workhouses. East Lavington in the Easebourne Union converted its establishment to a poor-house, capable of accommodating 30, and was 80 per cent full in 1835. Felpham in the three-parish Yapton Union also downgraded its workhouse to a poor-house, which contained a dozen at the same date, when its partner Walberton's four cottages were filled by 25.[46] On joining Great Glen, the modest Leicestershire town of Market Harborough separated part of its workhouse – situated in the main street – for a 'Detention House' for vagrants, divided the remainder into tenements, and kept the nine cottages erected in the grounds to the rear. Carlton's old workhouse was divided into five tenements.[47] Finally, some Gilbert adoptions in the last years of the Napoleonic war, and the early years of the peace, were instigated by utilitarian reformers, among them the pamphleteering Revd. Becher of Southwell and others in the well-known Nottinghamshire movement. Their real motives were to use the loan facility to provide new workhouses, which were to be illegally deployed by these luminaries to incarcerate unemployed workers and their families, a fact apparently unknown to the historian of that county's reformers, though he mentions their adoption of Gilbert in passing. As one of them – Becher's rival Thomas Nixon – candidly admitted, all be it privately, 'it [was] only by acting in *direct opposition* to … its most important enactments … that the great benefits derived from it' had materialised, namely deterrence and with it reduced poor rates.[48] Ampthill (Beds.) became a single-parish Gilbert adoptee in 1816; by the 1820s it had a utilitarian-driven administration under Visitor Charles May – a Quaker chemist and representative of a small urban elite – anxious to reduce exploitation by underpaying farming employers, who by 1835 had succeeded in making his parish an 'oasis in the desert of pauperism in this district' of largely agrarian and straw-plaiting villages. The Duke of Richmond – an architect of the New Poor Law – had also been illegally pushing the able-bodied unemployed into the Westhampnett workhouse for years, and this may be another explanation for the apparent absence of parish houses in all but one component of that Gilbert Union. The pro-New Poor Law May became vice-chairman of the Ampthill Union, while Richmond chaired his local Union, Westhampnett from its inaugural meeting, also in the spring of 1835. Both became model New Poor Law administrations, while Carlton cussedly soldiered onwards until compulsorily dissolved in 1869.[49]

III

If Broad's analysis of Gilbert parishes requires revision, so too do the ramifications of his assumption of compulsory powers. If this is not the place for either a full account of the disposal

[46] Pilkington to PLC, 8 Feb. and n.d., but 30 Apr. 1835; Northbourne parish officers' return to PLC circular, 30 Sept. 1834, MH 12/4989; 13028; 13198.

[47] Hall, and Brown, to PLC, 7 Nov. 1835 and 15 June 1843; Market Harborough, Lighting and Watching Inspectors' report, 17 Jan. 1839, MH 12/6581; 6582; 15286.

[48] Nixon to PLC, 15 Oct. 1834, MH 12/9228, though cf. BPP, 1837–8, XVIII (iii), 'Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 47th Report', QQ. 16111, 16114. J. D. Marshall, 'The Nottinghamshire reformers and their contribution to the New Poor Law', *EcHR* 13 (1961), pp. 382–96. Poynter, *Society and pauperism*, pp. 311–6.

[49] Ampthill vestry minutes, 1816–21, Bedfordshire RO (hereafter BRO), P.30/8/3. Copy, Ampthill Board inaugural meeting minutes, and assistant commissioner Adey to Chadwick, 16 Apr. and 22 May 1835; Pilkington to PLC, 4 Dec. 1834, 8 and 11 Feb. 1835, MH 12/1; 13198. 'PLC First Annual Report', pp. 172–3: BPP, House of Commons, select committee report, 'Poor Law Amendment Act', (1837–8), XVIII, QQ. 16316–32, evidence of the former farmer of Westhampnett Gilbert Workhouse; Q. 16563, evidence of substantial farmer Woods, Binderton.

process, or the reasons for retentions of housing property, it is worth outlining some of the difficulties faced by vestries. First, much of their property was dilapidated, and if some purchasers came from the ranks of at least moderate estate owners whose principal motive was to demolish adjacent eyesores – 'getting rid of a Nuisance' in the Earl of Liverpool's steward's parlance – the sales to them, or speculative buyers, realised little.[50] Secondly, the scale of disposals in some localities effectively flooded the market, depressing prices further *and* producing unsold lots.[51] Thirdly, traditional speculators in countryside housing for plebeians – notably craftsmen, shopkeepers and others in the rural service industries – were discouraged from further investment by the PLC's campaign against previous rent subsidies paid from the poor rate.[52] Fourthly, the costs of post-1834 poor relief ultimately fell on each parish's ratepayers, including, in the cases of settled claimants, their shelter. The PLC insisted that *de facto* pensions to those unable to maintain themselves, mainly the old and infirm, but also to non-able-bodied adults, should include a consideration for their rent; putting such folk in Union workhouses was *relatively* costly compared to pensions *and* a politically and socially sensitive issue.[53] Incarcerating unemployed able-bodied labouring fathers with large families was *prohibitively* expensive. If this reality ensured that such men were usually given priority by local employers, farmers' concern to maintain local workforces adequate to meet seasonal demand peaks also had implications for local housing markets. Fifthly, the PLC ruled that overseers must collect rents for retained properties adequate to the costs of necessary maintenance, a principle enforced by Union auditors. Rent considerations paid to pensioners were withheld from those tenanting retained properties, and sub-market rent levels could be maintained for others, notably fathers of large families.[54] Auditors had nothing to police when vestries made tenants responsible for repairs, and an alternative ploy with some retained properties was to all intents and purposes abandonment by parish officers, leaving the tenants in possession and to their own devices respecting essential

[50] Squire Wilmot of Chaddesden, Derbyshire, offered £53 for an unstated number of cottages on the waste, 'not worth repairing': copy, Framfield vestry minutes, 9 July 1835: letters to PLC from Market Harborough parish lawyers, 26 Aug. 1837, H. Bull, Aston Clifton, Wilmot, and Rev. De Passon, Hever, respectively 9 Apr., 27 Oct., and n.d. but 4 Nov. 1838, and steward Hall, 7 July 1839, MH 12/406; 2060; 5316; 13157. W. L. Sclater [Chairman of the Basingstoke Union], *Letter to the PLC … on the working of the New System* (Basingstoke, 1836), pp. 10–1.

[51] No buyers attended the Melbourne (Derb.) auction of ten cottages – in 'partial dilapidation and occupied by Paupers' – with gardens in late 1839; sale application, 12 July 1839, and auditor, Shardlow, to PLC, 8 May 1840, MH 12/2060. Among other examples, the 'greater part … still remained unsold' with only a 'small estate' purchased at an auction at Ketton (Rutl.); Stamford Union minutes, 2 Aug. 1836, Lincolnshire RO (hereafter LRO), PL 15/102/1.

[52] The PLC repeatedly claimed that the end of rent subsidies from parochial funds forced landlords to reduce rents significantly, though this was not invariably the case. The PLC was aware that in high-wage rural districts, notably Kent and East Sussex, rents remained stubbornly high, and this was reflected in its differential approach to sanctioning breeches of outdoor relief prohibition orders, though it withheld the latter from its published accounts. 'PLC Fourth Annual Report', pp. 15–6.

[53] PLC minutes, 10 Nov. 1835, 2 Feb. 1838 and 20 Mar. 1839, PLC to Clerk, Dunmow, 26 Sept. 1835; letters to PLC from overseer of Strubby, Linc., 9 and 16 July, auditor, Louth Union, 22 July 1844, and W. Martin, Fulstow, 23 Sept. 1845; MH 1/3, unpaginated; 14, pp. 118–9; 17, pp. 83–5: 12/3456; 6739. Howden Union minutes, 14 Oct. 1837, 24 Nov. 1838, 10 Apr. 1841, 10 May and 22 Nov. 1845, East Riding RO (hereafter ERRO), PUH 1/2/1; 2; 4.

[54] Letter of Strubby overseer as in previous note. PLC minutes, 29 Sept. 1840, MH 1/25, pp. 288–91. Cf. R. Wells, 'Historical trajectories: English social welfare systems, rural riots, popular politics, agrarian trade unions, and allotment provision, 1793–1896', *Southern Hist.*, 25 (2003), pp. 112–6, and sources cited there.

repairs. An agricultural labourer, Charles Lewis, a widower with eight children, domiciled in a ruinous 'one up one down' terraced cottage in the Andover Union, told parliamentary investigators in 1846 that the parish officers 'used to claim the houses, but they had given them all up … but who they belong … to I cannot tell', not least because rents went uncollected.[55]

Property sales remained subject to the stipulations in the 1835 Act into the second half of the twentieth century. In 1878 the then responsible department, the Local Government Board, prior to the sale of cottages at West Clandon in Surrey, categorically reiterated that

> no sale of parish property shall take place except under the authority of an order of the Board [of Guardians] after the consent of a majority of the owners of property and ratepayers … has been given at a [parish] meeting duly convened

by advance notice fixed to church doors, extended at some interim point to seven days, but still commensurate with the ancient mode of announcing general vestry meetings.[56] Although central registration of conveyances ceased from 1882, sales of properties under the 1894 Local Government Act required Parish Councils to obtain the consent of a 'parish meeting', while terminating the plural voting originating in 1818.[57] The monitoring responsibility eventually devolved to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government; however, the basic rules for disposals remained essentially unchanged. To give but one example, in 1962 Beverley District Council decided to build 'a block of old people's bungalows with a communal centre and warden' at Leven, with the concurrence of its parish council; the latter was motivated, first by an anticipated increase in the number of elderly residents, and secondly by the four aged tenants 'at present living in delapidated [sic] Parish Cottages', on a 730 square-yard site in the village centre. That site was not required for the proposed development (belatedly completed in 1965), and the parish council – unsurprisingly 'unable to trace any deeds or [relevant] documents' – sought legal advice over disposal. That led to protracted engagement with the Ministry, which required details of the property, including a map and valuation, and in the absence of deeds, reverted to the practice introduced in such circumstances in 1836–7, requiring a signed statement from an older resident of the parochial authorities' long usage. This was supplied by a retired schoolmaster who was also one of the current tenants. Subsequently, the Ministry required the 'completion of the necessary formalities' for disposal, including confirmation that the 'parish meeting' of 2 March 1964 'consented to the sale and that seven clear days [public] notice of the meeting was given'. Continued delay to the 'welfare bungalows' scheme, saw – be it after a 'lengthy discussion' – the

[55] PLC reply to queries re. parish officers' responsibility for repairing parish properties, from J. Wilson, Bodicote, 23 Sept. 1835: completed parochial 'Declaration of Application of Rates' forms from parishes comprised in the Louth and Hinckley Unions, Oct.–Dec. 1839, MH 12/6444; 9577. BPP, 1846, V, 'Select committee on the administration of the poor law in Andover Union', QQ. 9390–9436, 9699–9704, 9717–24, evidence of Penton Grafton, labourer, Lewis.

[56] Smallpiece and Soles, Guildford Solicitors acting for Lord Onslow, to the Local Government Board (hereafter LGB), and reply, 20 and 22 Aug. 1878; West Clandon sale application, 12 Sept. 1878. For an identical response in 1872, see LGB order to convene a 'Parochial meeting' at Searle (Surrey), sale application, enclosed by Guardian Trotter, 26 and 31 July, to LGB; LGB sanction, 26 Aug.; Nicholl and Newman, Strand, purchaser's lawyers, to the Poor Law Board [sic], 14 Nov. 1872, MH 12/12345; 12779.

[57] 45 & 46 Vict. c. 58, 'An Act to amend the Divided Parishes and Poor Law Amendment Act, 1876', section 14 (3): 56 & 57 Vict. c. 73, Local Government Act, section 8 (2) and 'Second Schedule (acts repealed)'.

parish council decide that 'no sale should take place until the tenants had been rehoused', a condition with many precedents. The property fetched £1250 at auction in September 1965, after which there was further consultation between Leven's lawyer and the Ministry, which eventually sanctioned the devotion of £500 from it to 'fittings for the Common Room' in the new development, in conformity with the 'permanent advantage' statutory requirement.[58]

The foregoing details reveal the duration of the relationship between local and central authorities created under the relevant statutes (1834–44) and the PLC's rules respecting the sale of the former's publicly-owned housing accommodation. The procedures enforced in Surrey in 1878 and Leven in the mid-1960s are eloquent proof that compulsion never went on the state's agenda, except in the very different circumstances addressed by compulsory purchase orders. As a result, Dr Broad's 'distinctive yellow and blue forms to give property descriptions' were not inventories of all 'property … owned' by every parish in each Union. They are not invariably blue or yellow, and more importantly list only those properties identified for sale at meetings of ratepayers and owners of property, and comprise answers to the principally *procedural* questions printed on each form, including evidence of parochial ownership, and in the absence of documentary proof, oaths of elderly parishioners confirming title through decades of use and payments for repairs.[59]

Ironically, in mid-1835 the PLC did introduce a requirement for the compilation of terriers of all real estate owned by parishes, and charitable provisions which effectively supported the poor rate, to be made on Form 5A. Among the details to be entered were the name of the estate and tenant(s), rent received, the use of profits, and the names of present trustees where applicable. These were to be revised annually. Many overseers refused to compile them, not least because they were for auditing purposes in general, and, with regard to parish-owned as opposed to charity property with active trustees, were used – as we have seen – to ensure that the maintenance costs of retained properties were entirely covered by rents received. Enforcement was Union auditors' responsibility. Indeed, and again ironically, when one Union Clerk – after a prolonged struggle with component parishes' officials – sent copies of completed terriers in 1838 to Somerset House, the reply diplomatically conveyed thanks for the

> pains you have taken … but the Com[missione]rs wish to explain to you that in order to save you unnecessary trouble in future that they do not require these documents, to be transmitted … although it is nevertheless essential that they should be made out in accordance with Orders for Keeping and Auditing the Accounts.

[58] File of letters, esp. Neville Hodson and Son to Clerk of Leven Parish Council, 2 and 22 Aug. 1963, 4 and 23 Apr., 7 May and 25 Sept. 1964, 25 Sept. 1965, 3 and 10 Jan. 1966; copy of replies, 23 July and 21 Oct. 1964, and 19 Oct. 1965, ERRO, PC.20/22. Cf. a similar case from Tetney (Lincs.). In the late 1890s the Parish Council inherited two houses 'Know[n] as "the Workhouse"', plus three two-roomed cottages erected in the grounds, another cottage, and two thatched cottages in the village centre, together with a 'Bungalow' – erected at an unknown date by the Parish Council financed from 'the Herbage of Land Fund' (namely, letting pasturage rights on roadside verges, which clearly survived well into the twentieth century). One of the eight old dwellings was demolished by 1929, and another in 1938: four of the remainder were demolished on their elderly tenants' deaths between 1945 and 1967. The fate of the last two went unrecorded, but the bungalow was sold to the district council with 'Vacant possession' on the parish tenant's death in 1977. Memorandum notebooks, 1897–1977, LRO, TetneyPar Co. 1; 2; 3.

[59] Broad, 'Housing the rural poor', p. 167.

The documents were returned.[60] If the Commissioners had required copies of completed terriers, the evidential base for an accurate assessment of the scale of parochially-owned housing accommodation would have been created. Somerset House remained under no illusions as to the social divisiveness of its disposal programme, and equally sensitive to the potential political backlash against the degree of intrusiveness represented by the submission of annually-revised terriers. The foregoing response by the PLC is among the most suggestive expressions of its recognition of these realities yet encountered in the documentation. Where convenient, various aspects of PLC practice – and even policies – went unpublished in its statutory stipulation for annual reports, and these can be established only through close analysis of administrative details emanating from the daily bureaucratic grind.[61]

As early as February 1836 one auditor – responsible for four West Sussex Unions – accurately opined that there would 'not be a Union in the Kingdom that will not borrow Money': others realistically anticipated an intensification of financial pressures on ratepayers – especially the very numerous smaller contributors – notably in parishes where existing significant debts would be inflated, together with the PLC's rigorous enforcement of promptly meeting interest commitments and capital repayment stipulations.[62] There can be no doubt that financing major extensions to existing, and the erection of new workhouses, operated as a major stimulant to property disposals across the country, though the prospect was somewhat mitigated by the speedy and pragmatic extension of state loan repayment periods from ten to twenty years,[63] and in turn perhaps aggravated again – once the law was belatedly clarified – by the stipulation of arrangements for the repayment of illegal debts incurred before 1834. The latter were to take precedence over all other parochial commitments, including capital repayments for proportional contributions to Union loans. Some communities – be it a minority – met their entire share of the latter from property sales and escaped further interest liabilities.[64]

[60] Ironically, assistant commissioner Senior subsequently wrote to the PLC demanding the terrier for Hinckley parish itself, only to be told that it had been returned, and the Clerk informed that they were not required by Somerset House. Letters to PLC, from Clerk Law, Hinckley Union, 9 and 21 Nov. 1836, and Senior 27 Feb. 1839 (and annotations); draft reply to Law, 29 Nov. 1838, MH 12/6443.

[61] The terriers' requirement comprised part of the substantial details on the Commissioners' accounting procedures published in 1835, but – significantly – went unmentioned in their long circular of 1 Mar. 1836 respecting parish officers' accountancy responsibilities, though their obligatory collection of rents from tenants living in retained parish properties was emphasised. 'PLC First Annual Report', App. A11, and 'PLC Second Annual Report', App. A5.

[62] Letters to PLC from Chairman Hollest, and auditor Mason, Midhurst Union, 10 and 20 Feb.; and Aylesbury Clerk, 3 Mar.; Haddenham parish officers, 25 June, and auditor, Ashby-de-la-Zouch Union, 15 Oct. 1836, MH 12/405; 6387; 13028.

[63] Identical arguments were advanced by assistant commissioners when addressing public meetings prior to Union formation, *Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 16 Oct. 1835. The 'sweetener' element of disposals was promiscuously evinced across the country and over time; for examples see: Driffield Union minutes, 1 Dec. 1836; and Clerk to assistant commissioner Revans, 22 Dec. 1836 and 23 Mar. 1837, Clerk's out-letter book, ERRO, PUD 1/1, 8/1. Basingstoke Union minutes, 27 May, 5 and 12 June 1835, HRO, PL.III/5/1. Rector of Pewsey, and T. Oakley, Sandridge, Hertf., to Lefevre, 3 Oct. 1836 and 25 Nov. 1837, HLRO, SLF.1/2; 7. Clerks, Basingstoke, and Amersham Unions, to PLC, 8 June 1835 and 18 Jan. 1838, MH 12/382; 10669.

[64] PLC minutes, 10 Oct. 1838: letters to PLC from Union Clerks, Hinckley, and reply, 27 Feb. and 18 Mar., Uckfield and reply, 16 Feb. and 16 Mar. 1839, Epsom, 9 Dec. 1841 and annotations; PLC to Hinckley, 23 Apr. 1846, MH 1/15 (unpaginated part): 12/6443; 6445; 12237; 13159. Petition to both Houses of Parliament copied into Shardlow parish journal, 30 Mar. 1840, DRO, D1326A/PM, 1. Easton-on-the-Hill which received £422 net from its sales, paid £251 into the new workhouse fund, which

The PLC's own statistics, published in its annual report for 1841, reveal that the numbers of disposals reached a peak in 1838–9, which is different from Broad's impression that 'most sales' took place between 1834 and 1842; his 'checks up to 1854 on a random selection of unions show rare occasions where sales were delayed beyond 1850'.[65] Perhaps these Unions are either too few, or unrepresentative, because checks across the 1842 to 1854 period should have revealed details of the sell-offs. These include both *calculated* partial, and *staggered* disposals, agreed in some communities in the latter category through the submission of later applications.[66] Moreover, disposals were contested, and if current occupants' resistance was to be anticipated, they found supporters from most elements within rural communities. When faced with pre-sale evictions, many tenants who paid no rent claimed ownership on the grounds of 'key-holding', by which previous incoming 'tenants' had handed cash to outgoing tenants for the key, and with it possession, without reference to parish officers; some of these disputes ended in the courts, which on occasion ruled in keyholders' favour.[67] These cases, and other evidence, also reveals that properties with sitting tenants fetched lower prices, and again on occasion sales were conditional on buyers giving security of tenure to sitting tenants for life, at sub-market rents.[68] There is little evidence about parochial meetings which rejected motions to sell, not least because there was no requirement to report negative outcomes and Somerset House was under too much pressure to follow-up sanctioned applications to call meetings in parishes which did not proceed further, but the odd notification was made, including a vote at Grendon Underwood (Bucks.).[69] At Brasted (Kent), the Revd. Burton emerged as the principal advocate of sale, only to typically 'experience … much annoyance and difficulty in carrying the object'. Although most believed that vacant properties fetched better prices, a minority held that sitting tenants were attractive

Note 64 continued
reduced its annual loan contribution to a mere annual £24; it invested the remainder into government consuls. Stamford Union minutes, 2 and 23 Aug. 1836, and 5 June 1836, LRO, PL.15/102/1; 2. Cf. parochial sales totals in PLC, *Official Circular*, 1, 8 Jan. 1840, p. 16.

[65] Broad, 'Housing the rural poor', p. 167, and esp. n. 72. BPP, 1841, XI, 'PLC Seventh Annual Report', pp. 18–19.

[66] Chiddingly vestry minutes, 4 Apr. 1836, 7 Feb. 1839, 10 Sept. and 5 Nov. 1840, 22 Nov. 1844, 18 Feb. 1852 and 26 Sept. 1854; some premises, including the former workhouse, were still being let in the 1850s, ESRO, Par.292/12/2. Cf. Foxton (Leics.) sales application, 10 Nov. 1839, MH 12/6583.

[67] PLC minutes, 16 Sept. 1840: Hall, re proposed Market Harborough Union, to PLC, 7 Nov. 1835, has a lengthy section on keyholders and perceptions of 'their indefeasible Right'; cf. letters to PLC, Clerks, Midhurst, 15 Sept. 1838, and Melton Mowbray, 23 Apr., and 25 June (enclosing correspondence from Nether Broughton parish's lawyer) 1846, MH 1/25, pp. 182–4: 12/6581; 6611; 13028. *Hampshire Independent*, 27 July 1840.

[68] Such sales were sanctioned nevertheless. PLC draft minutes, 2 Sept. 1846: Clerk, Melton Mowbray, to PLC, 19 Aug. 1846, and annotation, MH 2/22; 12/6611.

[69] Copy, Grendon Underwood vestry minutes, 14 Dec. 1837, forwarded Clerk, Amersham Union, to PLC, 12 Jan. 1838, where seven men, with twelve votes between them, voted two to five against, though the plural voting result was close, namely seven to five; perhaps curiously, when notification of another parochial rejection of sales motion went to the PLC with a demand that it intervened, which it could not, the Commissioners riposted – be it evasively – that it was 'so very improper to charge the present Rate Payers with the liquidisation of the outstanding [1812 vintage Gilbert] Bonds, that they are not disposed to issue any Order in the case'; PLC to Shardlow Clerk, re. Stapleford parish, 11 Apr. 1846: Strubby overseer to PLC, 21 July 1845, MH 12/405; 2062; 6739. Cf. Wells, 'Andover antecedents …', pp. 173–4. Further evidence of rejected proposals to sell could be found in vestry minutes, though I suspect that vestry clerks might not have bothered to record a negative, not least because ratepayers resisted requests for salary increases commensurate with the additional work in communicating with Somerset House. Chiddingly vestry minutes, esp. 10 Sept. 1834 and 1 Apr. 1840, ESRO, Par.292/12/2.

for certain buyers, possibly because such residents were accustomed to severe dilapidation.[70] Pre-sale evictions were of course, especially emotive issues, often accomplished with threat of, and actual resort to force: possessions were commonly removed to the street, while 'the thatch was … strip[ped] off'. Emotions were aggravated further when the victims faced incarceration in workhouses, among them the two elderly couples forcibly evicted at Castle Donington who departed with 'tears and lamentations'. When this incident was reported to the PLC, it merely concluded that the overseers had not acted illegally. However, the perceptive auditor of the Hinckley Union – also in Leicestershire – and host to the third largest hosiery centre in the county, whose framework knitters had a long tradition of militancy, argued that 'every legal and technical objection will be raised by the occupiers' once faced by eviction, supported by their 'friends' … funds', while the overseers would 'not sign notices or concur in the proceedings': he concluded ominously that

> Great excitement will no doubt prevail at so many families being turned out at once of their homes (and being so numerous and the proceedings against them being all simultaneous they will act in concert in their resistance) and if one should be … defeated on a principle that can be applied to all the occupiers (so as to defeat us entirely) … the consequences will be highly injurious.

The responsible assistant commissioner advised against both evictions and sales, though he called on the overseers to enforce rent payments. One Wealden parish's overseers genuinely feared arson attacks if they – as the responsible party – resorted to legal measures to secure possession; not only did they refuse, they put another family into a vacated house supposedly for sale. If resort to defensive militancy was unlikely to reach the intensity of mobilisations customarily reported to the Home Office, a riot against sales at Eaton Bray in the Luton Union was formally discussed by the Commissioners in 1841.[71]

A not inconsiderable number of parish houses and *de facto* tenement blocks were either never put on the market, or had failed to sell for a variety of reasons ranging from hopeless dilapidation to being 'mixed up with some charitable bequest'. In a significant review of the disposal policy in May 1841, the PLC formally reported that about 3900 conveyances had been registered, many of which related to multi-tenanted buildings, or rows of cottages, and so this headline figure cannot be converted into even the rudest estimate of people adversely affected. The Commissioners added – significantly – that many properties remained under parish officers' control, including former workhouses, with tenants who paid no rent, a complaint reiterated in 1843 together with a suggestion that sales had decelerated markedly owing to obstructive overseers. This was hardly surprising as tenancy of a parish cottage often proved a critical factor

[70] Chairman, Hartismere Union, annotation on letting agreement, 18 Jan. and to Chadwick, 10 Feb. 1837: Burton to PLC, 23 Aug. 1838, MH 12/5316; 11814.

[71] PLC minutes, 3 Mar. 1841: Hall to Lefevre, 15 Feb. 1837; letters to PLC from J. Bakewell, Castle Donington, and draft reply, Revd. Wilde, Fletching, Clerk, Banbury, auditor Jarvis, Hinckley, to PLC, 26 Mar. and 23 Nov. 1835, 8 Apr. 1837 and 31 May 1838, MH 1/28, pp. 65–6: 12/2020; 6443; 9578; 13157. Uckfield Union minutes, 22 Sept. 1839, ESRO, G11/1a/2. Sclater, *Letter*, pp. 9–10.

for keeping especially men with large families out of workhouses in the first place, and for those institutionalised, a mechanism for inmates' discharge when one became vacant.[72]

These retentions often reveal the sheer indifference of parish officers to their obligations under the PLC's rules. Even when these were honoured, retained properties listed on Forms 5A – available in specific ledgers facilitating annual revisions – are revealed to have been tenanted rent free, and without acknowledged expenditure on repairs. This is exemplified by a two-tenement cottage at Welwick (East Riding) between 1843 and 1858, when 'The cottage having fallen', the materials were sold for customary recycling, certified by the incumbent and three others for the district auditor's consumption.[73] If there are numerous examples of occupied, but effectively abandoned parish properties, collapsing, repairs were commonly effected by residents, sometimes with materials from other buildings which had totally or partly fallen down.[74] Conversely, where the tenants of retained properties paid rents to cover maintenance expenditure to the satisfaction of district auditors, the central authority was not involved. Evidence respecting such accommodation in MH 12 derives from disputes between auditors and parochial officials, exemplified in 1864 when the overseers of Cowfold (Sussex) found their repair expenses had exceeded their rental receipts, and saw the excess disallowed. In Cowfold, and other parishes in the Cuckfield Union, the Poor Law Board then followed up such cases, and asked why some property sales sanctioned in the late 1840s had not proceeded. Told that the market showed no interest at that time, suggestions to reconsider disposals were rejected at Lindfield, on the grounds that the Brook Street Tenements were all rented out to 'Farm Labourers', and that parishioners were 'not desirous of selling … considering that it is to the advantage of the ratepayers not to do so'. Unfortunately, the advantages were not enlarged upon, but at this period tenants *and* their employers were beneficiaries of low rentals charged, and the latter were probably also concerned over rural depopulation, or at least in this district, farmworkers migrating to towns.[75]

IV

What conclusions can be drawn from this discussion? First, the deficiencies of the documentation in MH 12 means that the actual scale of ownership by any parish (in say 1835) is incalculable,

[72] For an early example of 'too jealous' overseers' hostility over disposals on the grounds that finding non-workhouse accommodation for the current tenants would prove problematic, see letters to PLC from Chairman, Midhurst Union, 8 and 27 Aug. 1836, B. Pentress, Iping, 26 July 1837, Farleigh Wallop parish officers, 18 Nov. and 9 Dec. 1839, and Louth auditor, 22 Sept. 1844: South Ambersham sale application, 19 July 1836, MH 12/6739; 10672; 13028; 13029. 'PLC Seventh Annual Report', pp. 25–6: 'PLC 'Eighth Annual Report', pp. 18–9: cf. 'PLC Ninth Annual Report', pp. 18–19, 'PLC Tenth Annual Report', pp. 16–7. PLC, *Official Circular*, 31, 31 Jan. 1844, p. 187. Basingstoke Union minutes, 13 and 20 Dec. 1839, and 15 Apr. 1842, HRO, PL.III/5/4, 5.

[73] Welwick 'Terrier of Lands' Ledger, 1843–58, printed by Shaw and Son, London, ERRO, PE.43/29.

[74] 'PLC Tenth Annual Report', p. 16. BPP, 1845, XXVII, 'PLC Eleventh Annual Report', App. A12, Honiton Guardians' report on the state of cottages inhabited by paupers. Tufnell to PLC and reply, 6 and 27 Oct. 1842, MH 32/71.

[75] Letters to PLB from the former overseers of Cowfold parish, 19 May, and reply 20 June; District Auditor responsible for Cuckfield Union, 8 July, and replies 20 July and 19 Dec.; assistant overseer Bray, Cuckfield parish, 3 Aug., 10 Sept. and 22 Oct., and replies, 5 Aug. and 27 Sept. 1864, MH 12/12839.

unless applications for sale sanction specifically volunteer that the listed properties comprise entire parish portfolios. There was no question on any sale application forms – including later modified variants – to establish this, or if other properties were scheduled for retention. Admittedly, in some locations, local records can be checked against MH 12 documentation. For example, Framfield's terriers have a list of thirteen properties in 1836, all of which were on a sale application in 1839, bar one which had burnt down, and the former workhouse, which was rented to the Uckfield Union as an isolation hospital until 1846.[76] But terriers are rarely extant, though the General Order of 1847 respecting accounting procedures stipulated that both the PLC *and* district auditors could order their completion by parish officers.[77] Secondly, there are examples of parishes deciding to demolish dilapidated cottages without reference to the PLC, and devoting the land to other purposes, exemplified by the site of two cottages at Shardlow being added to the new school playground.[78] Thirdly, there is the problem of technically retained, but effectively abandoned properties, which in some locations may have been quite numerous, or substantial – including former work- or poor-houses – whose existence was never recorded in *any* extant documentation. Fourthly, there was no procedure respecting the problem of unsold properties, other than a time limit on sanctions to sales which dictated a repetition of the entire process, including parish meetings.[79] Fifthly, the Parish Property Act stipulated the same rules for letting and sales; although the PLC sanctioned such applications as received for the former, it clearly believed that continuous policing of cottage rent payments was too intrusive, and merely intervened in ensuring that the rents paid to parishes for workhouses requisitioned

[76] Framfield terrier ledger 1836–9 recorded these details of cottages, together with the names of eighteen tenants in 1836, of whom only two paid rents, and that one remained unsold in 1839; Framfield vestry minutes, 7 Jan. and 11 Mar. 1836, 13 Nov. 1837, 18 Dec. 1845 and 22 Jan. 1846: Uckfield Union minutes, 9 Feb. and 23 Mar. 1839, ESRO, Par. 343/3/1; 12/2. G.11/1a/1; 2. Copy, Framfield vestry minutes, 9 July 1835, sent to PLC and ironically not entered in the minute book itself; Clerk, Uckfield, to PLC, 30 May 1838, MH 12/13157; 13158.

[77] BPP, 1847, XXVIII, PLC, 'Thirteenth Annual Report' (1847), XXVIII, App. A1, 'General Order respecting the keeping and auditing of the Union and Parish Accounts', 17 Mar. 1847. Blank forms 5A (for real estate) and 5B (inventory of funds, securities and money) and the recording of income, were circulated to all eighteen parishes at an unknown date in the enthusiastic Ampthill Union, with instructions that they were to be 'filled up and returned immediately', but only seven parishes did so; four admitted owning property, and two of these also had bequeathed investments, as did two without real estate. BRO, PUAV 48/1–7. Heathfield terrier ledger, 1849–96, records mostly copyhold properties, including five cottages, three of them with between four and twelve acres, whose tenants were clearly smallholders. The new Parish Council secured a vote to sell in 1896–7, but the sale was delayed by a prolonged row over whether parish councillors should be permitted to bid, but barring a field retained for village sportsmen, the property was sold in 1899–1900. Parish Council minutes, 1896 and various other documentation, ESRO, Par. 372/1/1; 2/1; 5/1.

[78] 5 & 6 Vict. c. 38 empowered land owned by parishes to be given – with PLC sanction – for the sites of new schools. Shardlow township donated land, the site of demolished cottages, for a school playground, but without sanction. Shardlow Journal, 19 Mar. and 29 June 1847, DRO, D1326A/PM, 1. Plots with identical provenance were also sold privately under the PLC's sanction, but the number of cottages was immaterial and therefore not recorded in these sources. Waddesden sale application, 20 Nov. 1837, MH 12/406. 'PLC Eighth Annual Report', pp. 20–1.

[79] Each sale order originally had an expiry date, and if not met, the entire process had to be repeated; this was enforced, but at some time after 1847, the requirement for a new parochial vote was dropped, with the PLB, for example, stating that property unsold due to market conditions in 1848, could be remarketed in 1864. PLC minutes, 21 Jan. 1837, and draft minutes 17 Mar. and 7 Sept. 1846; auditor, Shardlow Union, to PLC, 8 May 1840, and annotations; PLB to A. Bray, Cowfold, 5 Aug. 1864, MH 1/9, pp. 202–3: 2/21; 22: 12/2060; 12839.

by Unions were equitable. When the Chairman of the Hartismere Board related how three houses retained by Westhorpe had been let to a speculator on condition that he kept the property in repair, and argued that the strategy should be encouraged universally, he received an unenthusiastic reply drafted by the Senior Commissioner, Frankland Lewis.[80] Sixthly, the scale of intervention in local housing markets by Old Poor Law authorities often went beyond parish-owned stock, including substantial intervention with assistance towards tenants' rents and the provision of properties directly hired from private proprietors, commonly occupied free by poorer plebeian folk. These practices, which cannot be quantified, were condemned in the 1834 Poor Law Report and systematically undermined, if not eradicated, by the PLC and its main agents in this struggle, namely Union and subsequently more specialist district auditors. Finally, while Broad's engagement with the issue of the housing market and the rural poor is to be welcomed, we would agree that much more work is needed on the acquisition of these parochial portfolios.

Political compromises, enhanced by characteristic sloppily-drafted legislation, dovetailed with assistant commissioner Hawley's 'vexatious' ratepayers' residual prerogatives, as a context defined – ironically in a pro-New Poor Law petition to William IV, 'the supreme Guardian' – by the PLC's exercise of 'vast power … watched with the constitutional jealousy so natural to Englishmen'.[81] The disposal programme itself warrants specific study – after all it comprised a Thatcherite antecedent – and the same must also be said of the PLC and its successor central bodies' campaigns to ensure that the costs of retained properties neither fell on the ratepayers, nor constituted continued outdoor relief to the able-bodied poor. If all of the above has a relevance to the semi-moribund debate over the 'revolution in governance' question, these were contemporaneously controversial and emotive issues, and generated – at least in places – widely contested episodes which await their historians.[82]

[80] Copy, agreement between Westhorpe parish officers and S. Wood, 18 Jan.; Chairman, Hartismere, to Chadwick, and draft reply, 10 Feb. and 20 June 1837, MH 12/11814.

[81] Blything Union Board petition, 6 Jan. 1837, MH 12/11731.

[82] In a study nearing completion, I argue that most rural communities, including 'open' parishes, reveal demand for housing outstripping supply, which becomes more evidentially visible from the 1740s. In especially cornland, and some pastoral communities, the process of bigger landlords creating 'close' parishes, which often involved the demolition of some plebeian housing, comprised a process superbly analysed by John Broad, *Transforming English Rural Society. The Verneys and the Claydons, 1600–1820* (2004), esp. chs. 1, 6, 7 and 9. However, there were even permutations on this theme, revealed for example by Lord Howe who wholly owned Ratcliffe-on-Soar, but used poor-law funds – paid by his tenants – to build several cottages, with their labouring and aged occupants charged a token annual rent of 2*s*. 'as an acknowledgement that they were built on behalf of the Parish'; overseers to PLC, 26 Oct. 1837, MH 12/2060. At least localised shortages in rural communities are found during the war years (1793–1815), followed by a manifest housing crisis after Waterloo, caused by accelerated demographic growth itself fuelled by the unprecedented scale of speedy demobilisation.

Profitable ploughing of the uplands? The food production campaign in the First World War

by Hilary Crowe

Abstract

This paper considers the financial effects of the government's direction of agriculture in the pastoral uplands of England during the Great War through a study of the West Ward in Westmorland. The paper aims to identify which farmers gained most from an agricultural production policy which enforced a shift to arable cultivation in areas unsuited to it. It considers wartime production at the county, parish and individual farm level and describes a wide variety of individual outcomes resulting from variations in topography, climate, landholding, farm size, labour structure and the extent of wartime intervention. A more general pattern is superimposed on the micro level and the paper shows that it was the most marginal farmers at the highest elevations who were least disrupted by wartime direction and who saw the greatest increases in net cash returns.

It is frequently argued that farmers did well out of the Great War. As the gap between revenues and costs widened, farmers prospered despite the overall shift from livestock production (with higher margins) to arable. Market prices encouraged this shift before the 'plough-up policy' became the basis of government policy, but the main extension of the arable area occurred after government, through the County War Agricultural Executive Committees (CWAECs) took control of production at the local level in January 1917.[1]

The aim of the Food Production Policy was to increase the number of calories available for human consumption. On this basis it must be judged a success. Estimates of the increase have been revised: Middleton calculated that in 1918 an additional 4.05 billion calories were produced from British agriculture as compared with 1913.[2] Peter Dewey has revised this total down and his calculations show that 'the efforts of the Food Production Department barely sufficed to bring output back to the pre-war level in 1918'.[3] Dewey goes on to ascribe much of the success of the

[1] See T. H. Middleton, *Food production in war* (1923), also E. Whetham, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, VIII, *1914–1939* (1978) and P. Dewey, *British agriculture in the First World War* (1989). The county committees were established as County War Agricultural Committees, but acquired the additional 'executive' when their powers were increased in January 1917.

[2] Middleton, *Food production in war*, p. 322.

[3] P. Dewey, 'Farm labour in wartime. The relationship between agricultural labour supply and food production in Great Britain during 1914–18, with international comparisons' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Reading, 1978), p. 55.

policy to the increased milling ratio and dilution of flour. From the government's viewpoint it did not matter whether the nation was fed through increased agricultural production or food economies. The key thing was that Britain did not starve and was largely able to meet the increased consumption demands of wartime by a mix of imported and home-produced food. On the other hand, there was also a great deal of grumbling amongst contemporaries that wartime conditions allowed farmers to make excessive profits. These complaints were the subject of a post-war enquiry and have been examined further by Dewey who finds that returns on capital, particularly in the first part of the war, were historically very high. He cites with approval contemporary opinion which held that 'it was impossible to lose money in farming just then'.[4]

If, in this respect, the war was a happy period for farming, the question remains whether the rewards were equally distributed between farming types and even between farms. Dewey has attempted to measure agricultural output both in terms of volume and value for the 'national farm' and shows that whilst the volume of agricultural production overall had begun to decline by 1918, the differential rise in prices of outputs and inputs had raised returns to the farming community.[5] He also finds that the increased returns from agriculture were not evenly shared. Dewey suggests that cereal farmers profited most early on in the war with the advantage moving back to livestock farmers later on.[6] But the rigid distinction implied here between two groups of farmers is misleading. At the start of the twentieth century most farming was mixed, and most farmers believed livestock to be an essential part of the rotational cycle of production although local climate, topography and markets demanded adjustment between the interdependent parts. This was seen in the broad division that existed between the arable south and east and the pastoral north and west of Britain.

The enquiry 'into the financial results of the occupation of rural land' of 1919 tried to assess the return to the farmer for his patriotic endeavours. It asked to be sent accounts for individual farms for the war years, but the response was 'disappointing', for it received information from only 45 farms occupied by tenants or owner occupiers, much of it piecemeal and not directly comparable.[7] Due to the limited response, detailed analysis by farm type was not possible, but the report also makes the important point that anyway 'most farms are mixed farms; all the farmers' eggs are not in one basket'.[8] Overall the report shows that although wartime farming was remunerative, farming returned lower profits than were available elsewhere.

> [S]o long as men prefer life on a farm to life in an office or shop … so long will the average profit be less in the business of farming. Life on the land has its amenities and attractions which reconcile many men to the acceptance of lower remuneration for their services.[9]

Dewey's estimates for the 'national farm' show that net income rose very fast during the war: the index of 100 for the farming net income of 1909–13 rose to 399 by 1918.[10] Dewey's analysis

[4] P. Dewey, 'British farming profits and government policy during the First World War', *EcHR* 37 (1984), pp. 373–90.

[5] Dewey, *British agriculture in the First World War*, and his 'Farm labour in wartime'.

[6] Dewey, 'British farming profits'.

[7] BPP, 1919, VIII, *Report of the Committee appointed by the Agricultural Wages Board to enquire into the financial results of the occupation of rural land and the cost of living of rural workers* (hereafter *Enquiry into financial results*), p. 2.

[8] Ibid., p. 55.

[9] Ibid., p. 37.

[10] Dewey, 'British farming profits', p. 376.

considers (but then excludes from discussion) the opportunity costs of capital and labour. He highlights three elements of cost which were critical in determining profits: wages, rents and feedstuffs. He identifies the stasis of rents as the main reason for the rise in net income: 'its virtual stasis more or less guaranteed a high level of net income during the war'[11] and he suggests the fall in the feed bill was almost exactly made up for by the 1918 rise in wages following establishment of the Agricultural Wages Board.

Dewey also examines the effect of the change of government policy in January 1917. He suggests that up to this point, farmers were making 'windfall profits' from the continuation of pre-war patterns of production. Afterwards gross income rose more slowly than product prices, a result of government direction of farming which dictated an unfavourable mix of products and prevented farmers from maximising their profits.[12] The few sets of accounts that survive record a wide range of profitability between farms and show that the average calculated for the 'national farm' is of no relevance at the local level.[13] However, some generalisations are possible and desirable.

This paper will consider the experience of pastoral upland farmers during the Great War. It is based on a study of the West Ward of the old county of Westmorland, drawing data from the 1910 Valuation Survey, correspondence files of the West Ward District sub-committee of the Westmorland County War Agricultural Executive Committee and government agricultural statistics to look below the level of the national farm at the experiences of an upland farming area, whose experience would have been duplicated across the livestock farming areas of the north and west of Britain. Farming in the county was firmly located at the livestock end of the farming continuum, where at the highest elevations arable cultivation was limited to a few acres of fodder crops and to the production of hay. Livestock constituted the main – if irregular – business transactions of the farm, although small amounts of regular income came from dairy and poultry sales. The paper aims to identify the farmers who gained most financially from agricultural production over the course of the Great War in upland areas, ill-suited to the extension of arable acreage as prescribed by the food production campaign.

Few farmers kept accounts for tax purposes, being taxed on multiples of rent,[14] and the few 'account' books that survive in the Cumbria Archives which list sales and purchases are clearly not a complete record of transactions and therefore not a means of calculating profit. We do not have access to regular asset valuations, other than those from 'displenishing sales' which are not constructed on a going concern basis.[15] Without a clear statement of opening and closing capital balances, calculation of accounting profit is impossible and we cannot evaluate the extent to which capital was used up to boost wartime production. However for the West Ward we do know what was growing in farmers' fields over the course of the war. We also have a record of livestock numbers and of market prices and this is sufficient to say something about the 'profitability' of upland farming as a whole and the way it varied in different locations over time.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., p. 379.

[13] *Enquiry into financial results*, p. 11.

[14] Cumbria Record Office Kendal (hereafter CRO (K)), WD BS/3, loose papers, government circular on taxation, June 1916.

[15] Displenishing sales are 'the sale of farm stock and utensils at the expiry of a lease' (*Oxford English Dictionary* on line).

Accounting profit incorporates non-cash elements of income and expenditure and incorporates changes in capital over the accounting period, but most farmers were not trained in such sophisticated accounting techniques. Despite pleas from agricultural writers, it was cash movements and bank balances which most farmers relied upon to assess their profitability.[16] Accountants may be able to ascribe a current cost to items of self-supply, barter and the provision of board and lodging for labour, but the farmer would not necessarily recognise changes in the value of these costs in his assessment of profit. So in the absence of complete cost and revenue records and asset valuations which would allow a 'true and fair' construction of accounting profit, 'financial gain' will be considered from the farmers' viewpoint, i.e. cash receipts and payments. The most successful were those who achieved the greatest increase in bank and cash balances as a result of wartime production.

This discussion will exclude consideration of opportunity cost, the theoretical income that could have been earned from alternative uses of farmers' capital and labour, because in reality, for farmers, there was no immediate practical alternative readily available in wartime. The focus of analysis will therefore be cash transactions. The long term impact of wartime production on the capital value of the farm is also considered.

Section I looks at agricultural production in Westmorland and compares the county with the national picture derived from agricultural statistics. The next section focuses on the West Ward in north-east Westmorland and contrasts three parishes, Brougham, Lowther and Patterdale, to illustrate the gradation of farming type from mixed 'upland' farming through to stock rearing on the high moorland. Section III narrows the focus further to examine the impact of wartime agriculture and government intervention on a sample of individuals from each of the three parishes. Section IV then considers the differential cash flows that accrued to farmers from mixed 'lowland upland' farms and to stock rearing farmers of the high moorland. The general financial effects of wartime agriculture are ascertained but always nuanced by the particular.

I

The formation of a Food Production Department from January 1917 replaced local encouragement of arable cultivation with a hierarchical system of control reaching from Whitehall down to district sub-committees who could determine cultivation at the level of the individual field.[17] The Food Production Policy hinged around the ploughing up of grassland that had been laid down since about 1875. Lord Ernle, President of the Board of Agriculture, described the policy as 'the improvement and extension of arable cultivation, with spade as well as plough; decentralisation; and drastic powers of compulsion which could only be justifiable or tolerable in a war emergency'.[18] The purpose was to increase production of cereals and potatoes, and provide increased food for human and animal consumption so saving vital shipping space. Control of

[16] Writers such as C. S. Orwin published material giving instruction in bookkeeping (his *Farm Accounts*, 1914 and later editions) and the report of the *Enquiry into financial results* called for 'the collection on an extensive scale of accounts of the cost of agricultural production' to enable a more definitive view of agricultural profitability to be ascertained (p. 38).

[17] Lord Ernle, *The land and its people* (1925), p. 25 provides a clear description of the hierarchy of committees and the functioning of the Food Production Department.

[18] Ibid., p. 107.

livestock was indirect: farmers were expected to comply with cultivation orders and to adjust their livestock numbers accordingly.

The ploughing up policy boosted the area under cultivation in England and Wales by 5.8 per cent in 1917 with a further increase of 21.3 per cent in 1918. Land for expanding arable production came from the categories of permanent and temporary grassland employed by the agricultural statistics. The first fell by 8.95 per cent and the second 19.3 per cent between 1916 and 1918.[19] Meanwhile the production of white crops and potatoes rose by 56.0 per cent and 58.5 per cent respectively.[20] Loss of grazing and a reduction in the production of hay impacted on livestock numbers but the effects were delayed for whilst overall numbers were maintained, slaughter weights and milk productivity per cow declined.[21] Total numbers of cattle peaked in 1917 at 6.23 million declining slightly to 6.2 million in 1918, but the significant decline was not evident until 1920 when only 5.55 million were recorded in the annual statistics.[22] Farmers preferred to maintain their cattle herds over sheep flocks, which were more easily replaced, and total sheep numbers declined from 1916 continuously down to 1920.[23]

The statistics show the overall effect of a food production policy from 1917 but they mask wide regional variations in the extent to which tillage was increased. In percentage terms Westmorland achieved the highest increase for an English county at 65.4 per cent and was one of the few counties to achieve Ernle's goal of 'back to the '70s'.[24] However, although percentage increases in the area covered by corn and potato crops were impressive, the absolute increases were small. White crop acreages increased by just over 100 per cent between 1915 and 1918, an increase of 14,500 acres compared with an overall acreage under crops and grass in the county of nearly a quarter of a million acres. The maximum potato acreage – in 1918 – was only 1,953 acres.[25] Rises in production as early as 1916 partly reflect the active influence of the County War Agricultural Committee, formed in October 1915, who encouraged additional arable cultivation from the outset.[26]

In Westmorland the boundary between rough grazing and permanent grass can be difficult to determine and the statistics must be treated with caution. Overall, between 1916 and 1918, permanent grassland fell by about 15,000 acres or 7 per cent and temporary grassland by 2500 acres or 17 per cent: both slightly below the national average.[27] Temporary grassland was rapidly reinstated after the war in Westmorland[28] and this abandonment of the plough policy reflected the inherent problems of arable cultivation in upland Britain. It is evident in the post-war pronouncements of the Westmorland CWAEC that the Executive concurred with the views of farmers. The chair of the Executive Committee wrote to farmers

it is easy to be wise after the event, there is no doubt that a policy of requiring potatoes in

[19] *A century of agricultural statistics, Great Britain, 1866–1966* (1968), Tables 44–5.

[20] Details of production by value and volume over the course of the war are given in Dewey, *British agriculture in the First World War*, pp. 244–8.

[21] BPP, 1920, L, 'Agricultural Statistics, England and Wales, 1919, Part I', pp. 83–4.

[22] *Century of agricultural statistics*, Table 63.

[23] Ibid., Table 65.

[24] J. Venn, *Foundations of agricultural economics* (1923), p. 158.

[25] Figures taken from the published *Agricultural statistics, passim*.

[26] CRO (K), WD BS/3, correspondence, Nov. 1915.

[27] Figures taken from the published *Agricultural Statistics, passim*.

[28] Ibid.

> place of a large portion of the area under corn would have been sounder … the Government's wish is to obtain [for 1919] a still larger area under corn … in Westmorland it would at the moment seem tactless to talk about any increase.[29]

Westmorland farmers were involved both in rearing and fattening cattle and in the dairy industry. Total cattle numbers were remarkably consistent over the duration of the war, fluctuating at around 75,000 head, the sharp rise that shows in national statistics between 1914 and 1916 being absent.[30] As elsewhere, cattle numbers declined between 1917 and 1918 as pricing policy errors encouraged the early slaughter of animals. The county followed the national trend between 1919 and 1920 showing the same 10.5 per cent fall in numbers.[31]

Nationally, sheep flocks were a casualty of the food production policy. Sheep numbers, which had slowly recovered from the low point of 1913, fell again by 25.4 per cent between 1916 and 1920.[32] In Westmorland sheep were a vital element in the upland farming economy and yet numbers fell to a level 9.75 per cent below the earlier nadir of 1913 in 1920. However, much of the decline was due to the harsh winter of 1919 and from 1920 numbers recovered rapidly.[33] It was lowland flocks that were hardest hit by wartime agricultural policy, those of upland farms being maintained at higher levels.[34]

In so far as the 'plough policy' was aimed at the cultivation of land laid down to grass since 1875, Westmorland was one of the few counties to exceed targets set.[35] In addition farmers also managed to maintain their flocks and herds at levels above the national average allowing for the possibility of an increase in agricultural productivity and profitability. The ability of Westmorland to maintain livestock levels will be examined in a later section. Even within a county though, statistics disguise the effects of variations in soil, topography and climate and the next section will look at the experience of farmers in areas of differing characteristics.

II

The West Ward Rural District is a rural area lying between Kendal and Penrith and extending from Patterdale in the West towards Appleby in the east (Figure 1). The land rises gradually from the fertile soils of the upper Eden valley in the north towards the high moorland of the south and west and the area provides representative examples of upland farms, from the mixed farming on the more fertile loams of Brougham parish through the tenanted farms of the Earl of Lonsdale in Lowther parish to the farms in the fell parish of Patterdale.[36]

[29] CRO (K), WD BS/3, correspondence for West Ward of the CWAEC, Nov.-Dec. 1918, letter from Chair of Executive Committee, 29 Nov. 1918.

[30] Figures taken from the published *Agricultural statistics, passim*.

[31] Ibid.

[32] *Century of agricultural statistics*, Table 65.

[33] Figures taken from the published *Agricultural statistics, passim*.

[34] BPP, 1920, L, pt I, p. 14.

[35] Venn, *Agricultural economics*, pp. 157–8.

[36] Much of the following discussion is based on a collation of the parish level returns to the annual agricultural census for the three study parishes contained in TNA, MAF 68. As this data can be quickly located and to reduce the number of superfluous references, specific citations are not normally given.

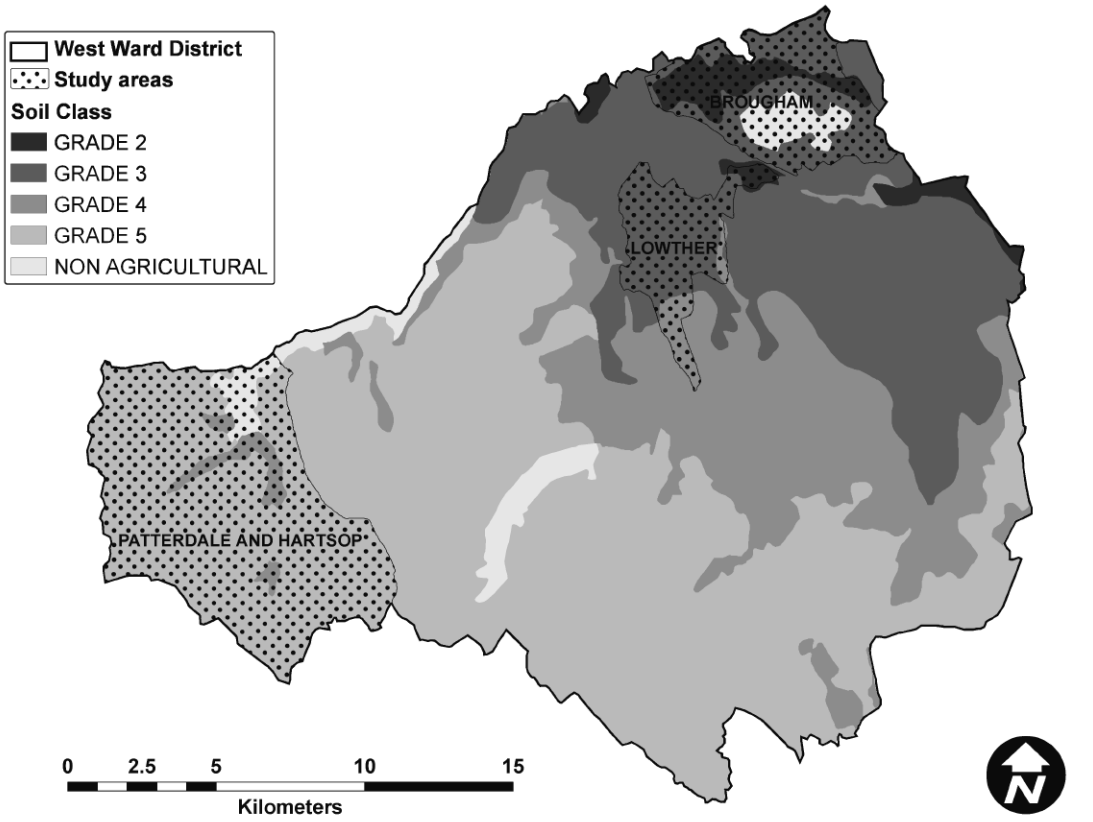


FIGURE 1. The West Ward of Westmorland with soil classification

Source: Soil Survey of England and Wales

With fertile soils and a relatively mild climate, Brougham supported large mixed farms with dairy farming an important adjunct to cattle rearing and fattening. At higher elevations were the smaller transitional farms of Lowther parish. Here stock rearing was of increasing importance, connecting farms with the moorland parishes such as Patterdale which supplied the pure bred draft ewes for the production of cross breed sheep. The harsh climate and short growing season of the high moorland restricted farming to stock rearing, and limited cultivation of fodder crops meant heavy reliance on rough grazing, particularly commons. Many farmers were dependent on secondary occupations in tourism and mining.

As we move from Brougham to Patterdale, national trends are less clearly reflected in local experience. Since the wartime shift to arable cultivation became more difficult to implement with increasing elevation and poorer soils, livestock production remained dominant and arable production was almost entirely for fodder. The percentage increase in arable production may have been impressive in upland parishes but in absolute terms amounted to little. The County War Agricultural Executive, through the unstinting efforts of the District sub-committee, achieved the targets set by Whitehall to return white crop and potato acreages to 1874 levels

but the correspondence files make it quite clear that the energy expended to achieve this was extraordinary.[37]

(i) Brougham

The parish of Brougham contained the largest holdings in the West Ward. Many of the farms were tenanted and formed part of the estate of Lord Hothfield of Appleby. This area of mixed farming had a higher proportion of arable land than elsewhere in Westmorland but arable was still subsidiary to breeding and fattening stock and dairy production.[38]

Agricultural land use in Brougham parish before the war was almost equally split between arable, including temporary leys, and permanent grassland. With large farms, experience in cereal cultivation and available equipment, Brougham was the parish in the West Ward most suited to arable production and the efforts of the CWAEC resulted in an early extension of the ploughed area, although white crop and potato acreages did not peak until 1918. In this respect Brougham mirrored the national picture. Post-war, government price guarantees encouraged maintenance of the cultivated acreage and both arable crops and temporary grassland covered a larger area than pre-war.[39] Brougham showed no sign at this stage of the agricultural depression and retraction of arable which was to come with the repeal of the Corn Production Act.

Although Brougham's climate favoured the production of white crops, the almost exclusive cultivation of oats reflects the marginal physical environment. Wheat and Barley reached a maximum extension of only 33 and 38 acres respectively, both in 1919. Livestock continued to be the mainstay of the agricultural economy with the emphasis on the rearing and fattening of cattle. Pre-war figures show the ratio of dairy to other cattle to be 1:2. Total numbers of cattle fluctuated around a downward trend over the course of the war and by 1918 numbers stood nearly 20 per cent below those for 1913 (Figure 2). However the ratio of diary to other cattle was largely maintained. Government requisition of hay and fodder crops and shortages of other feed would have made fattening of livestock increasingly difficult, but the timing of the fall in numbers coincides with government price control policy. Other cattle numbers were elevated in June 1917 prior to the heavy nationwide slaughter in the autumn of 1917.[40] At this point we can see national policy impacting directly on decisions taken at the local level.

Farms in Brougham also reared sheep largely from quality Scottish breeds rather than those from the surrounding uplands. Store sheep were also fattened but with the shortage of rough grazing and common land, cattle were more important. This is reflected in the earlier decline in numbers of sheep, the parish following the national trend from 1916 onwards (Figure 3). Sheep flocks were sacrificed ahead of cattle herds which, as we noticed before, represented a greater investment and were more difficult to rebuild.

[37] CRO (K), WD BS/3, file Aug. 1916 – Feb. 1917. Calculations show that a 44% increase in acreage would be required to raise white crop cultivation to the 20,303 acres grown in 1874 and a 34% increase for Potatoes. Actual production in 1918 was substantially above target: 29,567 acres for White Crops and 1953 acres for Potatoes.

[38] T. Darley, 'The agrarian economy of Westmorland' (Unpublished MA Dissertation, University of Leicester, 1964), p. 92.

[39] The agricultural statistics show the split between arable and permanent grassland to be 54:46 in 1913, and 61:39 in 1920. TNA, MAF 68/2601 (1913) and 68/2994 (1920).

[40] Middleton, *Food production in war*, p. 317.

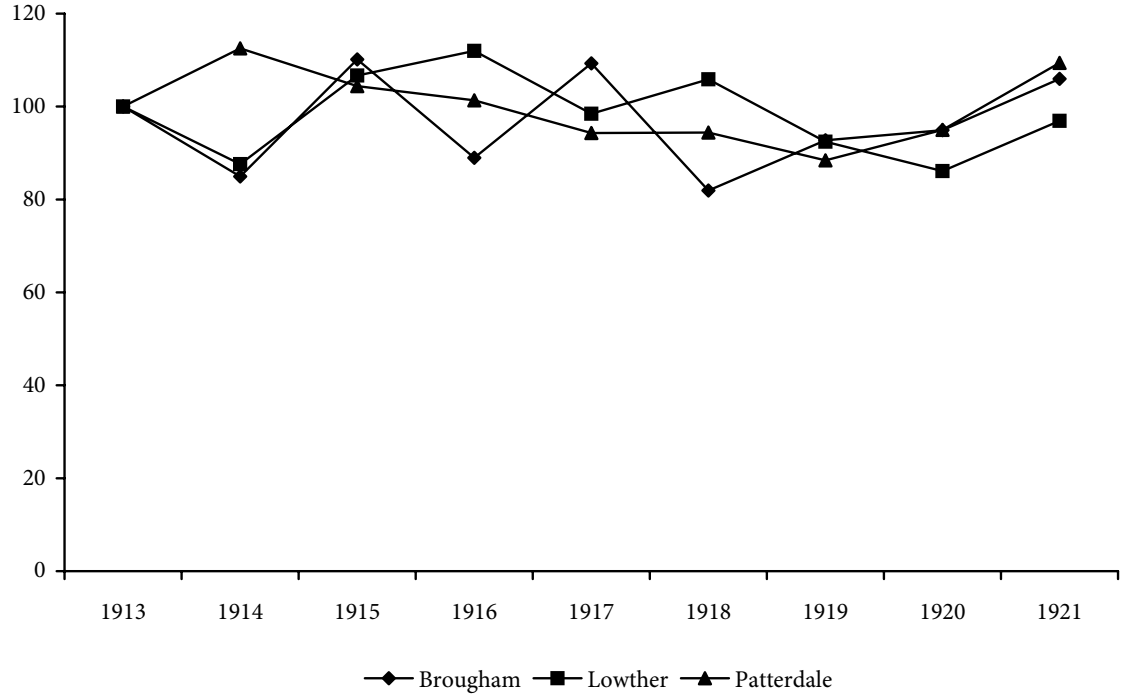


FIGURE 2. Index of cattle numbers in the study parishes (where 1913 equals 100)

Source: TNA, MAF 68, parish statistics for Westmorland, 1914–18

(ii) Lowther

The centre of the estates of the Earl of Lonsdale, Lowther parish lies south of Brougham on higher land with slightly inferior soils. Farms here, smaller than those in Brougham parish, were mixed and as the land increased in elevation, breeding crosses from draft upland ewes gradually replaced livestock fattening and dairy production in importance. Lambs were sold in the autumn, reducing the need for winter fodder. With only a couple of exceptions, the farms here were owned by the Earl of Lonsdale, and managed through his agent Mr Little. They were generally well run and tenancies did not change frequently.[41]

The parish was dominated by Home Farm on the Lowther Estate which covered 3134 acres, nearly 75 per cent of the parish. The District War Agricultural Committee survey of 1917 shows that only 94 acres of Home Farm was in arable cultivation and only 100 acres was required to grow white crops for 1918. On the remaining farms in the survey, the extent of arable cultivation reached 40 per cent or 463 acres, of which just under half was devoted to oats, the remainder growing fodder crops.[42] The arable acreage proportion reflected the more undulating terrain, higher elevation and poorer soils of Lowther parish.

The influence of the Earl of Lonsdale is strongly suggested in a complaint from Thomas

[41] Darley, 'Agrarian economy of Westmorland', pp. 115–9.

[42] CRO (K), WD BS/3, 1917 survey of production by farm.

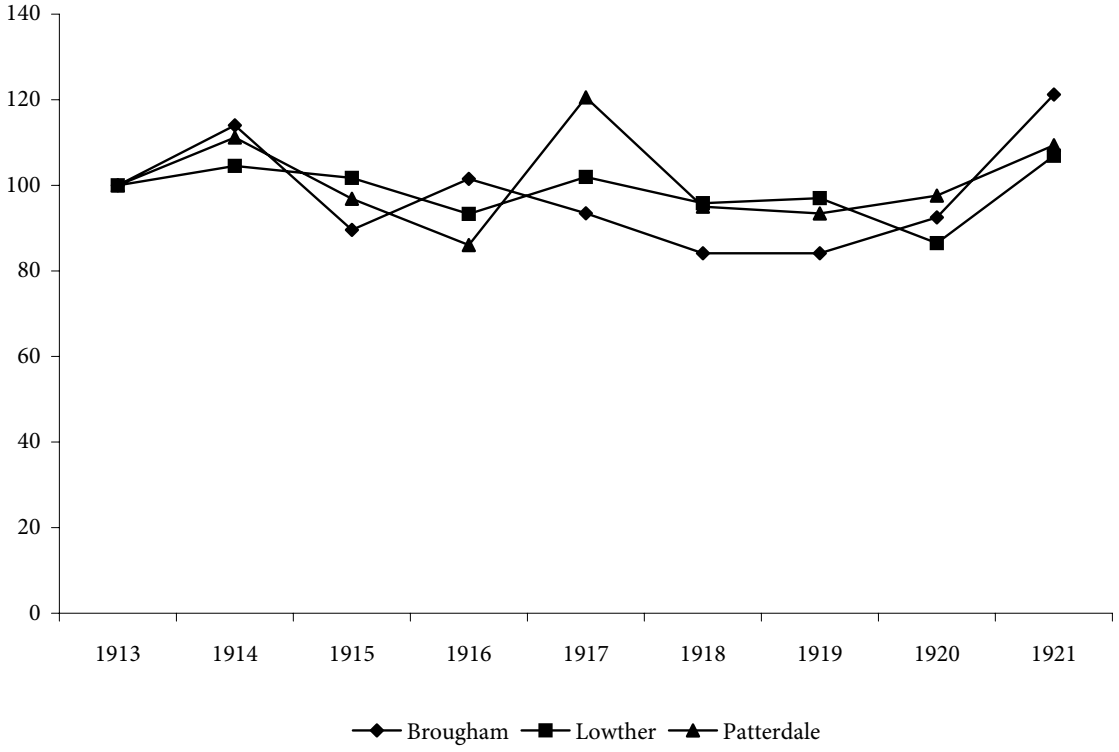


FIGURE 3. Index of sheep numbers in the study parishes (where 1913 equals 100)

Source: TNA, MAF 68, parish statistics for Westmorland, 1914–18

Lowthian at Winder Hall to the Secretary of the CWAEC in which he protested at being required to plough 47½ acres above 830 feet in altitude. He would 'have to sell my breeding grey faced ewes and reduce my dairy cows' and he pointed to land at Askham Hall owned by Lonsdale

> the greater part of which used to be ploughed but last summer was stocked with white heifers served by a Black Bull to breed fancy blue-grey cattle … you might ask the Chairman who the tenant is … I do not know if you know that seven members of the sub-committee consist of the Lowther Estate Agent and Lowther tenants.[43]

The ratio of other cattle to dairy cattle of 4:1 in Lowther reflected the reduced importance of dairying compared with the lower lying parish of Brougham which was also closer to the Penrith market. In Lowther, dairy cattle decreased slightly in number down to 1917, against the national trend (Figure 2). The impact of price policy in triggering the slaughter of other cattle in the autumn of 1917 (reflected in the statistics for 1918) was more limited in Lowther. The complaint from Winder Hall would suggest that the Earl of Lonsdale was able to continue his

[43] CRO (K), WD BS/3, File, Feb.-Mar. 1918, 23 Feb. 1918.

breeding activities largely unaffected by wartime strictures. His financial resources would have made him less susceptible to market price changes.

Sheep numbers followed a similar trend to those in Brougham parish (Figure 3). However sheep were more important to the Lowther economy and so the trends here were less pronounced. The fall in total numbers in 1916 reflected a poor lambing season in the previous year followed by an infestation of maggot fly, with a consequent decline in the number of breeding ewes of 10 per cent. The winter of 1915/16 was also harsh, and numbers of sheep did not recover until 1917. At the end of the war sheep numbers in Lowther stood just 3 per cent below pre-war levels. Again the influence of the Lowther estate was important in allowing the maintenance of flocks particularly as none of the entries in the 1910 valuation field book recorded rights of common attached to holdings.[44]

The plough policy was harder to implement in the marginal lands of the upper Eden valley but growth of fodder crops and the pasture that remained allowed the maintenance of livestock numbers. A unique feature of Lowther parish was the controlling influence of a large landowner. Unfortunately the division of livestock numbers between Home Farm and the other holdings is not available but it seems probable that the plough policy was not pursued as strongly here as in other less suitable parishes, such as Patterdale.

(iii) Patterdale

This large parish of 16,737 acres consists mainly of high moorland. With a harsh climate, the growing season is short and cultivation restricted to a limited terrain along the river banks and the shores of Ullswater. In 1900 there were no dominant landowners and farms were generally small although most also had extensive grazing rights on unenclosed common and moorland. Stock rearing was the basis of farming: the limited arable cultivation concentrated on producing roots for livestock fodder. Cattle, chiefly hardy shorthorns and sheep, in particular hefted Herdwicks, were bred for sale outside the parish as stores. Holdings along the river valleys were able to fatten some new season lambs.

Sheep numbers in 1913 mirrored the national low point from which recovery was underway early in the war. As in Lowther, but to a greater extent here, there was a decline in numbers in 1916 which fell 7.5 per cent below those for 1913 (Figure 3). This reflected disease and a shortage of winter keep in the harsh winter of 1915/16. Farming revenues also came from wool sales, but after control of wool prices from 1916, these revenues were restricted until the high price rises which followed decontrol in 1919.[45] The hard winter of 1919 prolonged the decline in sheep numbers, but the long term reliance of the economy on sheep is shown by the rebuilding of flocks which reach a level of nearly 15 per cent over 1913 by 1923. Livestock numbers were affected not only by agricultural policy and prices but also by variations in the weather which, in an upland parish, can cause the birth and death rates to fluctuate significantly.[46]

In Patterdale breeding cattle outnumbered dairy cows by four to one in the pre-war period. The local tourist trade provided an outlet for dairy produce despite the area's isolation, but

[44] TNA, IR 58/19203.

[45] BPP 1920, L, pt III, Prices, p. 87.

[46] The agricultural census returns show that the birth rate per breeding ewe varied between 0.7 and 0.95 per ewe between 1912 and 1925.

dairy cattle fell slightly in importance over the course of the war. Cattle numbers were maintained early in the war but then declined from 1916. This decline continued as the sheep population was rebuilt post-war. The effects of price policy are seen more clearly here than in Lowther. Overall however, Patterdale largely maintained its flocks. The ability to do so when external supplies of feedstuffs were scarce and little fodder was grown locally was due to the availability of additional sources of grazing on allotments and commons which placed the Patterdale farmer at an advantage over those in parishes such as Brougham where compliance with the plough policy resulted in significant losses of grazing resources not readily replaced.

The arable acreage extended to a maximum of 196 acres – in 1918 – and by 1923 it had shrunk to only 30 acres. The District sub-committee papers make clear how difficult implementation of the plough policy was in this parish. In response to a survey by the Distict Committee early in 1917, the parish correspondent wrote that 'a further 55 to 60 acres could be put under the plough but none of the farmers are likely to plough more land'.[47] Patterdale suffered from the same environmental restrictions as other upland parishes in the West Ward. The effort expended to enforce the maximum possible arable acreage was queried by a farmer from Hardendale Shap. 'Some of the land you specify is 1100 to 1200 feet above sea level. I really question the utility of it being ploughed out.'[48] Another farmer wrote how 'I have lived all of my life near hills and never yet saw ripe corn cut here … what is the use of ploughing if the corn never gets ripe'.[49] Patterdale Parish Council asked the Committee to come and inspect the farms as 'there seems to be a lot of dissatisfaction amongst farmers as to the amount of ploughing required of them'.[50] But the Committee, under pressure to meet targets for white crops, showed little sympathy or concern about the final outcome of the cultivation policy. They were urged on by the secretary of the CWAEC, Edmund Yates, who wrote 'it is not now a question of farming on ordinary lines'.[51] The sub-committee were forced to pressure owners to take action against reluctant tenants. Mrs Hodgson, owner of a farm near Shap, was instructed to give notice to her tenant, who was unable to plough.[52]

High moorland parishes were patently not suitable for the plough policy. The documentation shows that enormous efforts were expended in pushing farmers to grow crops to and beyond the limits of cultivation – effort that was largely unproductive. A more flexible approach would have made a great difference to the individual farmers in the parish and released committee members' energies for other tasks.

An index of livestock numbers for each parish allows comparison of trends over the course of the war (Figure 3). The divergences between the parish indexes show the variation in the implementation of national policy. Unsurprisingly, in moving from the lower more fertile land like the Eden Valley to the high moorland, the extent of the plough campaign was increasingly

[47] CRO (K), WD BS/3, file Aug. 1916-Jan.1917, letter 6 Jan. 1917.

[48] CRO (K), WD BS/3, file Dec. 1917, letter 18 Jan. 1917.

[49] CRO (K), WD BS/3, file Sept. 1917, letter 12 Sept. 1917.

[50] CRO (K), WD BS/3, file Dec. 1917, letter 18 Dec. 1918.

[51] CRO (K), WD BS/3, file May 1917, letter 31 July 1917.

[52] CRO (K), WD BS/3, file Feb.-Mar. 1918, letter 11 Mar. 1918.

limited. Brougham parish fails to maintain livestock numbers and sheep and cattle numbers fell sharply after 1917 whilst numbers in Patterdale are less affected. Superimposed on this trend we can see the influence of a powerful landowner at Lowther able to limit any unwelcome impact of national policy and maintain livestock numbers at inflated levels. Vagaries of climate, outside the control of the committees, also resulted in deviations from plan. The hard spring of 1916 reduced the numbers of sheep, particularly at the highest elevations, but for Brougham, with its warmer climate and different breeds wintered in more protected surroundings, the main decline was the result of government pricing policy late in 1917.

III

Even at the parish level general trends disguise the experience of the individual farmers. Using the 1901 Census, the 1910 Valuation Survey and the CWAEC records and surveys, this section looks at a sample of farms from the three parishes and examines the impact of tenure, farm size, labour structure and direction on agricultural activity over the course of the war. Section IV then goes on to assess the financial implications of change.

(i) Brougham

Julian Bower, a tenanted farm of 647 acres held on a tenancy from Lord Hothfield of Appleby Castle, was one of the largest farms in the parish. The census for 1901 shows the occupier as Robert Fawcett, then aged 66 years, whose occupation is given as farmer and auctioneer. The large household comprised eleven farm servants, one of whom was his granddaughter Ada, whose occupation is shown as domestic servant. The farm servants included three horsemen, two cattlemen and a shepherd in addition to general and domestic servants and the farm was managed by a foreman, John Brown, living with his wife and daughter in Julian Bower Cottage.[53]

The 1910 Valuation Survey for Brougham was completed in 1913 and describes the farm as a 'useful mixed farm, mostly arable', with good pasture on the lower land. The large farmhouse was in good order: with nine bedrooms and two staircases it would have provided ample accommodation for living in servants. The outbuildings were extensive and included byres for over 60 cattle and stabling for at least 10 horses. The Valuation Survey map shows that the land lay within a ring fence and although divided by the Eden Valley Branch line, it was all easily accessible with arable and pasture surrounding the farmhouse and meadow land lying along the River Eden which formed the eastern boundary. The Field Book lists the crops growing in each field. In 1913 the 245 acres of arable crops accounted for 38 per cent of the acreage of which 12.2 per cent was listed as white crops. Meadow amounted to 4 per cent, temporary pasture to 35 per cent and permanent pasture and waste to 23 per cent.[54] The survey suggests a farm typical of this part of the Eden Valley 'renowned for the breeding and rearing of cattle' – dominated by the shorthorn – and also the fattening of sheep from Scotland rather than the poorer breeds from the surrounding uplands.[55]

[53] TNA, RG 13/4906/6/4/15.

[54] TNA, IR 58/18808, hereditment 11 (Julian Bower); CRO (K), 1910 Valuation Maps, VI.15 and VIII.4.

[55] Darley, 'Agrarian economy of Westmorland', pp. 91–4.

Three surveys carried out by the War Agricultural Executive Committee in March, June and the autumn of 1917 illustrate the effect of wartime direction on farms of this type in the Upper Eden Valley. By the autumn of 1917, the 1913 split of the farm between 368 acres of Pasture and 245 acres of arable had been reversed and the farm now comprised 241 acres of pasture and 372 acres of arable (37.7 per cent and 58.2 per cent respectively). The 30 acres of oats had increased to 129 acres and most of this provided fodder for livestock.[56] Although livestock numbers are not recorded, with no access to common grazing and the restricted availability of purchased feedstuffs, the home-produced oats not requisitioned would have been essential to the continuation of livestock rearing and fattening. The target of a further 70 acres of land for plough up in 1918 is ambitious, for it included field 412, 'Little Slate', 23½ acres on Slate Hill including an old quarry, rising to an elevation of 619 feet.

Based on a yield of 4.77 quarters per acre and sale prices for the 1917 harvest as at May 1918, the additional area of oats would have had a value, if sold off the farm, of £1,145.[57] This is equivalent to the sale of 408 sheep or 52 two-year-old shorthorns at average prices for 1917.[58] In January 1917 Fawcett retired and the inventory for the displenishing sale listed 126 cattle and 750 sheep plus 26 horses.[59] It is likely that Julian Bower had shared in Brougham's reduction in livestock numbers between 1913 and 1917, a fall of 9 per cent and 3 per cent for cattle and sheep respectively. For Julian Bower this fall of 12 cattle and 23 sheep would have had a value well below that of the increased oats production.[60] Increased arable production at wartime prices was very profitable and whilst livestock numbers were maintained windfall gains accrued. However, livestock numbers continue to fall after 1917 and such gains were short-lived.

(ii) Lowther

Here, two contrasting farms will be examined. Low Moor – a 218-acre tenanted farm part of the Lowther Estate and the 67-acre freehold of 'yeoman farmer' John Kendal at Melkinthorpe.

The 1891 census records Joseph Sargeant aged 77 and his son as being the farmers of Low Moor. In 1901 his son's wife Isabella was head of the household, having lost her husband and father-in-law in the intervening period. She is described as 'farmer', living with her seven children, two of whom worked on the farm. The eldest, also Joseph, is named as the farmer in the District sub-committee files during the war. They employed one male farm servant.[61] Despite their annual tenancy, the Sargeant family had occupied Low Moor since at least 1891 with sons succeeding their fathers.

The 1910 Valuation Survey describes the farm as 'good strong arable, meadow and pasture partly sheltered by adjoining plantations'. Like other farms in Lowther parish there are fewer references to arable equipment or machinery sheds than in Brougham parish, the emphasis in

[56] CRO (K), WD/BS 3, surveys for Mar. 1917, June 1917 and a summary compiled in the autumn of 1917 which gives targets for additional plough up and white crop in 1918.

[57] BPP, 1918, XXIV, 'Agricultural Statistics', pt III, p. 61. Oats fetched 48*s*. 6*d*. per quarter if sold after May 1918. Yields come from the county statistics for Westmorland. BPP, 1918, XXIV, pt III, Table 13.

[58] BPP, 1920, L, pt III, p. 83.

[59] *Cumberland and Westmorland Herald (*hereafter *CWH)* 20 Jan. 1917, p. 1.

[60] A 9% reduction in cattle and a 3% in sheep numbers on this basis would be equivalent to about £328 of revenue based on average prices.

[61] TNA, RG 12/4327/29/1 (1891); RG 13/4906/24/1 (1901).

Lowther being on cattle and sheep.[62] The Field Books split the land into pasture (67.5 per cent), meadow (12 per cent) and arable (20.5 per cent). By the summer of 1917 the early effects of the plough policy may be seen. Arable acreage has nearly doubled to 39.7 per cent and pasture now occupies only 45.8 per cent of the land. But the detailed survey also shows that out of the additional 60 acres ploughed in 1917, 26 acres had been converted to arable between 1913 and the end of 1915.[63] Whilst higher prices may have encouraged the Sargeant family to plough up lea during 1915, it is not without significance that this farm belonged to the Lowther estate.[64] Early on, the Earl of Lonsdale was active in encouraging the war effort – he formed his own battalion of the Border Regiment, the Lonsdale Pals, through a controversial recruitment drive using a poster 'Are you a man or a mouse' – and publicly gave over 100 acres of his own land over to ploughing to match a gift of Lord Derby.[65] He continued to encourage his tenants to plough suitable land but also looked after his own interests: 'before taking steps [to increase ploughing] you should refer to your tenancy agreement and you will find as a rule land laid down in recent years … which may properly be broken up'.[66] In particular Lonsdale's Home Farm continued to be run on pre-war lines. We see in Lowther the impact of landownership and personality at the most local level of agricultural activity.

The village of Melkinthorpe was home to the Kendal family. Their holding had been in the family for several generations. John Kendal is described in the 1901 census as 'yeoman' farmer.[67] The Valuation Survey found that he owned this 67-acre holding. It also found that the buildings were of poorer quality than those of the Lowther estate farms: they included a disused cottage, possibly reflecting a larger household earlier in the nineteenth century. The Field Books reveal a pattern of small scattered fields, several of less than one acre, split equally between arable and pasture (25 acres each) with 14 acres of meadow.[68] The 1917 surveys show that seven acres of lea was ploughed in 1916 and a further seven in 1917, increasing the arable to 35 acres or 52 per cent of the holding. The district committee noted that Kendal 'should plough more lea' in 1917 and a ploughing order for an extra 1.5 acres, with a requirement to grow 17 acres of white crops (which would be oats) was issued.[69] The small additional acreage required for 1918 suggests that the limit of practical cultivation had been reached on this farm, possibly due to shortage of labour. In November 1918 John's son Richard was one of a quota of 15 soldiers released early for agricultural work.[70] In making the allocation of plough up orders, allowance was not made for the smaller, less convenient and less capitalised farms like the Kendal's whose arable portion formed more than the average for the parish.[71]

[62] TNA, IR 58/19203, hereditment 4 (Low Moor Lowther).

[63] CRO (K), WD/BS 3, Cropping survey, autumn 1917.

[64] The term 'lea' is used to refer to 'land that has remained untilled for some time; land laid down for pasture' (*Oxford English Dictionary* on line)

[65] D. Sutherland, *The Yellow Earl* (1965), p. 187.

[66] CRO (K), WD/BS 5, letter from the Earl of Lonsdale to tenants, 15 Jan. 1917.

[67] TNA, RG 13/4906/28/10/62.

[68] TNA, IR 58/19203, Melkinthorpe, Hereditment 89.

[69] CRO (K), WD BS/3, 1917 survey and ploughing orders, 1918.

[70] CRO (K), WD BS/3, papers, 28 Nov. 1918.

[71] The arable percentage of agricultural land for Lowther parish was 40 per cent excluding Lonsdale's Home Farm which had 100 acres of arable out of over 3,100 acres.

(iii) Patterdale

Farming here was a marginal activity. Low profitability is reflected in the generally poor state of repair of buildings and low rents of less than £1 per annum per acre, falling to as little as 4*s*. where rough grazing was included. However, livestock farming, when combined with a secondary occupation, allowed farmers a living.[72]

Crook-a-Beck Farm, a freehold, lying along and within a bend in Goldrill Beck, comprised 49 acres of low-lying meadow and pasture with common grazing on Place Fell. Robert Pears was 41 at the time of the 1901 Census and his occupations were listed as farmer and carrier.[73] The holding was farmed by the extended Pears family. Robert applied for an exemption for his nephew James whom he described as shepherd in May 1916. An exemption was granted until 1 September 1916 when the 'fly' season would be over.[74] The 1910 Field Books noticed a hogg house, a milk house and a hen house as well as a wool loft amongst the outbuildings. Pigs, eggs and dairy produce would have found a local sale to the tourist trade which supplemented the less regular income from livestock sales and wool. The Valuation Survey makes no mention of arable land but the 1917 District survey shows one acre of oats in 1916 which was increased to two acres with a further two acres of potatoes for 1917. Hay was cut on 30 acres of pasture. The white crop target was not increased for 1918, the total for the whole parish being only 65 acres.[75]

Farming at Crook-a-Beck would have been little affected by wartime direction. However the switch of four acres to arable on a farm without equipment or expertise would have been awkward and a likley source of irritation. The rights of common on Place Fell coupled with the low-lying pasture would have allowed the livestock numbers to continue largely unchanged and Robert Pears would have benefited from higher prices for store lambs and draft hill ewes sold away to lowland farms for the production of half breeds. Wool prices did not rise to the same extent as those of livestock, being fixed between 1916 and 1918 at 60 per cent above those for 1914, well below the rise in agricultural prices generally. Freed from restriction in 1919, wool prices rose sharply, but some wartime wool production may have been stored.[76] Crook-a-Beck farm was vulnerable to the impact of war on the tourist trade. Early on however this was not affected, at least at peak holiday periods. The Penrith press reported a great influx of Whitsuntide visitors in 1915; 'at Patterdale the hostels were filled to overflowing'.[77]

The discretion of the District Committee in directing cultivation is glimpsed in the case of Sykeside Farm – 18 acres of pasture and meadow lying to the north of Crook-a-Beck, close to Brothers Water. Tenanted by Charlie Dixon – who as 'Lakeland Shepherd' was 'a favourite picture postcard with visitors' – and his sister Grace, they kept sheep and a few cows.[78] With no experience or equipment they were unable to plough up any part of their four fields. The sub-committee did not issue any ploughing orders, nor instruct the owner to find a new tenant.

[72] TNA, IR 58/46525.

[73] TNA, RG 13/4906/95/5/27.

[74] *CWH*, p. 1, 27 May 1916, report of West Ward Tribunal.

[75] TNA, IR 58/46525 Patterdale, hereditment 58, Crook-a-Beck; CRO (K), WD BS/3, 1917 survey, Patterdale.

[76] BPP, 1920, L, pt III, prices, pp. 75, 87.

[77] *CWH*, 29 May 1915, p. 1.

[78] E. Little, *Chronicles of Patterdale* (1961), p. 21.

The Dixons continued to farm at Sykeside throughout the war and would have benefited from increased prices for their produce without suffering significant additional outgoings.

This review of individual farms highlights just how different farmers' experiences could be within a small area. An examination of trends at the parish level highlights the effect of topography, soil and climate on the daily practice of farming during the Great War. Superimposed on the general pattern are micro level variations in tenure, capital investment, individual ability, labour structure and the extent of external direction which individualised the wartime experience. This resulted in a varied financial return and any assessment of profitability must look through the average experience and consider the impact of the full range of contributing factors.

IV

The introduction showed that lack of asset valuation data makes any consideration of conventional accounting profitability of little value. This section will take the farmers' view and assess financial gain on the basis of cash receipts and cash payments. It will be shown that whilst an increase in cash and bank balances was probably the general experience, there was very considerable variation between individuals farming in close proximity.

(i) Revenues

Livestock sales provided the most significant, if irregular, cash injections into farming businesses. West Ward farms produced both store and fat cattle which were sold locally at Penrith and also at the major cattle market at Carlisle. Sales of store cattle out of Penrith occurred in October and to a lesser extent in April.[79] For the hill and mountain farmers, winter restrictions on feed compelled them to sell young stock each autumn whatever the price. Those able to over-winter stock at lower altitude had more freedom of manoeuvre. Although the volumes of sales through livestock markets need to be treated with caution because of the element of double counting when store stock are resold as fat, and because not all sales passed through livestock markets, we can link the trends at Penrith with the parish statistics for the West Ward. The number of fat cattle sold declined by 50 per cent over the course of the war, reflecting the decline in root crops and grassland in parishes such as Brougham and the shortage of feedstuffs from 1917/18 onwards. The sharp fall in the number of other cattle in Brougham between 1917 and 1918 was also reflected in the higher volume of store cattle sold at the autumn markets in 1917, a response to both shortage of winter feed and to the higher slaughter prices set that autumn.[80]

A bewildering range of prices for livestock is given in the weekly reports of markets and 'displenishing sales' in the local press. The range reflected local knowledge of variations in quality and the skill of the farmer selling stock. But, a general review of profitability requires use of a more general index. The enquiry into the financial results of the occupation of rural land provides an index of the average prices of farm products between June 1913 and October 1918.

[79] BPP, 1914, XLVIII, 'Agricultural Statistics 1913', pp. 254–5.

[80] BPP, 1918, LIII, 'Agricultural Statistics', pt III, p. 87.

This shows that the prices of fat cattle rose at a rate approaching twice that of store cattle[81] reflecting a rise in the cost of feeding stuffs in the region of 195 per cent between 1913 and 1918.[82] However the index for fat stock is based on weight and that for store stock is given per head,[83] and because of reduced slaughter weights, the difference in cash return between fat and store cattle would be lower than the index suggests.[84]

Farmers in Patterdale, forced to accept the market price and sell off store cattle in the autumn, would have received relatively less in revenues than farmers at lower altitudes, but would have suffered less from high wartime feedstuff prices and shortages. Cattle reared on summer grazing and particularly on common land were cheap to produce, and required relatively little labour input and hence cash outlay. The ability of Patterdale farmers to increase cattle numbers up until 1916 would have provided farmers with 'windfall' cash receipts only marginally reduced by increased outgoings.

The figures for Penrith show that sales of store sheep were concentrated almost exclusively into the months of September and October before winter necessitated additional purchased feedstuffs. Fat sheep sales occurred throughout the year, but the peak period was from November through to March, gradually relieving farmers of the need to provide winter fodder.

For stock rearers in upland parishes, the sale of store sheep was dictated by climate, not market price. These farmers benefited from the high prices of the early war years which rose by more than 50 per cent per head in the period to 1916.[85] After the introduction of the Food Production Policy, price rises were limited to only 9 per cent over the last two years of the war and, in addition, the wool price was fixed from mid-1916, limiting extra profits from wool sales.[86] The Penrith Farmers Association protested when the wool clip price was fixed and suggested that 'injustice and hardship' was being inflicted upon producers of wool. The chief concern however was for 'feeders' of sheep who 'gave an enhanced price for stores in the autumn and spring of 1915 and 1916 taking into consideration the advanced price of wool at that time'.[87]

Although farmers in Patterdale had little choice but to sell on their store sheep and draft ewes, revenues continued to rise albeit at a reduced rate. Numbers were maintained at high levels throughout the war: sheep often providing the only economic use for much upland grazing. The sales recorded at Penrith also reflect local vagaries of climate: low sales in 1916 resulted from the need to maintain herd numbers for 1917 after the outbreak of disease coupled with a harsh winter.[88] For farmers with hefted flocks of sheep this was critical.[89] By contrast, fat sheep sales volumes declined by 26 per cent between 1917 and 1918 along with a reduction in the rate

[81] BPP, 1919, VIII, p. 46 gives price rises for 1913/14 to 1916/17 and 1916/17 to 1917/18 as follows: fat cattle, 72% and 19%; store cattle, 44% and 8%, Fat Sheep, 53% and 21%.

[82] BPP, 1920, L, pt II, p. 45.

[83] BPP, 1919, VIII, p. 46.

[84] Between 1908 and 1924 cattle slaughter weights declined by 6.5% and sheep by 10%. Wartime reductions were largely due to shortages of feed but the overall trend also reflects changed market preference for lighter, leaner meat joints. E. Whetham, *Beef Cattle and Sheep, 1910–1940* (University of Cambridge Department of Land Economy, Occ. Paper 5, 1976), p. 26.

[85] BPP, 1920, L, pt III, p. 83.

[86] BPP, 1920, L, pt III, p. 87.

[87] *CWH*, 8 July 1916, p. 2.

[88] BPP, 1918, LIII, 'Agricultural Statistics', pt III, p. 89.

[89] 'Hefted' flocks of sheep were those that were included with a tenancy, the same number being returned to the landlord on its cessation. Such flocks were territorial and 'knew' their section of the fell.

of increase in fat sheep prices.[90] As with cattle, fattening sheep was less profitable than early in the war and farmers short of feed sacrificed sheep flocks first.

In summary, farmers with common grazing rights continued with the rearing of sheep and lambs and reaped the profits. Common and high moorland whose altitude put it outside the reach of the plough policy was an invaluable and low cost resource for farmers rearing stock. With no practical alternative use, the commons continued to support hardy livestock breeds and because many grazing rights were unstinted, farmers may have been tempted to increase the numbers carried to compensate for the ploughing up of valley bottom fields.[91] Indeed the Board of Agriculture recognised the potential value of common land early on in the conflict. In a circular of February 1916 the Board encouraged farmers and landowners to consider the use being made of moorlands 'with the object of ensuring that they are stocked with as many sheep as the land can carry'. They suggested 'that permission might safely be given as a temporary measure to pasture more sheep than are usually kept on moors without any harm resulting'.[92] To what extent overgrazing resulted in a decline in quality of common grazing is unclear. Generally there is little documentation available for the commons in the post-war period: the manorial courts were ceasing to function either because they were deemed unnecessary or because abuse was so widespread that no one was willing to take action against a neighbour when he himself was breaking the rules. However the files from the Hothfield Estate give details of two applications for regulation of common land during the 1920s. On Little Asby Common unlimited rights were converted to stints so 'that every farmer may be able to enjoy his just and equal rights of pasture'.[93] At East Stainmore 'owing to continued over stocking and trespass on the regulated pasture it has been necessary to amend the bye laws, drawn up in 1892, as the limited penalty was so small that it paid stock owners to deliberately trespass'.[94]

Additional evidence of the importance of fell grazing comes from the Second World War in an enquiry into upland farms in East Westmorland. Farms with fell grazing spent less on feedstuffs, although there was some extra outlay on the hire of grazing for wintering hoggs due to higher stocking levels.[95] Cash margins as a percentage of profits were higher for farms with fell rights than for those without.[96] By contrast, those in parishes at lower elevations, directed by the Food Production Policy to convert pasture to arable, concentrated on the production of fat cattle as a priority. Higher prices for fat cattle than for fat sheep supported this production decision.

Shortage of pasture meant that the value of any additional grazing rights or 'eatage', occasionally made available by tender, was considerable. In January 1913 £27 was paid for three years grazing on the 'wastes and lanes' of the village of Morland[97] and a government enquiry found

[90] BPP, 1919, VIII, p. 46. Fat Sheep prices rose by 53 per cent between 1913/14 and 1916/17, and then by 21 per cent from 1916/17 to 1917/18.

[91] The Field Books of the 1910 Valuation Survey describe most grazing rights in Patterdale as 'unlimited'.

[92] *J. Board of Agriculture*, Feb. 1916, p. 1187.

[93] CRO (K), WD/HH/36, Regulation of Little Asby Common.

[94] CRO (K), WD/HH/38A, Regulation of East Stainmore Pasture.

[95] 'Hoggs' are sheep of between one and two years of age.

[96] University of Durham, *Farm Management Survey*, 16, *Financial Results on upland farms in east Westmorland, 1944* (copy in CRO (K), WDX 494).

[97] *CWH*, 4 Jan. 1913, p. 1.

increases of up to 150 per cent in such rentals for subsidiary grazing in Cumberland between 1913 and 1918.[98]

In upland areas only limited cash revenues came from the arable cultivation of corn crops and potatoes. In 1914 the Penrith market sold 37 tons of oats but no wheat. During the war the maximum quantity of oats sold was just two tons in any one year.[99] Much of the increased arable production was requisitioned by the military for horse provender, resulting in some additional cash flows, and the remainder stayed on the farm and contributed to livestock production. Even in the most arable of the parishes in the West Ward at the fullest extent of the plough policy, farmers were cultivating to produce feed for the army or their own livestock rather than providing crops for human consumption.

Cash incomes continued to be derived from sales of livestock, although farmers would have been conscious of a slowing of the rate of growth in prices in the latter years of the war. The income of farmers at lower elevations where arable cultivation impinged on livestock numbers and where feedstuff shortages reduced the weight and number of fat stock for sale would have been adversely affected compared with farmers in upland parishes who, benefiting from access to common and moorland, continued their rearing business at or above pre-war levels and for whom total revenues would have increased even if the rate of growth was slowing.

(ii) Costs

Whilst revenues rose during the war, so did costs. Rents, wages and feedstuffs made up about 80 per cent of total expenses.[100] The enquiry into financial results of the occupation of rural land suggested that during the war rents were usually only revised on a change of tenancy, landowners being reluctant to be associated with wartime profiteering. Examining the North of England, the enquiry found 22 per cent of holdings had been relet since Lady Day 1914 at rents which were about 23 per cent above pre-war levels.[101] Later, the Corn Production Act of 1917 effectively prohibited further rent increases by requiring proof that the rent increases were not based on higher profits arising from corn price guarantees, something for which no mechanism was provided.[102]

Dewey ascribes the profitability of wartime farming to a stasis in rental income, but at the local level there would have been four groups of farmers: those benefiting from long standing tenancies, those who took on tenancies during the war and paid higher revised rentals, and two groups of freehold farmers. Some of the latter owned their farms outright but others would have borrowed to purchase their farms or buy out relatives on their inheritance: they, at least, would have suffered from increased wartime interest rates. In terms of cash outflows therefore, yeoman farmers without borrowings would have been at an advantage over tenant farmers and of those, tenants with very similar holdings may have faced very different rent charges depending on when the tenancy commenced.

The structure of wage rates for agricultural workers was especially complex in the Lake Counties due to the system of half-yearly hiring and the provision of board and lodging. Pre-war

98 BPP, 1919, VIII, p. 11.
99 BPP, 1915, XLIX, 'Agricultural Statistics', p. 203.
100 Dewey, *British Agriculture in the First World War*, p. 230.
101 BPP, 1919, VIII, p. 10.
102 Dewey, 'British farming profits', p. 383.

wage rates in Westmorland were amongst the highest in the country reflecting a scarcity of labour. The *Cumberland and Westmorland Herald* highlighted this in its reports of the Whitsuntide Hirings of 1913: 'the shortage of farm servants both male and female and the high wages asked were the features of the Whitsuntide hirings …'.[103]

The financial results enquiry of 1919 calculated summer rate increases in Westmorland between 1914 and 1918 at rates as high as 94 per cent for ordinary labour and 86 per cent for skilled.[104] But as the war progressed and labour shortages were exacerbated by military recruitment, many labourers struck bargains with existing employers to their advantage and so avoided the recruiting officers at the hiring fairs. In late 1915 it was 'the poorest attendance seen at Penrith hirings for a long time. It was a most difficult matter to get men, many having agreed to stay in their present places usually at an advance in wages'. 'Top men were nearly all stopping on.'[105] Many of these privately-struck bargains would have been at rates in excess of those quoted by investigators. The minimum wage rate of 25*s*. set by the Agricultural Wages Board in August 1917 was less than the wage rate ruling in Westmorland and would have been of little local relevance.[106]

Rising wage rates would have had a differential impact on farmers. Best placed would have been the smaller farm relying on family labour with perhaps the services of a lad or 'maid' – farms like John Kendal's at Melkinthorpe or Crook a Beck in Patterdale. Here rising wage rates would not have impacted on cash flows, and the ability to extend working hours and adjust work task schedules would have made possible the extension of arable cultivation without significantly increased cash outlay for labour. Although the personal cost of reduced leisure and the possible depletion of farm capital because of low maintenance must not be discounted, these did not involve actual cash outlay.

The West Ward made little use of paid female labour. '[N]one of the farmers wanted women immediately … and considered the girls not fitted for it.'[107] Prisoner labour does not seem to have been made available to farmers. 'North Westmorland will not be able to have German Prisoners of War for work on the land as desired.'[108] Soldier labour from the Agricultural Corps at Carlisle was offered but was not warmly received as an alternative to securing the return of sons from the army. R. Walker from Bank Farm, Crosby Ravensworth, who was refused temporary exemption for his son, was offered a soldier from Carlisle in his place. He wrote to the secretary of the county committee, 'No I don't want a soldier … they are neither use nor ornament … I cannot do without him [his son] I have more corn than last year over 11 acres and 32 acres of hay'.[109] Rates of up to 42*s*. a week for soldier labour would have added an economic motive to the personal desire to secure exemption for family members, for sons rarely received cash wages. There were complaints from early 1916 of farmers dismissing labourers to offer their jobs to adult children. If this happened, it would have saved the children from conscription but

[103] *CWH*, 17 May 1913, p. 1.
[104] BPP, 1919, VIII, pp. 57–8.
[105] *CWH*, 20 Nov. 1915, p. 3.
[106] Dewey, *British Agriculture in the First World War*, p. 94.
[107] CRO (K), WD BS/3, file July-Oct. 1918, – Aug. 1918.
[108] Ibid.
[109] CRO (K), WD BS/3, 7 May 1918.

also reduced farmers' wage bills.[110] Much of the hired labour so released would have found itself conscripted, leaving only those over military age and the very young at the hiring fairs.

Again there were considerable discrepancies in the cash outlay required to secure sufficient labour. Family farms with limited hirings would have been able to adjust labour input at personal, rather than cash cost. Those requiring hired labour or soldier assistance would have seen an increase in cash outlay particularly where soldier labour did not live in and the full wage had to be paid out in cash. Board and lodgings also were not neutral. At a time of labour shortage, good working and living conditions were an essential part of retaining hired hands and although much could be supplied from the farm, providing a good and varied diet would have involved some cash outlay. Overall, it was the small farms with flexible family labour that were able to benefit from rising prices for their produce without commensurate increases in the cash cost of their labour input.

The price of feedstuffs rose sharply as availability declined. Initially farmers aimed to maintain volumes but by 1918, prices had doubled whilst overall usage in England and Wales had halved.[111] With shortages in supplies of feed, the efforts of the CWAEC in Westmorland were directed to encouraging the maximum cultivation of fodder crops leaving farmers to make their own adjustment to livestock numbers as required. 'Farms at high altitude should only be required to produce what the occupier needs for consumption on his own holding with the knowledge that he cannot buy artificial feeding stuffs.'[112] Ironically it was those parishes with the most arable land which suffered the largest reduction in livestock as volumes of fodder crops increased and supplies of oats and straw were requisitioned for army use. At higher elevations common grazing and moorland continued to provide much of the nutrition required for the production of store stock and here only limited quantities of additional fodder resulted from the plough policy. In terms of cash outlay, farmers in Patterdale would have seen little change overall in expenditure on feedstuffs, whilst in Brougham the cash effect would have been seen in the reduced number of fat stock sold as well as the increased prices paid for scarce feedstuffs.

V

This analysis has looked at cash flows in farming rather than accounting profit. To obtain a materially correct estimate of the latter requires information on stock movements and asset valuations. Most farmers did not keep the sophisticated accounting records required and they relied on cash flows for their only real indication of business performance. Had accurate asset valuations been possible, the farmer may have found that wartime farming had depreciated his capital by reducing soil fertility and the quality of common land grazing and diverting labour from maintenance. Some of his capital was now held in higher cash balances and would need to be reinvested after the war.

[110] CRO, Carlisle, CC 1/39/1, 9 Dec. 1918. Captain Broadhurst was reported as saying at the Penrith Tribunal that 'some employers of labour, farmers and others, had since last November dispensed with their hired labour with a view to getting sons into a safe position' [prior to the introduction of conscription]. *CWH*, 11 Mar. 1916, p. 2.

[111] Dewey, 'British farming profits' p. 379.

[112] CRO (K), WD BS/3, Report from the West Ward, 19 Nov. 1918.

Evidence of general depreciation in farmers' capital comes from the 1919 enquiry. In his evidence the Hon. E. Strutt, chairman of the Essex CWAEC, stated 'that it will require a considerable sum of money spent on it [the land] to bring it back into the condition in which it was in 1914'. Asked for an estimate of the amount he suggested at least £5 per acre to return it to good heart.[113] He also highlighted the need to make up arrears of repairs.

Arable farmers in lowland regions benefited from the escalation in the prices of cereals before 1917. This prompted some to switch more land to arable before the introduction of government direction. Once government started to coerce farmers towards arable production, it restricted the returns available and subsequently raised the costs of labour, in effect setting up a disincentive to compliance. It was at this stage that livestock farming regained some of the advantage it had lost in the early part of the war.

In upland areas generally, where revenues came from sales of livestock supplemented by dairy produce, all farmers benefited from the higher prices of the early war years. 'They merely had to produce what they had done before the war in order to raise their incomes substantially.'[114] Fat stock prices rose ahead of store stock throughout the war, although rises slowed after 1916, but these higher revenues were eroded by the higher prices of feed and also by the need to reduce stock levels as grazing pasture was converted to arable, much of the production of which was requisitioned by the army.

Stock rearing costs were lower and more stable so farmers at higher elevations with less extension to the arable area were better able to maintain livestock numbers and suffered less from the higher prices of purchased feeding stuffs. Geographically therefore, it was farmers in the most marginal and less favoured areas who, although working from a much lower base, would have seen the largest percentage rise in net cash revenues over the course of the war. In stock rearing parishes at the highest elevations, limited plough up and extensive common grazing facilitated the maintenance of livestock numbers. Here too although prices of store stock rose at a slower rate than fat stock, margins suffered less erosion from high feedstuff prices.

At the sub-parish level this study also highlights local variations. Within the broad categories of rearers and fatteners, individuals' cash flows varied with the type and size of farm they worked. The effects of wartime direction of cultivation were uneven in their incidence, some were able to exercise personal influence, others were less fortunate. Cash outflows for rent varied between neighbours and freeholders without borrowings were obviously advantaged. Those who took on tenancies during the war would have been disadvantaged by higher rentals compared with some of their neighbours who either owned the freehold or had been in occupation for many years.

The cash cost of labour varied with the size of farm and the personal family circumstances of the farmer; smaller family farm units benefiting from flexible working practices and limited cash outgoings. Such farms were able to 'stretch' family labour and limited cash outlay on wages allowed farmers to put aside more of the windfall cash incomes that arose from the wartime prices. The desire to keep sons at home, especially after the introduction of conscription in 1916, was therefore driven by economic as well as practical and emotional considerations.

[113] BPP, 1919, VIII, *Royal Commission on Agriculture*, 'The economic prospects of the agricultural industry', evidence of Mr E. Strutt, paras 1424–35.

[114] Dewey, 'British farming profits', p. 379.

Farming in Brougham changed more than in nearby Patterdale where farmers felt the benefit of significant increases in cash resources, but the effects on the capital valuation of farms must be factored in to any assessment. Shortage of labour and more intensive arable production and reductions in livestock quantity and quality will have taken their toll on all farmers and the increased cash resources would have been required to make good wartime depreciation.

This study launches the investigation of the impact of First World War food policy and controls on the individual farmer. It has demonstrated a wide range of difference between farming enterprises at the micro level whilst identifying the adaptability of the family farm to crisis situations. At the sub-regional level, it reveals that farming was least disrupted in marginal areas with access to high moorland and commons. Stretching grazing resources allowed farmers to maintain cash revenues by taking advantage of wartime prices and so maintain levels of livestock, particularly sheep. The paper also distinguishes between raised cash incomes and the depreciated capital which meant that farmers faced the post-war depression with a depleted asset base. It may be questioned whether farmers really had such a good war before agriculture slipped back into post-war depression.

George Odlum, The Ministry of Agriculture and 'Farmer Hudson'

by John Martin

Abstract

The direction of farming by the County War Agricultural Executive Committees in the Second World War, coupled with the dissemination of more progressive and productive methods of farming, has been widely hailed as an unqualified success story. This article evaluates the validity of this assertion by focusing on a case study of Manor Farm, Manningford, Wiltshire. From 1926 it was owned by George Odlum, a specialist dairy farmer, nationally and internationally acclaimed for his 'Manningford' herd of pedigree Friesians. In 1942 his farm was privately sold to R. S. Hudson, the Minister of Agriculture, who was, according to the local agriculture committee, treated as 'Farmer Hudson'. Following press comment that the farm was in 'poor condition' prior to its sale, Odlum embarked upon a lengthy campaign to clear his name which culminated in a libel trial in 1946. The evidence presented at the trial provides a detailed insight into the way a progressive farm was managed during the war and suggests strongly that the Wiltshire CWAEC was not impartial in its dealings with either Odlum or Hudson.

The Second World War was arguably of greater significance for the development of British agriculture than any previous period. Within the space of five years the pre-war system of livestock-dominated agriculture was replaced by farming with an emphasis on the production of cash crops, particularly wheat and potatoes. Livestock production was deliberately curtailed by the state, although milk production was prioritised and granted preferential treatment in terms of the allocation of scarce resources such as feedingstuffs.

The increases in domestic food production which were realised during wartime enabled Britain to cope with the diminution of imports caused by the German U boat campaign and allowed shipping to be switched to the transport of military materials. This success was particularly impressive given the country's pre-war dependence on imported food. In 1938, 70 per cent of the cash value of the food consumed in Britain originated from overseas, which equated to 23 million tons of shipping space for food, fodder and fertilizer.[1] No other European county was anywhere as near reliant on food imports as Britain, its nearest rival being Switzerland, whose food imports amounted to 35 per cent of its total food consumption. Not only did British agriculture perform better than any of the other countries embroiled in the war but its achievements surpassed those of the First World War.[2]

[1] A. S. Milward, *War, economy and society* (1977), p. 246.

[2] M. Olson, *The economics of the wartime shortage. A history of British food supplies in the Napoleonic War and in World Wars I and II* (1963).

It is not surprising that the contribution of home-based farming to Britain's survival during the Second World War period and its immediate aftermath was widely acclaimed by both officials and scholars. As the Ministry of Food noted, 'By 1944 there had been compared with pre-war production, a 90 per cent increase in wheat, 87 per cent increase in potatoes, 45 per cent increase in vegetables and 19 per cent increase in sugar beet'.[3] In a similar vein the Editor of the *Farmer and Stockbreeder* noted 'farming's own share in this epic has been to increase food production for a surprising extent for man and beast … Our efforts have not only kept the population supplied with 70 per cent of their food needs, but also saved shipping'.[4] Contemporary official accounts attributed a large part of this success to the wartime system of control, with the County War Agricultural Executive Committees (CWAECs) being eulogised as 'perhaps the most successful example of decentralisation and the most democratic form of control this war has produced'.[5]

The only minor blemish on the achievements was the possibility that wartime controls may have adversely affected a number of farmers, in particular those who were evicted from their holdings, and those landowners who had had land requisitioned for military purposes. Concerns about the legality of the wartime dispossession of farmers were raised by the Farmers and Smallholders Association and the Farmers Rights Association. But the FSA was looked upon as one of many phantom organisations. It operated with a small staff from three rooms in Austin Friars.[6] In contrast the FRA was numerically far more important in terms of its membership which, at peak, amounted to 5–6,000 farmers, although it was widely regarded as being of little political influence.[7]

According to the prevailing orthodoxy, the dispossessed farmers were unrepresentative and isolated individuals who had either been unwilling or incapable of meeting the state's commitment to the dissemination of progressive farming. In spite of significant regional and spatial variations in the incidence of dispossession, the relatively small number of farmers who were forced to vacate their holding was a tiny fraction of those actively involved in farming.[8] What remains unknown is how many more *voluntarily* withdrew from farming in the face of injunctions from their local CWAEC with which they disagreed or thought wrongheaded.

With the publication of K. A. H. (Lord) Murray's magisterial official history, *Agriculture*, in 1954, the wartime achievements of British agriculture rapidly became an integral part of the conventional wisdom of the period. Murray's analysis concluded that the wartime conversion of pasture to arable farming, directed at local level by the CWAECs, constituted 'an unqualified success story'.[9] His account stressed the 'crusading enthusiasm to bring about a renaissance in British farming' which had resulted from 'the progressive tenant farmers and farming landowners on the committees'.[10] In a similar vein Edith Whetham eulogised the 'missionary zeal'

[3] Ministry of Information, *How Britain was fed in wartime* (1946), p. 5.

[4] *Farmer and Stockbreeder*, 5 Dec. 1944, p. 287.

[5] Ministry of Information, *Land at war* (1945), p. 12.

[6] P. Self and P. Storing *The state and the farmer* (1962), p. 118.

[7] J. Martin, 'The impact of government intervention on agricultural productivity in England and Wales' (PhD thesis, University of Reading, 1992), p. 273.

[8] B. Short, 'The dispossession of farmers in England and Wales during and after the Second World War', in B. Short, C. Watkins and J. Martin (eds), *The Frontline of Freedom* (2007), pp. 159–65.

[9] K. A. H. Murray, *Agriculture* (1954) p. 340.

[10] Ibid., p. 339.

exhibited by the CWAECs.[11] In contrast to the opposition which was engendered by directives issued from Whitehall in the food production campaign of the Great War, it was assumed that those emanating from the CWAECs in the Second World War met with harmonious cooperation from the farming community. According to Sir John Winnifrith, this illustrated the 'success of executing government policy through voluntary associations comprised of farmers'.[12]

This viewpoint remained largely unchallenged until the late 1990s, when significant reassessments of the wartime achievements were offered by a number of researchers. Important issues were raised about the role of the National Farm Survey's role in establishing the 'modernist surveillance culture.'[13] Revisionist challenges to the received account were also provided by Martin and Wilt. The former evaluated the wartime changes in terms of physical output, calorific value and monetary value, concluding that the official history 'has tended to exaggerate the achievements of the food production campaign'.[14] Wilt shared some of Martin's reservations about the magnitude of the wartime achievements in output, but he was considerably more equivocal in endorsing the criticisms, arguing that plans for the successful mobilisation of British agriculture could be traced back to the mid-1930s.[15] This revisionist school of thought was subsequently endorsed in principle by Brassley, subject to the very important and relevant caveat that 'much detailed work still needs to be done'.[16] Doubts were raised about the impartiality of some CWAECs when dealing with individual farmers, and about a number of dispossessions carried out under rather dubious circumstances.[17]

One of the problems of developing a revisionist critique has been the lack of detailed archival sources relating to how individual farmers were affected during the period of wartime controls. A potentially valuable source of information is the records of the CWAECs. Designated as MAF 80 in the National Archives, and containing 4,169 files and volumes of documents, they are open for public inspection, but subject to the proviso that readers sign an undertaking of confidentiality in respect of the personal details contained in the files. Autobiographical and biographical accounts of farmers are rare and often rather scant in terms of content. Most of those in existence focus on events that are very difficult to substantiate without reference to additional primary sources.[18] The most popular contemporary writer of this period was A. G. Street, a Wiltshire farmer, broadcaster and journalist, who produced numerous accounts of wartime farming including *Harvest by Lamplight* (1943) and *Hitler's Whistle* (1943).[19] However these were novelistic in approach, or cameos of rural life interspersed with reminiscences based on personal experiences. In a more practical vein was Clifton Reynold's tetralogy *Glory*

[11] E. H. Whetham, *British Farming, 1939–49* (1952), p. 130.

[12] Sir John Winnifrith, *The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food* (1962), p. 28.

[13] B. Short, C. Watkins, W. Foot and P. Kinsman, *The National Farm Survey 1941–43. State surveillance and the countryside in England and Wales in the Second World War* (2000), p. 232.

[14] J. Martin, *The development of modern agriculture. British Farming since 1931* (2000), pp. 47–58.

[15] A. F. Wilt, *Food for war. Agriculture and rearmament in Britain before the Second World War* (2001), p. 202.

[16] P. Brassley, 'Wartime productivity and innovation', in Short *et al* (eds), *Frontline of Freedom*, p. 54.

[17] Martin, *Development of modern agriculture*, pp. 63–6; Short, 'Dispossession of farmers', pp. 158–78.

[18] J. Martin, 'British agriculture archives in the Second World War: lying fallow', *Archives* 25 (2000), pp. 123–35, repr. in J. Black (ed.), *The Second World War* (6 vols, 2007), IV, p. 218.

[19] 'A. G. Street' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *ODNB*) (2004).

Hill Farm (1941–5), which gives an autobographical account of an industrialist who went into farming.[20] Similarly Frances Donaldson's *Four Year's Harvest* is a detailed critique of the wartime management of her 400-acre Warwickshire farm,[21] while Tom Williamson's *The story of a Norfolk farm* (1941) describes his initial experiences of wartime farming tinged with his ruralist and neo-romantic Fascist vision.[22] The sequel, *Lucifer before Sunrise* (1944) which, in places, assumes an autobiographical approach, describes his wartime experiences interwoven with examples of Williamson's sympathy for Britain's enemy.[23] As David Reynolds reminds us, 'war memoirs are rarely transparent and sometimes decidedly opaque'.[24]

Reservations about the accuracy and validity of source material are less of an issue with respect to the present study of Manor Farm, Manningford which was owned by George Odlum, who compiled a comprehensive account of his dairy herd in *An analysis of the Manningford Herd of British Friesians*. The key source here is the verbatim transcript of the court case which he successfully pursued in 1946 against Richard Stratton, Chairman of the Wiltshire CWAEC, and which provides a unique account of the way in which Manor Farm was transformed during this period, not only under Odlum's ownership but also under his successor, Robert Hudson, the wartime Minister of Agriculture. The authenticity and accuracy of the evidence is beyond reproach. The two sides in the case were represented by leading barristers who carried out systematic and rigorous examination of the evidence presented by the witnesses, several of whom were recalled for cross-examination. The trial proceedings provide an invaluable insight into the wartime system of bureaucratic control, and of the actual mechanisms which were used to ensure the dissemination of more productive and progressive methods of farming.[25]

I

During the Second World War the Ministry of Agriculture assumed responsibility for directing national policy on agriculture, whilst a decentralised system of administration undertaken by the CWAECs controlled production at local level. The Ministry was a complex, multi-layered system of administration with its own permanent staff of civil servants. In 1939 the most influential member of staff responsible for liaising with its Minister was the Permanent Secretary, Sir Donald Ferguson. Following the outbreak of war, these links were strengthened by the appointment of William Gavin as Agricultural Advisor to the Ministry.[26] Shortly after the establishment of the CWAECs, Cedric Drewe, MP for Honiton, and Anthony Hurd were appointed to assist William Gavin in liaising with them. Hurd was a respected farmer, tenant of the 480-acre Rainscombe farm, near Marlborough in Wiltshire.[27] He was well known to farmers through his regular radio talks and had also represented Wiltshire on the Council of the National Farmers Union.[28]

[20] C. Reynolds, *Glory Hill Farm* (1943–5).
[21] F. Donaldson, *Four year's harvest* (1945).
[22] T. Williamson, *The story of a Norfolk farm* (1941).
[23] T. Williamson, *Lucifer before sunrise* (1944).
[24] D. Reynolds, *In command of History* (2005), p. 177.
[25] Odlum v. Stratton. *Verbatim report of proceedings* (duplicated ts, 1946).
[26] In 1942 Gavin's services to agriculture were recognised by a knighthood.
[27] A. Hurd, *A farmer in Whitehall* (1951), p. 9.
[28] *The Times*, 22 Sept. 1939.

The Minister of Agriculture at the outbreak of war was Sir Reginald Dorman Smith. Originating from farming stock and elected President of the National Farmers Union in 1936, his extensive first-hand knowledge of farming ensured widespread support from the farming community. In a broadcast made at the outbreak of war, Dorman Smith assured farmers that 'they would not be asked to do the impossible'.[29] Reflecting upon the lessons learnt from the food production campaign of the 'Great War', when there had been widespread allegations of 'farming from Whitehall', the government was determined not to repeat the same mistake.[30] As early as March 1939 officials had endorsed the establishment of local agricultural committees, because of the perceived 'innate conservatism' of the British farmer.[31] In the late 1930s it was widely assumed that this first food production campaign (1917–18) provided a blueprint for the wartime control of agriculture. Based on the official accounts compiled by Beveridge and Middleton, these assertions were deemed to be self-evident. Not only had the campaign ensured that the population had been adequately fed in spite of the country's abnormal dependence on imported food, but also there had been a significant increase in the area of arable land.[32]

Given the reluctance of some landowners to embrace the first ploughing up campaign in the First World War, it was rather naively assumed that all that was needed was a more coherent structure, and the extension and strengthening of earlier procedures. It was acknowledged that the state should be granted more draconian powers this time around to coerce farmers into carrying out directives, and that the campaign should be directed by committees of local farmers who knew what could and could not be done in their own localities. Unlike the Great War, therefore, farmers had no rights to use the courts of law as a mediating body to redress any grievances against the local agencies of the state. The official rationale for this lack of an appeals procedure was that a scheme of this kind 'would so delay matters as to seriously interfere with food production'.[33]

On the outbreak of war the CWAECs formally came into existence with extensive delegated powers.[34] One Committee was appointed for each county in England and Wales, consisting of about twelve members, together with a full-time salaried Executive Officer. In the absence of any democratically-elected assembly, the members of central committees derived their authority from the fact that they were 'personally appointed by the Minister of Agriculture'. In practice the task of selecting a Chairman was delegated to the local Lord-Lieutenant and the Land Commissioners. The principal criterion for selection was an individual's standing as an agriculturalist. Once nominated, the Chairman was given a free hand to choose the other members of the committee.

Executive Officers, on the other hand, were appointed directly by the Minister. Their role was similar to that of civil servants in that they were directly employed by the government but under the jurisdiction of a departmental head who, in the case of the CWAECs, was the chairman

[29] Broadcast made by Sir Reginald Dorman Smith, Minister of Agriculture, cited in *Farmers Weekly* (hereafter *FW)*, 6 Oct. 1939, p. 18.

[30] Ibid. p. 18.

[31] Winnifrith, *Ministry of Agriculture*, p. 27.

[32] W. H. Beveridge, *British food control* (1928), pp. 182–247; T. H. Middleton, *Food production in war* (1923), pp. 158–256.

[33] *Farmer and Stockbreeder*, 22 Apr. 1941, p. 814.

[34] An informative summary of the powers of the CWAECs is contained in J. D. Cantwell, *The Second World War. A guide to the documents in the PRO* (1992), pp. 29–30.

of the local committee. Of the 63 appointments in England and Wales, 26 were filled by Land Agents and a further 24 by county organisers such as the agricultural staff of the County Council. They were responsible for coordinating the work of paid technical advisors.

The chairman of the Wiltshire WAEC was Richard Stratton, a well known farmer who had, for many years, been a prominent member of the Wiltshire County Council, as well as a leading figure in the Wiltshire branch of the National Farmers Union.[35] In 1937 he had featured in the *Farmers Weekly* 'Successful Farming' series. His 2,800 acre estate at Kingston Deverill, Warminister, had been inherited from his father who had purchased it in 1921, having previously been its tenant. At the time of its sale, more than 1,200 acres had been arable but, by 1937, there was less than 400 acres of arable crops including wheat, oats and barley, in addition to clover, leys, roots and kale grown for the cattle and sheep. Unlike many of his more impoverished fellow farmers who had much smaller acreages at their disposal, Stratton was able to focus on more conventional livestock farming which included the summer fattening of cattle, supplemented by a flock of more than 500 breeding ewes.[36] From 1925 onwards two Hosier milking bails were in use, with 120 cows being machine-milked and a further 30 were hand-milked in a dairy.

W. T. Price was appointed Executive Officer. Prior to the war Price had been County Agricultural Organiser, in charge of the County Council's agricultural department, coordinating the advisory services to farmers, landowners and farm workers, as well as having responsibility for ensuring that any statutory orders were carried out.[37] In this role his department had had contact with nearly all the farmers in Wiltshire.

For ease of administration by its CWAEC, each county was divided into districts, usually of four to six parishes, controlled by District Committees. Manningford was under the jurisdiction of the Marlborough and Pewsey District Committee, whose Chairman, Frank Swanton, also sat on the Executive Committee. He was the owner-occupier of a 4,000-acre estate at Overton and surrounding parishes, where he had 300 dairy shorthorns divided into five herds, four of which produced Grade A Tuberculin-Tested (TT) milk. Yields for his herds were officially recorded as averaging 750 gallons a head, an achievement which contributed to him being awarded the Devizes Agricultural Society Cup for the best large dairy herd four years in succession. His farming activities also included 1,000 acres of arable, 1,400 breeding ewes and a folding system for rearing young pigs, with a contract to sell 100 pigs each month to a bacon factory. He too featured in the *Farmers Weekly* 'Successful Farming' series in 1934.[38]

The decentralised organisational structure was intended to foster the impression that local farmers were administering the food production campaign at parish level. In practice, however, the real power was concentrated in the hands of the county Executive Committees and the Executive Officers. CWAECs were given a high degree of autonomy and discretion in the way they dealt with individual farmers. As Dorman Smith explained:

> While I do retain some measure of control I have given the county committee as free as hand as possible to get on with the job, and as they are men with good local knowledge, I am confident that the machinery is the best which can be adopted to carry out this great task.

[35] *FW*, 15 Aug. 1934, p. 28.
[36] *FW*, 13 Aug. 1937, p. 00.
[37] *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 260.
[38] *FW*, 5 Oct. 1934, p. 23.

> The task of deciding which field should be ploughed and what should go into those fields is the business of these county war executive committees. These work through their local district committees.

He was even rash enough to speculate that 'when the history of this war does come to be written, the work of this great corps of volunteers will rank high in the national effort'.[39]

The work of the Committees could broadly be divided into three categories: general administration, technical advice and sanctions. The former occupied most of the committees' time and ranged from dealing with the impact of various wartime regulations to paying subsidies for ploughing and drainage.[40] Providing technical advice, although less time consuming, was regarded by the government and the members of the CWAEC as an important means of increasing agricultural output. Wartime officials considered it their duty not to question the official programme but merely to inform individual farmers as to how their cropping and farming methods could be amended in accordance with the national agricultural plan.

CWAECs were also responsible for the collection of information relating to the condition of, and production on, individual farms. Even at the outbreak of the Second World War, the Ministry of Agriculture had only a vague understanding of this, based primarily on the annual 4 June returns. There was scant information about levels of mechanisation, or of the condition of the land. In order to remedy this situation, the Ministry instructed CWAECs to undertake a national farm survey, which was the most comprehensive survey of land ownership by government since the Domesday survey. This was intended to ascertain the tenurial status of farms, their condition (i.e. soil type, condition of buildings, roads, fences, ditches, drainage, water and electricity) and, most controversially, an assessment of the managerial ability of the farmer.[41]

Farmers were graded into the three categories of A, B, or C according to levels of output. 'A' category farmers were deemed to be achieving levels of output over 85 per cent of the holding's potential, 'B' category farmers as having levels of output of between 70 and 85 per cent, while those in the 'C' category were regarded as less efficient. Usually grading was undertaken during a visit to the farm by a member of the District Committee who, in conjunction with the farmer, would inspect the crops and livestock on the holding. It was against these less efficient or 'failing' farmers that sanctions might be brought should they fail to implement the advice given them by the officials of the CWAEC as to how they should improve their productivity.

After the fall of the Chamberlain government, Dorman Smith was replaced as Minister of Agriculture by R. S. Hudson, who remained minister until the Labour landslide in the 1945 General Election. Hudson was the eldest son and family heir of a wealthy soap manufacturing dynasty. Educated at Eton and Magdalen College, Oxford, he had entered the diplomatic service in 1911, before being elected Conservative MP for Whitehaven in 1924. He lost Whitehaven in 1929 but was returned for Stockport in 1931 and held that seat until he was elevated to the Lords in 1952. In May 1940 he became Minister of Agriculture in Churchill's wartime coalition government.[42] Immediately following his appointment Hudson appointed a team of twelve

[39] Hurd, *Farmer in Whitehall*, p. 26.

[40] Murray, *Agriculture*, p. 339.

[41] For an analysis of its social and political context see Short *et al* (eds), *National Farm Survey*, pp. 15–40.

[42] For Hudson see the biography in *ODNB*. In the absence of private papers, there is no full length biography.

leading agriculturalists to act as his personal representatives, each with a group of counties to look after. Anthony Hurd, took responsibility for Wiltshire, Hampshire, the Isle of Wright, Dorset and Somerset. In conjunction with his Parliamentary Secretaries, Tom Williams and the Duke of Norfolk, Hudson coordinated a massive organisational and publicity task. Hudson was widely acclaimed for ensuring that during the war farmers and landowners alike used every acre of soil to help keep the nation from starvation.[43]

Hudson became so absorbed in his job and interested in new farming practices that a few weeks after his appointment he established Fyfield Estates Ltd which bought Manor Farm, Manningford from George Odlum in 1942.[44] More land was subsequently acquired so that, by the end of the war, Hudson was farming in the region of 2,000 acres, in addition to a farm his wife owned in Oxfordshire. The fact that he was involved in the industry for which he was Minister marked a break with tradition. The prevailing consensus was that it was improper for any MP who was appointed to a ministerial position to continue to trade in businesses connected with office.[45] During the latter stages of the war, Hudson earned high accolade in official circles and in the press for having first-hand experience of farming but as we shall see, this came at some cost to his subsequent reputation.[46]

II

George Odlum was not a typical British farmer.[47] Born in Canada in 1879 or 1880, he became an internationally renowned agricultural engineer and consultant, as well as a farmer in several countries.[48] At the age of fifteen he purchased his first farm, later going to Michigan College of Agriculture where he gained a BSc specialising in the scientific aspects of farming.[49] In 1900 he was appointed agricultural advisor to the British South African Company, and was responsible for the development of the Rhodesian tobacco industry.[50] He also played a key role in the management of banana and sugar estates on Honduras employing more than 8,000 employees and, later, of plantations in Kenya with 4,000 employees, acting as an agricultural consultant in 35 countries.[51]

Odlum spent six months touring farms in the southern part of England before deciding, in September 1926, to buy Manor Farm, Manningford, Wiltshire, from a Mr Wookey, who had run it as a mixed farm.[52] His choice of Wiltshire reflected the fact that the county's fertile vales were ideally suited to grass farming, for which the Manningford district was particularly renowned.[53] The existence of relatively good facilities for the daily transport of milk to London

[43] E. T. Winterton, *Orders of the Day* (1953), p. 272.

[44] *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 477.

[45] Farmers Rights Association, *The New Morality* (1948), p. 3.

[46] *FW*, 10 Dec. 1943, p. 14.

[47] For a detailed analysis of interwar farming see P. Brassley, 'British Farming between the wars', in P. Brassley, J. Burchardt and L. Thompson (eds), *The English countryside between the wars* (2006), pp. 187–99.

[48] TNA, MAF 48/587, letter from Chamberlain and Co to the editor, *The North Wiltshire Herald and Advertiser*, 8 Nov. 1943. The exact date of Odlum's birth is unknown, but he died on 28 July 1959 (*The Times*, 30 July 1959).

[49] *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 63.

[50] For a detailed account of his achievements see G. M. Odlum, *The culture of Tobacco* (1908).

[51] *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 63.

[52] TNA, MAF 48/487, Letter from Chamberlain and Co to the editor, *The North Wiltshire Herald and Advertiser*, 8 Nov. 1943

[53] TNA, MAF 48/487.

meant that the switch to dairy farming was considerably more pronounced in this county than in most other areas. Recognising the value of the monthly milk cheque, Odlum intended to run the farm as a specialist dairy unit producing milk for the liquid market, and to breed high quality, pedigree Friesian cattle which he could sell to other farmers. He formed a company, Manningford Estates Ltd.[54]

In terms of its geographical diversity, Manor Farm was a typical chalk land holding consisting of an area of downland, with arable land on the lower slopes, and water meadows and pasture running down to the River Avon. Wookey had stocked it with a large herd of rather nondescript dairy cattle which were formally regarded as Shorthorns. Retaining the cattle as a stopgap measure to generate an income, by 1928, Odlum had embarked on an ambitious plan to develop a pure bred herd of Friesians.

Unlike many of his peers, Odlum recognised the strong correlation between low cost per gallon and high yield per cow, and the need to focus on breeding high yielding cows which, with good feeding, could be exploited for their genetic potential. Difficulties in finding suitable cattle, particularly those which had been tuberculin tested, resulted in many animals not reaching his stringent requirements. Odlum soon realised that the existing information about pedigree animals did not meet his exacting standards and he sought to develop a more scientific approach to analyzing bloodlines and strains.

Although he was not the first person to develop the technique, Odlum pursued a rigorous policy of selecting bulls based on their offspring's merit as producers. Selection of the genotype was achieved by a rigorous process of progeny testing by milk recording, and then intensifying characteristics by line breeding. This entailed ensuring that only a few selected animals which had indicated transmissible merit occurred in the offsprings' ancestors for four and five generations back. In effect this policy meant the intervening animals were often cousins, with no outside blood being brought in to dilute their characteristics.[55]

Such a scientifically-based selection strategy was made possible by a systematic policy of milk recording, a process which, even the late 1930s, had been adopted by only a small proportion of Britain's dairy herds even though the Strutt family of Rayleigh, Essex, had been using these techniques since the mid-1890s on their highly acclaimed Terling Friesian Herd.[56] As Odlum surmised, but was not able to fully verify because the Strutt family tended not to publicise their methods, their success was the result of the rigid selection of both male and female lines as judged by a system of progeny testing the performance of their offspring.[57]

The approach of breeders such as Strutt and Odlum was exceptional. The prevailing preference of many cattle breeders was for the selection and mating together of parents of outstanding quality which, in practice, was the selection of the phenotype. It was commonly believed that this selection process would impart the necessary qualities in the offspring. However Odlum had little time for cattle shows and awards where cattle were judged in respect of external and

[54] The company had a paid up capital of £50,000, of which £49,999 was held by Odlum and £1 by his wife. Following her death this was transferred to his solicitor.

[55] G. Odlum, *An analysis of the Manningford herd of British Friesians* (1947 ed.), p. 108.

[56] G. E. Mingay, *British Friesians. An epic of progress* (1982), p. 59; W. Gavin, *Ninety years of family farming* (1967), pp. 161–4.

[57] Ibid., pp. 161–2.

intrinsically worthless characteristics such as colour markings, carriage of the tail and overall visual appearance. As he noted:

> The physical perfection (to which may be added a bit of fat and grooming) called for in the show ring bears no relationship to milking merit or the transmission of milking qualities … there is nothing to prevent an animal with outward physical perfection from being a great producer, or the ancestor of great producers, but also there is nothing in the outward appearance, or the winning of prizes that in any way indicates that the animal will be a great producer or the ancestor of great producers.[58]

His first bull, Newly Roseador, had been acquired on a temporary loan and, before he had fully appreciated its potential for enhancing milk production, it had been slaughtered.[59] This experience encouraged him to pursue a more systematic policy of improving the commercial attributes of his strain of Friesians through the use of comprehensive progeny testing records.[60] His own bulls were laid off after trial matings until their daughters had milked one lactation, allowing him to judge the sire's impact on milk production.

The instability of milk prices during the 1920s and early 1930s created difficult times for dairy farmers and pedigree breeders. Membership of the Friesian Cattle Society declined from a high point of 2,098 in 1924 to a low of 1,371 in 1935, after which time it slowly began to revive. Odlum registered the prefix Manningford with the Friesian Society and this rapidly became synonymous with the name of its owner, who established a reputation as a breeder of pedigree Friesians. By the late 1930s he had bred 52 cows which produced more than 2,000 gallons a year, with some exceeding 3,000 gallons, at a time when the national average was a mere 407 gallons.[61] Consequently his cows and bulls were widely sought after, and the famed Manningford bloodlines were dispersed throughout Britain, as well as other countries.

Odlum was one of the first breeders to pursue a strategy of developing a certified disease free herd. As he explained in his memoirs, 'my conscience would not permit me to produce milk for babies to drink that I would not drink myself'.[62] His cardinal principal initially was to take 'every possible measure to clear the farm of disease,[63] and then to make sure that it could be not recontaminated.[64] To this end he ensured that his cattle did not come into contact with those on neighbouring farms which might have been infected with Johnes disease or contagious abortion.[65] Recognising the importance of a pure and liberal supply of water, piped water was laid on to all his fields. More than thirty miles of fence was erected, and the boundaries abutting his neighbour's pasture fields were double-fenced. Rabbit-proof fencing was erected in a number of places, in particular where military land adjoined the southern section of his farm.[66]

[58] Odlum, *Analysis*, p. 86.

[59] Mingay, *British Friesians*, p. 124.

[60] *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 66.

[61] The average output per cow in terms of gallons per head per year sold off the farm was 407 for the period 1935–9. This did not take into account the amount of milk consumed on the farm. Nevertheless the output per animal was less than 500 gallons. See E. M. Ojala, *Agriculture and Economic Progress* (1952), p. 205.

[62] Odlum, *Analysis*, pp. 3–6.

[63] Ibid., p. 4.

[64] *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 6.

[65] In 1934 the Gowland Hopkins Committee identified these two diseases, together with tuberculosis and mastitis, as the most important causes of loss in the dairy industry. See Mingay, *British Friesians*, p. 59.

[66] *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 44.

Certification of his cattle involved testing and retesting the milk for tuberculosis. In 1933 the number of farmers producing Certified or Grade A TT milk amounted to only a few hundred. By 1937 the figure had increased to 23,000, but this still amounted to less than one in five of all milk producers.[67] As early as 1929, the British Medical Council visited Manor Farm in order to see the 'best clean milk farm in the district', a visit arranged by the county advisor, W. T. Price.[68] Throughout the 1930s a succession of foreign dignitaries visited Odlum's farm.

Research by members of staff at the University of Oxford's Agricultural Economics Research Institute showed that the reluctance to switch to producing disease-free milk could be attributed to the fact that many farmers considered the additional costs involved in the provision of milking sheds and parlours as prohibitive.[69] The higher running costs entailed in meeting the more stringent regulations were only being undertaken by 'keen commercial farmers' who recognised the financial benefits which could be derived.[70] Odlum's progressive approach to farming was exemplified by the feeding of sprouted grains to his cattle and a focus on loose housing.[71] He spared no expense in reconstructing his existing cattle sheds, building new ones to house the cattle in winter, which were deemed to be 'among the finest in the country if not the finest'.[72] He was a keen advocate of the use of silage at a time when the vast majority of farmers remained committed to hay making.[73] In order to exploit the high yielding potential of his stock, Odlum purchased large quantities of cereals and oil seed cakes. These were the cheap by-products left over when oil seeds were crushed to extract the oil for margarine and soap, and readily available from overseas prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. Not all of Odlum's ideas were commercially viable or readily adopted by other farmers. This was particularly evident in terms of his installation of a hydro-electric plant in the river to generate electricity for the farm and house.

His concentration on high quality milk production differed significantly from many contemporary progressive farmers, including Frank and Joshua Hosier in Wiltshire. The Hosier brothers had pioneered the development of an outdoor system of machine milking based on the use of a portable bail which was moved from one field to another.[74] Under this system milk yields were adversely affected during inclement periods of weather, but this was more than compensated for by the economies derived from low labour requirements.[75] The Hosiers did not attempt to enhance the genetic potential of their animals through progeny testing; instead 90 per cent of herd replacements were imported Irish heifers, which were dual purpose utility cattle.[76] A cheap, outdoor, grass-based system of milk production was also developed by Rex Paterson, enabling him to rent more than 10,000 acres of land in Hampshire and Wiltshire.[77] Other notable Wiltshire farmers who pursued a similar approach included the renowned A. G. Street and Richard Stratton.[78] Unlike Odlum however, they concentrated their efforts on

[67] Martin, 'Impact of government intervention', ch. 11, 'The campaign for milk production'.

[68] *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 304.

[69] F. R. G. N. Sherrard, 'Some costs of producing tuberculin-tested milk', *Farm Economist*, Apr. 1938, p. 187.

[70] Ibid., p. 187.

[71] Mingay, *British Friesians*, p. 124.

[72] *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 568.

[73] Ibid., p. 9.

[74] A. J. Hosier and F. H. Hosier, *Hosier's Farming System* (1951), pp. 12–21.

[75] Ibid., p. 11.

[76] Ibid., p. 32.

[77] 'Rex Paterson' in *ODNB*.

[78] *FW*, 13 Aug. 1937, pp. 28–9.

adopting technical innovations, such as machine milking and outdoor bail milking, which enhanced labour productivity rather than on improving the quality of their stock.

All these farmers shared with Odlum high levels of organisational and administrative ability, combined with astute business acumen, enabling them to become specialist dairy producers able to exploit economies of scale. They were able to prosper at a time when many of their peers were having difficulty in remaining solvent. On the eve of the war, their large herds, which in Odlum's case amounted to 217 animals, contrasted sharply with the vast majority of Britain's 136,000 dairy farmers, who had an average herd size of 22 cows.[79]

Odlum was therefore a shining example of a progressive farmer according to the criteria identified by the eminent agriculturalists Viscount Astor and B. Seebohm Rowntree. Such a farmer was described as 'a scientist, keeping records, always trying as far as possible to relate effects to its causes and occasionally venturing into field experiments of his own'. In the late 1930s an 'unfathomable gulf yawned between the progressive farmer and the run-of-the-road farmer, who muddled along with a rule-of thumb wisdom inherited from his father or picked over a glass of beer on market day'.[80]

In the years before the outbreak of the War, Odlum continued to work as an agricultural consultant during the winter months. During these absences Manor Farm was looked after by a farm manager, Douglas Mann.[81] From 1934 onwards Odlum suffered from what he called a 'germ infestation', which he had contacted during one of his many trips to West Africa. This required him to rest whenever possible in the afternoons.[82] The outbreak of the Second World War, coupled with the illness and eventual death of his wife in 1940, led to him curtailing his overseas consultancy.

III

Following the outbreak of war in August 1939, the Ministry of Agriculture embarked upon an ambitious plan to increase the area of arable nationally by over 2 million acres, of which Wiltshire's share was 40,000 acres, or about 10 per cent of the existing grassland area.[83] Having only two arable fields, both of which were used for growing fodder for his cattle, Odlum recognised the need to increase his arable production in accordance with wartime policy. His plan was that for every two acres ploughed up for arable, he would plough up an additional acre for forage crops in order to ensure that his farm remained as self-sufficient as possible.[84] In this way he hoped to cope with reduced levels of feedingstuffs which could now only be obtained under an allocation system coordinated by the local CWAEC.

Opposition to Odlum's proposed strategy was strongly voiced by John Nichols, a member of his District Agricultural Committee.[85] Nichols had previous experience of Manningford, having farmed some of the rabbit-infested military land which adjoined the southern section of

[79] For Odlum's herd, *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 586; for the national herd, Martin, 'Impact of government intervention', p. 216.

[80] Viscount Astor and B. S. Rowntree, *Mixed farming and muddled thinking*, p. 10.

[81] *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 14.

[82] Ibid., p. 15.

[83] *FW*, 31 May 1940, p. 17.

[84] *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 389.

[85] Ibid., p. 68.

Manor Farm. He refused to accept Odlum's plan of 'planting forage to replace grass' in order to maintain the dairy herd.[86] Instead, Nichols emphasized that livestock production should be subordinate to cereal farming, arguing 'that in the end all the farm would be ploughed and put to grain, even to possibly the bull pen and the lawns'.[87] Furthermore, Nichols was scathing of Odlum's pioneering initiatives, claiming that he did not like Friesian cattle because they were foreign.[88] He expressed serious doubts about the value of silage.[89] In addition he 'did not believe in too much talk about clean milk because it gave people the impression that other milk was not clean'.[90] These comments were not surprising, given that Nichols himself had no personal experience of producing certified Grade A milk.[91]

During the first year of the war, Wiltshire as a whole managed to plough up 42,610 acres.[92] Odlum's initial attempts to cope with the ploughing up directives were thwarted by shortages of plough parts as the Minister of Supply had diverted production to other needs. Nevertheless he managed to comply with virtually all the wartime directives issued by the local CWAEC, including increasing the area of arable to 418 acres in 1941 and growing potatoes.[93]

This rapid increase in the arable area resulted in Manor Farm being transformed into an arable farm growing cereals. The associated reduction in the area of grassland, and the fact that he was not allowed to produce his usual 450 tons of silage, coupled with difficulties in securing feedingstuffs for his cattle, necessitated a major reduction in the size of his dairy herd in 1940. In 1939 he had been able to purchase 238 tons of feedingstuffs for his cattle, whereas in the first ten months of 1940 he secured slightly over 75 tons.[94] As a result, Odlum held only 83 animals in the winter of 1941–2.

Perhaps recognising that he could no longer maintain the Manningford herd, Odlum decided to sell Manor Farm. On 24 April 1942 the Minister of Agriculture, R. S. Hudson, who lived a few miles away at Fyfield Manor, visited the farm and agreed that his private company, Fyfield Farms Ltd, should purchase it at the asking price of £41,000, paying an additional £19,000 for the fixtures and fittings which included the remaining 51 cattle and the farm machinery.[95] By this time, following the dispersal of the bulk of its milking herd, the farm had mainly young stock. Just before Hudson returned to finalise the deal, Frank Swanton, a member of the Wiltshire CWAEC, visited Odlum and instructed him to fill up his No. 1 shed with milking cows. Odlum was perplexed by this bizarre request and had asked Swanton 'Why was it necessary to part with my high-class, disease free herd, and now to be asked to stock with mongrel animals which will all have been in contact with disease?'. Swanton replied that he thought Odlum had had to sell the cows because they were diseased. It was subsequently revealed that the CWAEC were in the process of serving an order requiring Odlum to milk at least 30 cows by September 1942.[96]

[86] Ibid., p. 70.

[87] Odlum's account of his meeting with Nichols, ibid., pp. 16, 70, 389.

[88] Strictly speaking none of the dairy breeds, including the British Friesian, Guernsey, Jersey or Ayrshire, are native English. Pure English breeds such as the Shorthorn would be classified as dual purpose or beef.

[89] *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 16.

[90] Ibid., p. 16.

[91] Ibid., p. 16.

[92] *FW*, 31 May 1940, p. 17.

[93] *Odlum v. Stratton*, pp. 572–3.

[94] Ibid., p. 300.

[95] Ibid., pp. 121, 375.

[96] Ibid., p. 83.

IV

In August 1943 W. T. Price, in his role as Agricultural Organiser and Chief Executive Officer for the Wiltshire Committee, was instructed to arrange a fact-finding tour of a selection of farms in his county for a party of about 26 journalists, including a BBC representative.[97] Price prepared a document providing technical details and timetabling the farms to be visited: '4.30 pm. Then to Mr R. Hudson's farm at Manningford. This farm was taken over by last summer by Mr Hudson and was in very poor condition but it is now showing excellent crops'.[98] Manningford was the only farm on the itinerary which was specified by name.[99]

After the tour, articles were published in a number of newspapers, including the *News Chronicle*, *Wiltshire Times*, *North Wilts Herald and Advertiser* and *Manchester Guardian*, and coverage was given by the BBC.[100] The wide dissemination of details about what might be regarded as an insignificant farm visit is not surprising given that, under the auspices of the Ministry of Information, a regular weekly news service was maintained through Britain's 350 national and provincial newspapers.[101] The *Manchester Guardian* noted that 'on the advice and requirements of the committee', Mr Hudson, 'an assiduous and weekend farmer in his own person, has had much problem land ploughed up which is giving this year a satisfactory barley yield. The water meadows have been reclaimed – some for corn and roots and others as pasture for the 170 head of Friesian and Ayrshire cattle which Mr Hudson hopes to increase to 200'.[102]

Comments about the poor standards of the farm prior to its sale infuriated Odlum who instructed his solicitors, Chamberlain and Co, to write to the newspapers asking them to identify the authors of these statements.[103] A reply from the editor of the *News Chronicle* confirmed that their statement had originated from the CWAEC. Odlum's solicitor wrote to Stratton asking that this statement, which cast a slur on his client, who was inextricably linked with the prestigious Manningford strain of Friesian cow, should be rescinded.[104] Stratton verified that he was not the author of the document but, in his capacity as Chairman of the Wiltshire CWAEC accepted full responsibility for it.[105] He explained that 'I cannot think that anyone would read this as libelling Mr Odlum but I am sorry that it has caused him offence'. In response to a further letter from Odlum's solicitor, Stratton acknowledged that the author of the document was W. T. Price.

Chamberlain and Co requested a 'written withdrawal' of the statement and 'an apology for having' made it in the first place. They affirmed that if this was acted upon, Odlum would not ask for damages, or seek a refund of the costs he had already incurred. If this was not forthcoming within seven days, Stratton was requested to provide the name of the solicitor who would act for him, stating that in the event of further legal proceedings his client would claim 'any damages to which he is entitled'. Eventually, in a belated attempt to defuse the escalating crisis, a member of Stratton's legal team met a representative of Chamberlain and Co, stressing that what they were dealing with what was a 'storm in a teacup.'[106] Responding to the solicitor's letter,

[97] Ibid., pp. 9, 575.
[98] Ibid., pp. 9, 567.
[99] Ibid., p. 576.
[100] Ibid., p. 576.
[101] J. W. Day, *Harvest Adventure* (1946), p. 282.
[102] *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 183.
[103] Ibid., p. 3.
[104] Ibid., p. 13.
[105] Ibid., p. 11.
[106] TNA, MAF 48/587, letter from A. D. Stocks to W. T. Price, 1 Feb. 1944.

Price's response was less conciliatory, he concluded that 'It is a pity that the case is to proceed but I take it we shall defend with all vigour and at least we do know we have got a good case.'[107] A writ was issued on 10 February 1944, but the case did not formally reach the law courts until June 1946. This lengthy procrastination can be partly explained by the directives accruing from the Attorney-General,[108] but further delays were caused by Price's extended lecture tour in America during the autumn of 1945. By the time the trial started, Hudson had been replaced by Tom Williams as the Minister of Agriculture.

The libel case formally opened on 21 June 1946. Odlum was represented by Mr G. J. Paull KC and Mr H. Heathcote-Williams, while Stratton was represented by Mr G. C. Slade KC and Mr W. J. K. Diplock. Stratton's solicitor was also the official solicitor to the Ministry of Agriculture. The highly regarded and experienced Mr Justice Atkinson presided over the proceedings. During the trial it was reiterated that, although Stratton was not the author of the document, in his capacity as Chairman of the Wiltshire War Agricultural Executive Committee, he accepted 'full responsibility for it'.[109] This was not, therefore, a libel trial concerned merely with Stratton's integrity, but an indictment of the committee system of wartime control. Thus the Ministry of Agriculture had a vested interest in securing the defendant's acquittal.

Witnesses were called on both sides, focusing on the quality of Odlum's management capabilities in 1942 immediately prior to the sale of his farm. The case for the prosecution was based on the view that the farm was not in a poor condition, contrary to the description in the press release. Considerable emphasis was placed on Odlum's reputation. According to one witness, the plaintiff had done more for Friesians in this county than any man of his generation.[110] A number of witnesses confirmed the high level of farming which had taken place at Manningford. The defendant's case was that in the spring of 1942 shortly before it was sold, the farm was in 'a very poor condition and a bad state'.[111] In their amended defence they argued that, in terms of the report which Odlum had objected to, 'the said words are fair and *bona fide* comment made without malice upon a matter of public interest, to wit, the condition of Manor Farm Manningford, in and between the months of March and July, 1942'.[112]

The defence case was shrouded in secrecy. The Ministry of Agriculture had decreed that the records relating to the District Committee were 'confidential and state documents and that it would be injurious to the public interest that they … be disclosed'.[113] Stratton had been forbidden under a plea of privilege from revealing how Odlum's farm had been classified by the National Farm Survey.[114] That this information should remain secret contravened official policy, for the Ministry of Agriculture's *Notes on Agricultural Policy*, issued in the spring of 1942, stressed the benefits of informing individual farmers of the grade they had been allocated.[115]

This edict about privileged information had resulted initially from a letter drafted by Sir Donald Ferguson, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, which

[107] TNA, MAF 48/587, Letter from W. F. Price to A. D. Stocks, 9 Feb. 1944.
[108] *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 11.
[109] Ibid., p. 567.
[110] Ibid., p. 569.
[111] Ibid., p. 111.
[112] Ibid., p. 534.
[113] Ibid., p. 570.
[114] *Law J.*, 96, 13 Sept. 1946, p. 493.
[115] Ministry of Agriculture, *Notes on agricultural policy for those directing the food production campaign*, for which see Murray, *Agriculture*, p. 359; *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 529.

specified that it had been compiled on the instructions of the Minister of Agriculture, Hudson. However, proceedings in court revealed that it had been drafted in Hudson's absence, and without his knowledge, a procedure which was considered to be normal practice.[116] Consequently the Judge was allowed to see the minutes of CWAEC, but affidavits excluded him from seeing the District Committee's minutes, or from being informed that the National Farm Survey had allocated Odlum's farm an 'A' grading.[117] This embargo was endorsed by Williams who had succeeded Hudson as the Minister of Agriculture. The restrictions did not meet with the approval of Justice Atkinson who with a degree of exasperation exclaimed, 'If fifty Ministers swore on fifty bibles that it was contrary to the public interest that I should not be told how the farm was graded I should not believe them'.[118]

A key witness for the defence was John White, who managed Manor Farm for Fyfield Estates Ltd. He presented damaging evidence against Odlum, explaining that when he had first inspected the farm shortly before Hudson had purchased the holding, crops were in poor condition culminating, he argued, in low yields which were substantiated by the threshing returns he had collated. He stressed that that they had been compiled immediately after threshing had taken place, and that he could produce his original notes to collaborate this if required.[119] But when he was recalled for cross-examination, it was shown that the forms had been completed retrospectively, several months after threshing, and that all the details had been recorded using the same pen, suggesting that they had been filled in simultaneously. Moreover Hudson's secretary, Miss Lillian Hayman, gave evidence that between September 1942 and December 1943 'there were no farm diaries in existence, nor so far as I am aware any notebook or document recording the operations in any particular field'.[120] In addition the actual forms on which the data had been recorded had not been sent out from the Institute of Agricultural Economics until several months after threshing had taken place.[121]

The defence maintained that the crop failures of autumn sown wheat were the result of the plaintiff's low levels of husbandry. When giving evidence Stratton denied that these failures had anything to do with the inclement weather conditions, even suggesting that the winter of 1941–2 had not been particularly bad. His evidence was quickly undermined when the prosecution required him to read out an extract from an article that he had written in March 1942 in which he stated that 'We are having a succession of hard winters'.[122]

The Cultivations Officer for the Wiltshire Committee gave evidence that he had advised Odlum about the potential for potash deficiencies leading to crop failure. According to him this discussion had taken place immediately after a Young Farmers visit to Manor Farm. His views were challenged, therefore, on the grounds that inspections were organised primarily to promote progressive farming techniques and would not have included visits to failing farmers. More importantly, other independent witnesses stated that no such Young Farmers' visit to Manningford had taken place at the time the Cultivation Officer claimed he had engaged in the discussions with Odlum.

[116] *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 452.
[117] TNA, MAF 32/41 7085231 (National Farm Survey: Manor Farm Manningford, Wilts.).
[118] *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 454.
[119] Ibid., p. 376.
[120] Ibid., p. 377.
[121] Ibid., p. 376.
[122] Ibid., p. 467; see also p. 210.

The defence made a number of assertions about the dilapidated state of Odlum's farm machinery, but it was revealed in court that they had been purchased at valuation by Hudson as a job lot when he bought the farm.[123] One allegation concerned a hay tedder, which was allegedly broken and had a part missing, but it was shown this had been removed to enable it to be transported. Other examples of broken or poorly maintained machinery were cited such as the threshing machine, which White described as 'useless'. But it was revealed that, at the direction of Fyfield Estates, auctioneers had arranged to sell the machines which had been described in the catalogue as a 'genuine sale of valuable farm implements taken with the farm now surplus to requirements' and that they had realised high prices at auction.[124] The threshing machine was said to be in 'excellent condition'.[125]

Further evidence of Odlum's incompetence included him having unthreshed wheat ricks on the farm in March 1942. Mr Swanton claimed to have told Odlum 'what a disgrace that was'.[126] But under cross examination the witness was forced to acknowledge that it was the 'policy of the Government … to encourage farmers to hold wheat in stacks until required for flour milling'.[127]

One of the key witnesses for the defence was W. T. Price. In July 1942 he had written to Anthony Hurd, Agricultural Advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture explaining:

> I have already explained to the Minister the reasons why Manningford was in such a deplorable state. I think … that since Odlum lost his wife he has gone to pieces and his health has been particularly bad during the last 12 months. We did everything possible to try and get things put right but as you know Mr Odlum was particularly awkward and was a complete obstructionist. I think it is quite definite that if Odlum had not sold the farm the committee would have taken possession by now.[128]

Subsequently Price was subjected to rigorous cross-examination which revealed that his assertions were unsubstantiated.[129]

Hudson appeared in person for the defence, reinforcing the view that the farm was in a poor state at the time of the purchase, and that it was both under-grazed and lacked sufficient arable land. According to his evidence, when Odlum had shown him around the holding he had apologised for its poor condition. But this assertion was difficult to square with the fact that, according to Odlum, Hudson had complimented him on the holding and had agreed to pay – without demur – £19,000 for the remaining cattle, farm machinery and other fixtures and fittings. Hudson tried to escape this impasse by claiming that, as he continued to farm the land, he found more and more evidence to support his original view.[130] His 'great story in the witness box was that he had reclaimed the land and that it was now some of the best land on the farm'.[131] One of the interesting aspects of the trial was that, indirectly, it became an investigation of Hudson's own methods of farming. The transcript reveals that by the time of the trial, in the

[123] Ibid., p. 321.
[124] Ibid., pp. 115–22.
[125] According to the court transcript, Hudson secured new implements for his farm; *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 49.
[126] Ibid., p. 586.
[127] Ibid., pp. 466–7.
[128] Ibid., pp. 173–4.
[129] Ibid., p. 301.
[130] Ibid., p. 323.
[131] Ibid., p. 379.

summer of 1946, there were 101 cattle on the holding, 51 of which were adults compared with the 227 that Odlum had maintained in the spring of 1940.[132]

Hudson was later recalled after his evidence was disputed by other witnesses. Stress was placed on the changes which had taken place in field U which extended to about 14 acres.[133] According to John White, this particular field was in a particularly poor state at the time of Hudson's purchase with a substantial area of rushes, whereas now it was 'practically all in potatoes'.[134] During an adjournment of the trial, Odlum, in conjunction with a Mr Cole, visited the field and confirmed that little more than seven acres were under potatoes, while more than six acres were 'just growing weeds'.[135] Photographs were taken to illustrate this point and shown to the judge, casting further doubts about the veracity of the defence's evidence.

V

In his summing up the Judge stressed that it was agreed by all parties that Odlum's crops were not in good condition in 1940 and 1941.[136] He dismissed the defence's attempts to imply that the disposal of the dairy herd was the result of Odlum's obstinacy, rather than a response to the impending feed shortages which would result from the ploughing up programme. The Judge was particularly scathing about the evidence presented to the court by Price. In respect of the letter he had sent to Hurd, the Judge concluded 'there was scarcely a statement … which was not an untruth and a deliberate untruth'.

Price had claimed that 'As far as we were concerned in Wiltshire, Mr Hudson was Farmer Hudson; the fact that he was also the Minister of Agriculture did not matter at all'. These assertions were dismissed by the judge as 'sheer humbug'. Hudson had undoubtedly received preferential treatment for, as the Judge concluded:

> The moment Mr Hudson got the farm, the Catchment Board cleaned out the river, lowering the bed of it; the Agricultural Committee themselves cleaned out the drains and lowered them; they ploughed his land for him; they did everything they could for Mr Hudson – and they let him grow as much fodder as he wanted.[137]

By 1945 the arable area had been allowed to contract to 403 acres while the area of forage had increased to 139 acres, a trend not only out of line with the government's national policy but also with the targets of the Wiltshire Committee.[138]

Mr Justice Atkinson vindicated Odlum, awarding him £500 damages, an amount which reflected the seriousness of the accusations and was in stark contrast to the peppercorn awards often imposed in other defamation cases. More significantly Odlum's legal costs were awarded against Stratton which, when disclosed several months later, amounted to £4,965.[139] Indemnifying Stratton against the costs of his defence ensured that the Ministry of Agriculture was faced with a bill of over £8,000.

[132] Ibid., p. 477.
[133] Ibid., p. 379.
[134] Ibid., p. 581.
[135] Ibid., p. 476.
[136] Ibid., p. 573.
[137] Ibid., p. 583.
[138] Ibid., p. 583.
[139] *Law J.*, 97 (1947), p. 105.

The verdict was widely reported in the popular press. Not surprisingly the most critical account was in the *Daily Worker* with a headline of 'Down on Hudson's Farm it was All Too Easy'.[140] The *Daily Herald* exclaimed 'All Humbug about Farmer Hudson'.[141] The practical and down to earth *Farmer and Stockbreeder* hailed it as 'Lies and Humbug and £500 Damages'.[142] Even the more conservative pro-establishment *The Times* reported the Judge's surprise about the way the Ministry of Agriculture had indemnified the defendant against costs and damages.[143]

That the Ministry of Agriculture had agreed to this indemnity was not unusual. Existing legal convention was based on the premise that the Crown had immunity in tort and 'it was the usual practice for a Government Department to indemnify public officials who may be sued in respects of torts committed by them in the course of their official duty if, in the view of the Department at the time, they had acted in good faith'.[144] Technical legalities of this kind were lost on the public and on a number of MPs such as Mr N. Smith, who continued to ask questions about the issue in the House of Commons.[145] The Ministry of Agriculture's legal team did investigate the possibility of appealing against the judgement. A conference between the defence's legal team and Mr Valentine Holmes, a legal expert on appeals procedure, concluded that the 'chance of success were about fifty-fifty', and that even if it was successful it would 'not do away with the adverse strictures upon the various witnesses made by the Judge'.[146] C. W. Whately, a member of the Wiltshire CWAEC, wrote an impassioned letter to the *Spectator*, suggesting that defence witnesses had merely been 'slipping up over the language used in describing Mr Odlum's farming'.[147] But his comments were firmly rebutted in the following edition in a letter from a less partisan correspondent, Eric North.[148] Protracted negotiations between the BBC and Odlum's solicitors were resolved by the BBC agreeing to pay him 100 guineas inclusive of costs but, like the other costs in the case, this was ultimately paid by the Ministry of Agriculture. In addition, the Corporation agreed to broadcast an apology in the seven and eight o'clock news bulletins and to publish it in the *Radio Times* and *Listener*.[149]

VI

Odlum did not return to farming: his contribution to the modernisation of dairy farming ended with the running down and sale of the Manningford herd. His book, *An analysis of the Manningford Herd of British Friesians*, was privately published in 1943, with Odlum intending only to distribute it to a few friends, but it was reprinted for wider circulation in 1944, 1945 and 1947.[150] The wisdom and perceptive comments which it contained ensured that the text rapidly became 'one of the best known works on cattle breeding in this country'.[151] The fact that progeny testing

[140] *Daily Worker*, 30 July 1946.
[141] *Daily Herald*, 30 July 1946.
[142] *The Farmer and Stockbreeder*, 6 Aug. 1946, p. 1454.
[143] *The Times*, 30 July 1946, p. 6.
[144] *Law J.*, 96, 13 Sept. 1945, p. 493.
[145] *Parliamentary Debates (Commons)*, 427 (1945–6), col 114 (14 Oct. 1946).
[146] TNA, MAF 48/587, Report of conference between Mr Slade and Mr Valentine Holmes, 1 Oct. 1946.
[147] *The Spectator*, 16 Aug. 1946, p. 16.
[148] *The Spectator*, 23 Aug. 1946, p. 17.
[149] TNA, MAF 48/587, letter from The BBC to Sir Denys Stocks, 5 Feb. 1947.
[150] Odlum, *Analysis*.
[151] *Odlum v. Stratton*, p. 11.

was eventually widely adopted by many leading dairy breeders, including the highly influential Milk Marketing Board, is testament to its significance.

The comments in the farming press testify made at the time of Odlum's death to his continuing influence. For *Farmers Weekly*, Odlum's writings had 'a profound effect on the average farmer's attitude to keeping better stock'.[152] *Farmer and Stockbreeder* remarked that

> some of Mr Odlum's views were highly controversial and he challenged much of the accepted dogma of pedigree breeders. But even those who disagreed violently with his ideas benefitted from the serious thought they provoked. Above all George Odlum was a fearless individualist.[152]

The challenge he made to cattle breeding was referred to some twenty years later by J. Williams in a British Breeders Club discussion. 'All these great breeders like Boutflour and Odlum have made you think … and thought inspires people to do better than they would otherwise'. To be ranked alongside Professor Robert Boutflour, Principal of the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, whose lectures were encapsulated in his seminal work *The high yielding dairy cow*, identifies him as an outstanding crusader for more progressive and productive methods and raises Odlum to an iconic figure in the history of dairy farming, or as *Farmer and Stockbreeder* had it, 'The Bakewell of our Century'.[153]

Of the others involved in the libel suit, Stratton resigned as Chairman of the Wiltshire CWAEC shortly after the publication of the verdict. In conjunction with his son, he continued to farm after the war, although there was some suggestion that he felt he had been made a scapegoat for the shenanigans of wartime officials. Unlike some of his fellow Chairmen, his contribution was not recognised by the award of a Knighthood or CBE.[154] Papers deposited by his family in the Wiltshire Record Office provide a detailed insight into the numerous and complex disputes on which he was required to adjudicate.[155]

W. T. Price managed to retain the confidence of Tom Williams, the Minister of Agriculture, who noted:

> It is not for me to comment on the expression of a Judge, but it will perhaps suffice if I say that my confidence in Mr Price's integrity is in no way impaired by Mr Justice Atkinson's remarks, and if Mr Price were remaining in the Minister's services – he has recently been appointed Principal of the Harper Adams Agricultural College – I should have no hesitation in continuing his appointment in a responsible position. In the circumstances I see no reason for any enquiry into the work of the Wiltshire Committee.[156]

He continued his wartime role of presenting lectures for the BBC and remained Principal of Harper Adams Agricultural College until his retirement in 1962.

The Odlum case undermined Hudson's political credibility. Nevertheless the long term impact on his reputation was limited. He was widely acclaimed in contemporary accounts as an outstanding success. According to Lord Winterton he 'was by far the best of Ministers of

[152] *FW*, 14 Aug. 1959, p. 51; *Farmer and Stockbreeder*, 18 Aug. 1959, p. 78.

[153] Mingay, *British Friesians*, p. 125; R. Boutflour, *The high yielding dairy cow* (1967), p. 59.

[154] Hurd, *A farmer in Whitehall*, p. 34.

[155] Wiltshire and Swindon RO, 2865/1.

Agriculture in either war'.[157] Hudson continued to represent Southport until he was elevated to the Lords in the New Year Honours of 1952 as Viscount Hudson of Pewsey. He continued to farm in Wiltshire. Shortly after the end of the war, in conjunction with four of his friends, he acquired the Charter Estate in Southern Rhodesia of nearly 100,000 acres, where they farmed on an extensive scale.[158] He was also the director of a number of the Rhodesian companies. In 1954 he served as President of the British Friesian Society. When he died (whilst visiting Rhodesia) on 2 February 1957, his eldest son inherited the title but, following his death in 1963, it became extinct. Unlike many of his wartime contemporaries in the government, Hudson did not attempt to write his autobiography, nor did he ensure that his personal papers were preserved for posterity. Instead a small collection of his papers including press cuttings and a few personal family letters were retained by his sister who resided at Manningford after his death.[159]

VII

Odlum's experience at Manningford provides an insight into the way that even progressive farmers were treated during the war. Another respected figure, Rex Patterson, was castigated by the Hampshire committee because of his unorthodox methods. This matter was only resolved following a lengthy official investigation which vindicated Patterson's claims that he was being victimised by local officials[160]

While recognising that making generalisations from an isolated instance is a risky gambit, the case study of Manor Farm nevertheless illustrates the complex and, at times, contradictory aims inherent in the wartime control of agriculture. More specifically it casts serious doubt on the conventional wisdom about the impartial way local committees operated during this crucial period. Odlum's case was unique in that he had sold his farm to the Minister of Agriculture, and that he went on to secure legal redress through the law courts for defamation. In a broader context he epitomised a significant body of farmers whose standards of farming were found lacking in an unspecified way by wartime officialdom. But where some of the category 'C' farmers were 'failing', or attempting to cope with undercapitalised and unpropitious farms on the urban fringe,[161] Odlum had been a highly successful and well-regarded dairy farmer in the 1930s. Moreover, he had been graded as a category 'A' farmer by the National Farm Survey, a fact which the Ministry went to some lengths to conceal from the libel action.

Odlum was confronted by a series of instructions to re-orientate his farm to meet the immediate demands of wartime production, demands which he seems to have accepted even though they made impossible the farming on which his reputation rested. Finally he seems to have preferred to sell up when it became necessary to disperse the Manningford herd. In this re-

[156] TNA, MAF 48/487, Letter from the Minister of Agriculture to H. S. Morrison MP, 26 Aug. 1945.

[157] Winterton, *Orders of the Day*, p. 272.

[158] *The Times*, 12 Feb. 1957.

[159] C. Hazlehurst, S. Whitehead and C. Woodland, *A guide to the papers of British cabinet ministers, 1900–1964* (1996), p. 197; C. Cook, *Sources in British political history* (1977), p. 234.

[160] 'Paterson, Rex Munro (1902–1978)' in *ODNB*; 'Rex Paterson and his farming empire', *FW*, 15 Dec. 1944; 'Settlement in Paterson case', *FW*, 10 Nov. 1944; 'Strong Exception to Minister's Statement', *FW*, 5 Jan. 1945.

[161] C. Rawding, 'The treatment of "failing" farmers in south-west Lancashire during the Second World War', in Short *et al* (eds), *Frontline of freedom*, pp. 179–93.

spect, Odlum and the Manningford herd were casualties of war. The wartime priority for bread and potatoes simply overwhelmed one of the most innovative agricultural developments of the inter-war years. In being instructed to plough, Odlum was being treated no differently from his neighbours, and yet there seems to be more than a hint of needle towards him, a settling of old scores. If this raises questions about how the CWAEC saw Odlum, then there are too questions about Hudson's role. Why, of all the farms available for purchase in 1942, did Hudson chose to buy Odlum's? How much did he know of Odlum's reputation before that date? How aware was he that he was being treated as a special case by the CWAEC and how complicit was he in securing privileges denied Odlum?

Finally, *Odlum v. Stratton* draws attention to the behaviour of the Wiltshire CWAEC. Even if Odlum, the specialist dairy farmer, was treated impartially in 1939–41, being given targets for arable production in line with those of his neighbours, Hudson seems to have been treated much more leniently and allowed to establish a farm which played to its natural strengths – precisely the strengths which Odlum was denied. The Wiltshire CWAEC could not have claimed to have dealt with both owners equally impartially. Odlum's experience therefore illustrates the fate of inter-war progressive farming in the rush to achieve wartime self-sufficiency: *Odlum v. Stratton* the seedier side of the behaviour of the CWAECs.

The wealth of the English landed gentry, 1870–1935*

by Mark Rothery

Abstract

This article explores changing levels of unsettled personal wealth amongst the landed gentry of Devon, Hertfordshire and Lincolnshire during the period of the Agricultural Depression of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The main quantitative sources employed for this research are the National Probate Calendars. Despite problems with agricultural incomes and land values, overall levels of gentry wealth were sustained. This was a result of the diversification of wealth away from land and into other safer investments of a non-agricultural character. A final section shows how one Devon gentry family converted land into liquid investments at the end of the First World War.

The highly adaptable nature of landed elites in the face of profound changes in modern society and the flexibility of relations between landed and non-landed elites have been amongst the most important findings of scholars of landed society over the past fifty years. F. M. L. Thompson and David Cannadine amongst others have shown that the aristocracy and the gentry were willing to diversify their investments into mining, railways and a range of other urban and industrial ventures as economic conditions came to permit such behaviour.[1] This has contributed to more general explanations of the openness and flexibility of the British landed order during the modern period. The slow and gradual decline of landed elites along with their fluid relations with new aspirants to elite society helps explain, it has been argued, the smooth and evolutionary nature of modernisation in Britain. In particular, the gentry provided an important safety valve for any possible social tensions arising from industrialisation, urbanisation, democratisation and the development of meritocracy.[2] Equally, the force of the attractive power of landownership, it

* The research that forms the basis of this paper was facilitated by the financial assistance of the Economic History Society and the Institute of Historical Research through the award of their Postan Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, 2004–5. I am greatly indebted to both of these institutions for their support. I would also like to thank Professor Richard Smith of the Cambridge Group for the Study of Population and Social Structure for providing a stimulating and rewarding base during that year. Several colleagues at the University of Exeter were also instrumental in encouraging and advising this research, including Dr Tim Rees, Professor Andrew Thorpe, Professor Mark Overton, Dr Henry French and Dr Bruce Coleman. Equally, I extend my thanks to Dr Jane Whittle for her invitation to present a paper at the Winter Conference of the British Agricultural History Society, 2005, in honour of Professor Thompson, which forms the basis of this article. Finally, I would like to thank Professor Michael Thompson for several interesting conversations during our meetings at the conferences of the British Agricultural History Society.

[1] F. M. L. Thompson, *English landed society in the nineteenth century* (1963); id., 'English landed society in the twentieth century', I-IV, *Trans. Royal Historical Society*, fifth ser. 40 –sixth ser. 3 (1990–2), *passim*; D. Cannadine, *Aspects of aristocracy: grandeur and decline in modern Britain* (1995).

[2] Thompson, *English landed society*, p. 22.

has been argued, led the rising middle classes to emulate the aristocracy rather than challenge their status through new forms of culture and politics.

This work, and particularly that of Michael Thompson, stimulated a wide ranging debate over the wealth of landed society during this period and, more generally, relations between landed patricians and 'new wealth'. During the 1980s Lawrence Stone and W. D. Rubinstein attempted to undermine the long-held belief amongst historians and contemporaries alike in the 'openness' of the English landed classes to new wealth.[3] Rubinstein and Stone both claimed to show that very few businessmen with the necessary wealth to do so had, in fact, bought landed estates of any great magnitude. Aspirants to the patrician class were admitted to the social and cultural institutions of the landed orders through public school education, marriage, invitations to the hunt and the shooting party and via sociability connected to the season. They also attained political power by pushing for parliamentary reform. However, few seem to have been inclined or, more likely, able to buy landed estates and play 'the squire' in its fullest sense. The landed orders were not, it was argued, an 'open elite'.

Both of these historians were heavily criticised and most scholars now accept that their arguments were flawed. Thompson made some of the most incisive criticisms of this work, particularly in relation to Rubinstein's claims. One major criticism was the way Rubinstein had used the probate records that formed the basis of his data on non-landed elites.[4] Also, it was noted that the definition of a 'landed estate', which had been set at 2000 acres or more by Lawrence Stone, was too high a ceiling for the analysis of landed society as a whole.[5] Thompson argued that, as a result of this approach, they had under-estimated the numbers purchasing land by ignoring the large numbers of wealthy entrants to landed society who had purchased smaller estates of between 1000 and 3000 acres.

However, the debate is far from over and there remain a number of possible new empirical and analytical angles on the subject. Much of the work on landed wealth has focused on the wealthier aristocracy. Those studies that have dealt with the landed gentry have been confined to the nineteenth century. There has been relatively little work on the wealth of the lesser landed gentry, particularly in the early twentieth century. Equally, most existing studies have been of a qualitative nature and have focused on a small number of families, and on the decline of their estate incomes and agriculture rather than alternative investments and types of wealth.

This research aims to make a modest start at filling these empirical gaps and to make a contribution to the debates as they stand today. The focus of this article is on the personal and unsettled wealth of the English landed gentry as it related to their adaptation to changing

[3] L. Stone and J. C. F. Stone, *An open elite? England, 1540–1880* (1984) and W. D. Rubinstein, *Men of property: the very wealthy in Britain since the Industrial Revolution* (1981).

[4] F. M. L. Thompson, *Gentrification and the enterprise culture. England, 1780–1980* (2001).

[5] These debates span a number of different publications. A good starting point in the literature would be F. M. L. Thompson, 'Life after death: how successful nineteenth-century businessmen disposed of their fortunes', *EcHR* 43 (1990), pp. 40–61, W. D. Rubinstein, 'Cutting up the rich: a reply to F. M. L. Thompson', *EcHR* 45 (1992), pp. 350–61 and Thompson, 'Stitching it together again', *EcHR* 45 (1992), pp. 362–75. For other dimensions to this debate see W. D. Rubinstein and M. J. Daunton, 'Debate: "gentlemanly capitalism" and British industry, 1820–1914', *Past and Present* 132 (1991), pp. 150–87.

social and economic conditions. From a fresh perspective it will be shown that the gentry were, indeed, a highly adaptable social group during this period. By making use of probate records and by including the estates of the lesser gentry in possession of less than 2000 acres, this research supports the arguments of Thompson as opposed to those of Stone and Rubinstein.

Section one sets out the data derived from the *National Probate Calendars* relating to the unsettled wealth of gentry landowners from three English counties dying between 1870 and 1935 and relates it to landed income as it was recorded in 1873 and, for a smaller subset, to settled wealth. Section two explores the investments of the wealthiest of these gentry landowners through a number of more focussed case studies. The third part then narrows the focus further to the investments and financial diversification of a single lesser gentry family, the Strode family of Plympton, Devon.

I

The quantitative data that informs this paper is based on the probated fortunes of 250 gentry landowners from 124 landed gentry families who were resident and had their main estates in Devon, Hertfordshire and Lincolnshire during the 1870s. 'Landed gentry' is defined here (as it was by Thompson) as commoner landowners with £1000 or more income from land per year as reported in the return of landowners of 1873. These corresponded to the 3817 'Squires' and 'Great Landowners' listed by Bateman in his tables on the distribution of landownership.[6] There was no upper limit set on landed incomes and, thus many of the wealthier families, such as the Aclands of Devon or the Turnors of Lincolnshire spanned the divide between the aristocracy and the gentry. The vast majority of the families sampled had been landowners for at least one generation before the 1873 Return. By definition, those that purchased landed estates of this size after 1873 do not figure in this study.

The sample of families for these three counties was identified from the *Parliamentary return of owners of land, 1873*. All families owning £1000 rental of land or more were extracted and those with published genealogies in *Burke's Landed Gentry* were then selected from this larger sample. Of the 124 remaining families, 32 per cent fell into the £1000-£3000 bracket, whilst 68 per cent received £3000 or more in rental income. This contrasts with the broader structure of landownership at this time. John Bateman had noted that 66 per cent of the 'landed gentry' (his 'squires' and 'great landowners') were of the lower wealth order, whilst 34 per cent owned 3000 acres or more.[7] This sample, then, over-represents the wealthier gentry. However, the sample does include a significant number of the 'lesser gentry' who form a major part of the analysis. The *National Probate Calendar* was then searched to find the date of probate and probate valuation of the heads of the 124 landed families. Here it needs to be explained that after 1858 all wills were proved by the state. Details of all grants of probate were published in the *National Probate Calendar* which gives the identity of the deceased, the date of their death, the names of the executors and the value of the total effects of the deceased.

[6] J. Bateman, *The great landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* (1885, repr. 1971), p. 510.

[7] Ibid.

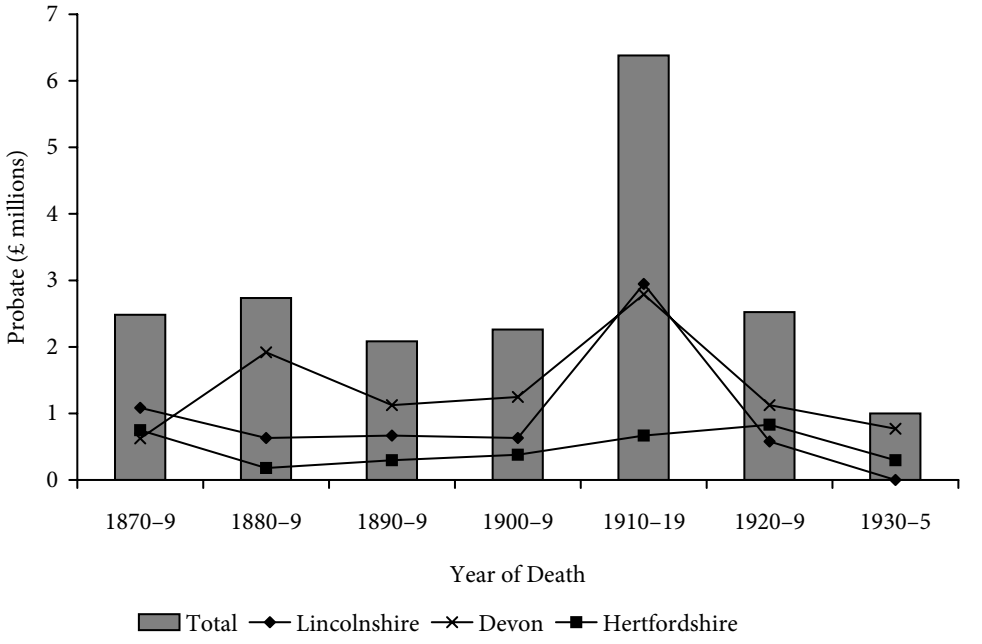


FIGURE 1. Total Probated Wealth

Note: The total numbers of individuals dying in each period was as follows: 1870–9 = 41; 1880–9 = 38; 1890–9 = 35; 1900–9 = 40; 1910–19 = 45; 1920–9 = 39; 1930–5 = 12.
Sources: Parliamentary Return of Owners of Land (1873–5); J. Bateman, *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland*, (1883, repr. 1971); *Burke's Landed Gentry* (fifteenth edn, 1937); *Burkes Peerage, Baronetage and Knightage* (1949); *National Probate Calendar, 1858–1935*.

The *Calendars* only list those effects which were the unsettled and personal property of the deceased until 1926, after which settled and unsettled wealth were both included. These valuations give some indication of the deceased's wealth: however, we cannot equate unsettled and personal property with non-landed assets in a direct sense since the Settled Lands Acts meant that landed property could be held by an individual as the proper 'owner' rather than as tenant for life and thus, 'personal' does not necessarily equate with 'moveable' or 'liquid' assets. Altogether the total personal effects of 250 of the 291 individual heads of families were traced in the probate calendars. This group included several members of different generations of the same family. It is assumed that the 41 heads of families for whom probate entries could not be found were either not probated, which is perfectly possible, or that the will was contested, thus delaying the probate process beyond the five-year post-mortem period selected for this study.

In total, the 250 gentry landowners in this sample who died between 1870 and 1935 left over £19 million in unsettled personal wealth or an average of around £78,000 each. There was a high level of variability in the wealth of individual landowners dying in all cohorts. The value of their effects ranged from the £5 left by John Gage Saunders Sebright (d. 1890) of Hertfordshire,[8] to the

[8] *National Probate Calendar* (hereafter *NPC*) 35/98.

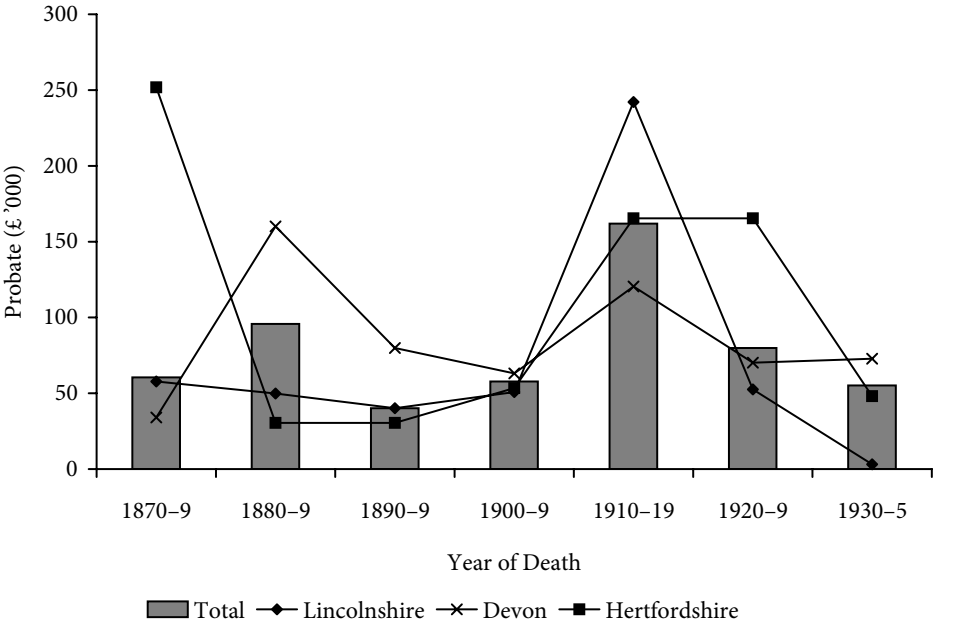


FIGURE 2. Average Probated Wealth

Sources: See Figure 1.

£1,600,000 left by John Michael Williams of Devon (d. 1880), and covered almost everything in between. Total probated wealth decade by decade is shown in Figure 1 and average probated wealth in Figure 2.

A number of the sampled landowners left exceptionally large fortunes at death. In fact, just under one in five of them left over £100,000. Sixteen left more than £250,000. The top ten wealth-holders in this group left, between them, £7,231,790 in personal unsettled wealth, an average of over £700,000 each. There were two millionaires, John Michael Williams of Devon, and Richard Vincent Sutton (d. 1918) of Lincolnshire.[9] These 'super-wealthy gentry' will be examined in more detail later in the paper.

The general picture provided by the probate calendars was one of relative continuity (Figures 1 and 2). However, there were some indicators of change at certain points. There was a distinct rise in the wealth of the Devon gentry left by those dying between 1880 and 1889. A more significant rise can be identified amongst the gentry of all three counties dying between 1910 and 1919, which was mainly a result of increases in probate amongst the Devon and, especially, the Lincolnshire gentry. During this period a total of £6,359,415 was recorded, around £5 million of which was left by Devon and Lincolnshire families. This was partly a function of the higher number of more wealthy gentry dying during this period. But, it is suggested, tentatively at this point, that the concentration of land sales during the early twentieth century was also a crucial factor reflected in these figures on personal wealth.

[9] *NPC* 24/87 (J. M. Williams), 62/39 (R. V. Sutton).

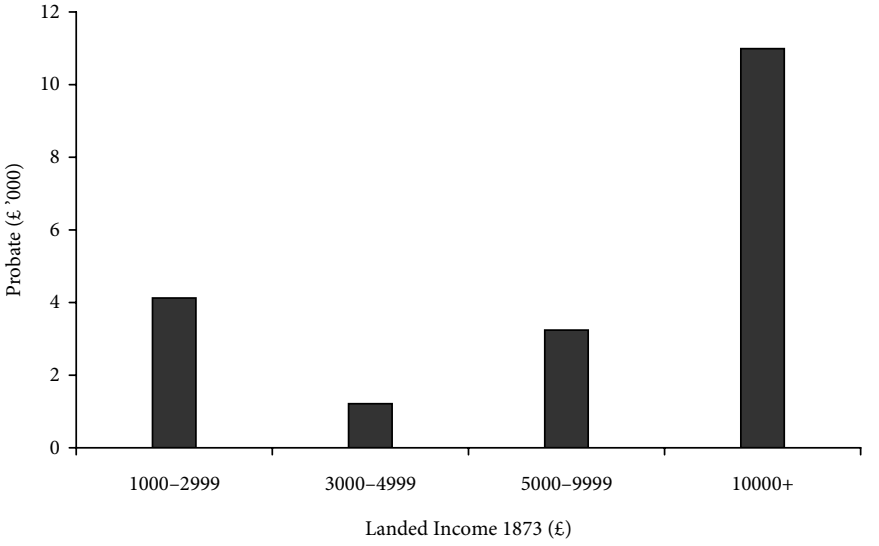


FIGURE 3. Probated Wealth by Annual Landed Income

Sources: See Figure 1.

It is generally accepted that, during the period between 1910 and 1921, around 6 million acres of land changed hands. This was the largest turnover of land since the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the sixteenth century and, possibly, since the Norman Conquest.[10] Most gentry estates coming up for sale were sold to sitting-tenant farmers. The frenetic activity in the land market during this period was facilitated by the Settled Land Acts of 1882 and 1890.[11] This legislation gave the individual landowner, who was a 'tenant for life' under the system of family settlement, the right to sell the family estates along with the country house, if they desired to do so. The proceeds of these sales were still subject to the family settlement but it was the life-tenant's own decision how the proceeds were reinvested, whether in land or some other type of investment. As Habakkuk has noted, it allowed the 'owner' to decide '… the form in which the family wealth should be held'.[12] Additionally, estates of less than 6,000 acres could be released more easily from the family settlement.[13] The sales were also encouraged by high land values in the late Edwardian period and stimulated further in the post-war years by the Corn Production Act, the repeal of which in 1921 (the 'Great Betrayal') brought an end to the 'selling frenzy'. It is suggested that all of this helps explain

[10] This is the established orthodoxy on land sales during this period. However, this claim has been queried, most recently by John Beckett and Michael Turner: see their paper, 'End of the Old Order? F. M. L. Thompson, the Land Question and the burden of ownership in England, c.1880-c.1925' and Thompson's rejoinder, 'The land market, 1880–1925: a reappraisal reappraised', both in this issue of the *Review*.

[11] Thompson, *English landed society*, pp. 319–21.

[12] J. Habakkuk, *Marriage, debt and the estates system. English landownership, 1650–1950* (1995), p. 649.

[13] Ibid., pp. 645–9. The actual importance of these acts can be overstated since, as Habakkuk has observed (p. 649), it is likely that there were many gentry estates left out of settlement before the depression, especially those under 6000 acres.



FIGURE 4. Average Probated Wealth by Landed Income

Sources: See Figure 1.

the very high levels of personal wealth amongst some individuals dying during this crucial period of market activity in land, particularly those that were able to remove their capital from family settlements.

Figure 2 shows that the average probated wealth for the three counties together was the outcome of differing, but not consistently different averages, in each of the three counties. In Figure 3, total probated wealth is categorised according to annual income from land in 1873. The overall experience of the three counties was generally that landowners with the largest rent roll had much the most probated wealth, despite being relatively few in number. However, Figure 4 suggests a rather different story in Hertfordshire. The lesser gentry of Hertfordshire possessed far larger personal estates than the greater landowners there. Explanations for this must be guarded at this point. However, a number of speculative suggestions may be proffered on the basis of the different types of gentry found in the three counties.

Perhaps the most obvious distinction to be drawn between the profiles of the Devon, Lincolnshire and Hertfordshire families is the general length of time that they had been settled on their estates and had been landowners. More recent entrants to landed society were far more commonly found amongst the Hertfordshire gentry, many of whom, such as the Baker family of Bayfordbury, had bought their landed estates during the late eighteenth century or later. Much of the wealth invested in Hertfordshire estates came from banking, finance and the professions.[14]

By contrast, a higher proportion of gentry families in Devon and Lincolnshire could claim

[14] On the high frequency of new purchasers in the Metropolitan counties, see Habakkuk, *Marriage*, p. 620, also Stone, *Open elite*, esp. pp. 160–4.

TABLE 1. Settled and unsettled wealth post-1926

Name	*County*	*Annual rent in 1873 (£)*	*Settled Wealth (£)*	*Unsettled Wealth (£)*	*Proportion of Wealth Settled (%)*
T. Kekewich	Devon	5942	28,775	56,402	34
B. Bromhead	Lincs.	1676	1390	2208	39
M. Kelly	Devon	3531	21,490	18,538	54
C. Giles-Puller	Herts.	6055	19,217	15,829	55
A. Kelly	Devon	3531	19,000	6898	73
J. Ley	Devon	4520	38,565	10,574	78
R. Coode	Devon	8739	146,200	38,008	79
H. Carew	Devon	15,148	33,852	5682	86
A. Acland	Devon	34,785	175,800	23,749	88
G. Sebright	Herts.	13,567	50,000	4076	92
W. Radcliffe	Devon	2461	29,243	2515	92
A. Smith	Herts.	14,617	357,970	24,379	94
Total		114,572	921,502	208,858	

Source: See Figure 1.

Note: The preponderance of the Devon gentry is purely incidental on the individuals dying in the short period between 1926–35. The sample of Devon families was the largest and it was likely that there would be over-weighting towards the gentry of this county. There were an additional nine landowners that died during this period. However, for whatever reason, they did not return these double probates.

a far lengthier lineage as landowners in their rural locales. The patterns of Hertfordshire landownership support the general observations made by Habakkuk and Stone on the gentry of that county. However, the larger personal wealth of the lesser Hertfordshire gentry provides an indication that both Stone and Rubinstein were, indeed, misguided in not analysing the lesser gentry in their studies of new entrants to landed society. As Thompson suggested, it was amongst this 'lesser' group that most new entrants to landed society were more likely to be found. Despite the distinctive pattern of wealth-holding found amongst the Hertfordshire gentry, which is of itself highly revealing, the aggregate data for the three counties combined does show that unsettled wealth tended to follow the capital value of settled landed wealth. Those with more valuable agricultural land rentals were more likely to leave a larger personal fortune at death.

A more accurate picture of the ratios of settled and unsettled wealth in gentry circles is afforded by the change in tax laws in 1926, which meant that settled real estate was also included in probate valuations and listed under a separate heading. The two figures, for the settled and unsettled estate, were listed as separate probate, allowing a comparison of capital values. This does not afford a complete separation of real and movable wealth since unsettled land had been treated as personal estate since 1892. However, the post-1926 probate records for this small subgroup of families does allow a glimpse at changing patterns of wealth-holding amongst small sections of the landed gentry, although it should be stressed that the size of the sample places limitations on the power of this analysis of settlement patterns.

Twelve individuals from the three study counties left probate of this kind between 1926 and 1935 (Table 1). This small group of landowners left, in total, 18 per cent of their wealth in unsettled form and 82 per cent settled. The average proportion of wealth left in settled estates was 72 per cent and personal wealth 28 per cent. There is a high degree of variance in the figures, which still show a lower overall proportion of settled wealth than might be expected, suggesting a reasonably high level of diversification, or at least possibilities for diversification, in the financial investments of these individuals.

Overall, these figures on land and probate hint at a shift in gentry wealth away from agricultural land to more reliable sources of income. They suggest a sustained and, at times, rising level of personal wealth at death during a period when agriculture was in general decline and many families were selling parcels of land. On the whole, they seem to have retained high levels of personal wealth. Many families, particularly the more wealthy ones, had in fact, diversified during an earlier period, often in the nineteenth century. A closer survey of some of the super-wealthy families will show these changes in more detail.

II

The ten wealthiest individual landowners in this sample to die in this period have been listed in the Table 2. The first and most striking feature of these figures is the close link between levels of landed and personal wealth. Eight of the ten super-wealthy individuals were born into greater gentry families with rentals of £10,000 or more: three of them received over £30,000. Another prominent feature is that the Hertfordshire magnates in this select group were part of the 'lesser gentry'. This is a reflection, in miniature, of the broader trend observed earlier in the paper, towards high levels of personal wealth amongst the lesser Hertfordshire gentry. Closer analyses of the varied backgrounds and fiscal behaviour of some of these individuals and families will reveal several of the contextual factors serving to produce these patterns and the close links that can be observed between the gentry and non-landed elites.

John Michael Williams, the wealthiest of this group, was the owner of land in Devon, Cornwall and South Wales worth £13,392 per year in 1873. The main home of the family during his life was in Cornwall, at Caerhays Castle, although the family also owned Gnaton Hall, in Newton Ferrers, Devon, from 1853.[15] The family had originally derived their wealth from mining in south Wales and had bought their estates in the south-west of England in the mid-eighteenth century, where they continued to exploit opportunities for mining and other investments into the nineteenth century.[16] Closer investigation of J. M. Williams and his son Michael reveal more details of their patterns of investment, which were diversified long before the Agricultural Depression.

J. M. Williams was a shareholder in the Cornish Railway from Plymouth to Falmouth in the 1840s, to the tune of £90,000 (at £50 per share) and with a return of 4 per cent on his

[15] *White's Devon* (1878–9 edn), p. 567.

[16] Although no collection of family, business or estate papers seem to have survived, there are several single documents in the Cornwall Record Office relating to their mining and banking activities. See Cornwall RO (hereafter CRO), GP694–6, records of Grylls and Paige, solicitors of Redruth and BRA846/164, Deed between various gentlemen and John Michael Williams, banker, of Truro and Caerhays.

[17] *The Times*, 31 Oct. 1844.

TABLE 2. The super-wealthy landed gentry

Name	*County*	*Rental Income Per Annum, 1873 (£)*	*Date of Death*	*Probated Wealth (£)*
J. M. Williams	Devon	13,392	1880	1,600,000
R. V. Sutton	Lincolnshire	13,726	1918	1,000,000
R. C. Vyner	Lincolnshire	37,693	1915	998,095
W. L. Christie	Devon	13,382	1913	966,412
J. A. Williams	Hertfordshire	1522	1871	500,000
J. W. Ramsden	Lincolnshire	18,974	1914	489,028
J. G. Williams	Hertfordshire	1522	1923	479,005
C. T. Acland	Devon	34,785	1919	429,424
G. F. Luttrell	Devon	24,370	1910	426,580
H. F. Vyner	Lincolnshire	37,693	1883	312,936
Total		197,059		7,231,790

Sources: See Figure 1.
Note: None of these individuals died after 1926 and it is, therefore, impossible to precisely calculate levels of settled wealth. Unsettled land could be included in probate after 1892, which suggests that real property may form part of these probate entries, along with liquid capital and movable goods.

investments.[17] Later, he became a partner in the Cornish Bank on the basis of his £35,000 capital investment, which he withdrew some time before the liquidation of the bank in 1879.[18] In the 1880s his executors invested £15,000 of his fortune in a Canadian investment, The Peel River Land and Mineral Co.[19] Additionally, he owned 1,210 shares in the New York Central Railway.[20]

Rather than pass on the bulk of the family's land to one son, which was generally the norm amongst landed gentry families, J. M. Williams chose to divide the landed estate almost equally between his two sons, an approach most often associated with the business middle classes.[21] His elder son, Michael, moved closer to the position of a gentry landowner when he sold the family interests in the Morfa Smelting Works, in south Wales, and moved to the family home at Gnaton Hall. He retained some business interests of a more passive kind by taking up a series of directorates in Devon and Cornwall Railway companies.[22] Michael's personal wealth at death (1889), of £43,470, was much less than his father's had been. The most likely explanation for this is that J. M. Williams's fortune was placed into a trust or family settlement. The evidence of the investments made by his executors after his death provides strong support for this assessment.[23] All of this illustrates the amphibious identity of a family located between the worlds of land and business.

[18] *The Times*, 29 Jan. 1879.
[19] *The Times*, 15 Nov. 1886.
[20] *The Times*, 2 May 1888.
[21] Bateman, *Great landowners*, p. 478. On partible inheritance amongst the business middle classes see R. J. Morris, *Men, women and property in England, 1780–1870* (2005), esp. pp. 109–17.
[22] *The Times*, 23 Feb. 1899. On the widespread inclination of businessmen to retain interests in business after purchasing landed estates, see Habakkuk, *Marriage*, pp. 582–6.
[23] *The Times*, 15 Nov. 1886.

The Sutton family claimed a far longer lineage as gentry landowners and exhibited, in many ways, very different behaviour during this period. The Sutton estates had been built over a long period through a mixture of purchase and marriage. Captain Sir Richard Vincent Sutton, sixth baronet (1891–1918) died of influenza whilst on active service in France in the last weeks of the war, aged 27. Sutton had posthumously inherited the estates from his father, Richard Francis Sutton, in 1891. *The Times*' obituary records that Sir Richard held 13,000 acres in the country and 'real estate in certain Mayfair streets leading from Piccadilly': the whole was estimated to produce £100,000 annually. He left an estate valued at one million pounds ('as far as can be ascertained'). As he was unmarried, the settled estates passed to an uncle, H. C. Sutton, with remainder to his cousins, the sons of H. C. Sutton.[24] Two previous owners of the family estates, Sir John Sutton (d. 1873) and Sir Richard Francis Sutton (d. 1891) left much lower amounts of personal wealth, although there was a detectable build-up of personal wealth between these three owners.[25] It seems unlikely that any significant amount of land was sold during Sir Richard's Vincent's tenancy of the Sutton estates that could explain his personal wealth.

Given the circumstances of his death at a young age it seems likely that the Sutton estate, including the lands in London, was left out of settlement during Sir Richard's life tenancy. Thus, although his probated wealth appears to have represented an increase on his predecessors, it was, in fact, a continuation of wealth that was previously shrouded in family settlements. This wealth was 'unmasked' either due to his untimely death or for some other reason relating to his arrangements for the transmission of the Sutton estate upon his death.

Other aspects of the multifarious nature of gentry finances, and of the inertial force of gentry wealth in the face of successive challenges in modern society, is reflected in the Vyner family, also of Lincolnshire. The two Vyner brothers in this list, Henry Frederick Vyner (d. 1883) and his younger sibling Robert Charles de Grey Vyner (d. 1915) are an interesting case study in the accumulation, transference and continuity of gentry wealth. The Vyner dynasty began with a small estate, purchased in the early sixteenth century, at Ashelworth, in Gloucestershire. The family then acquired wealth and land through a succession of marriages into other landed families and several London merchants. Two younger sons rose to particular prominence in London society during the seventeenth century. Sir Thomas Vyner (1588–1665) became the Lord Mayor of London (1653) and was knighted by Oliver Cromwell, in 1654, later receiving the title of Baronet, in 1661. His cousin, Sir Robert Vyner (1631–1688) was also a Lord Mayor of London (1675) and a baronet (1666). Sir Robert's estates came to rest with the descendents of a nephew, his own son having predeceased him, and they settled at first Gautby in Lincolnshire and then at Newby Hall in Yorkshire after they acquired that estate by marriage.[26] By the nineteenth century the family had accumulated extensive lands, measured at over 30,000 acres

[24] *NPC*, 62/39, 27 Dec. 1918; *The Times*, 3 Dec. 1918 (obituary); 31 Dec. 1918 (report of will). The Sutton estate still exists, with Cahill suggesting that it presently holds about 21.3 acres in central London and over 9,000 acres elsewhere in England and Scotland. Kevin Cahill, *Who owns Britain. The hidden facts behind landownership in the UK and Ireland* (2001), pp. 152, 154, 157, 235, 383, 389.

[25] *NPC*, 17/70, 21 Aug. 1873, John Sutton, £45,000, and 35/107, 18 Mar. 1891, Richard Francis Sutton, £149,539.

[26] Both Sir Thomas Vyner and Sir Robert Vyner have biographies on *ODNB*. See also *Burke's landed gentry* (15th edn, 1937), p. 2335. (All subsequent references to Burke are to this edition.)

in 1873, which were located in Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, Bedfordshire, Cheshire, Gloucestershire and Surrey. The main estates were centred on Newby Hall and Gautby Hall but the family also owned estates in Kingston upon Thames, in Surrey and in Cannes, France, both of which undoubtedly grew substantially in value during this period.[27] Both Vyner brothers were extensively involved in racing and R. C. Vyner at least owned a stud farm at Fairfield, in Yorkshire.[28] Although gambling was a high risk venture that led to the ruin of many profligate landowners and was generally a ruinous venture for many of those involved, there does not seem to be signs of the same kind of ruinous gambling habits amongst the Vyners associated with other famous patricians of the Turf, such as Henry Chaplin.[29]

Like Sir Richard Vincent Sutton, the wealth of both H. F. Vyner and R. C. Vyner were inherited personal fortunes. Robert Vyner (1782–1872) died leaving just under £300,000 according to the probate calendar so he fell just short of entry into the top-ten super-rich gentry. He left about £60,000 to relatives, including £30,000 to the younger of his two nephews, R. C. Vyner, who ultimately inherited the family estates. The bulk of the estates went to the elder nephew, H. F. Vyner, who died childless.[30] The wealth inherited from Robert Vyner must have formed the basis of H. F. Vyner's large probated fortune of £312,396 when he died in 1883 (probate 1885). As well as the inheritance of a part of Robert Vyner's fortune, in 1872, Robert Charles also inherited the bulk of his elder brother's (H. F. Vyner's) personal wealth. Thus, the unequal partible inheritance of unsettled fortunes practised by the Vyner family allowed a concentration of personal as well as real property in the male head of the estate and household.

There is an 'incoming' gentry family of recent origins represented by two very wealthy individuals in this sample. Rev. James Williams of Tring Park (d. 1871) and his son, Joseph Grant Williams of Pendley in Hertfordshire (d. 1923) both left probated wealth of around £500,000. Whilst Rev. Williams did not warrant a *Times* obituary, his son was noticed as having lived 'the traditional life of an English country gentleman – farming, hunting (often six days a week), shooting and helping the local institutions'. He had a reputation for his breeding of shire horses, pedigree cattle and Hampshire Downs sheep.[31] For unexplained reasons Tring park was sold after the death of Rev. Williams to Baron Lionel de Rothschild and J. G. Williams himself built a house at Pendley. Exactly where their wealth came from is presently unclear, but the land that the family owned could not have generated the level of personal wealth recorded at the time of either Joseph or James' deaths and it would seem that the majority of their wealth was in liquid form.

Although this family may not, by generally accepted standards, count as a 'landed gentry' family with the associated long attachment to a locale and honourable lineage, it does represent the kind of new wealth that seems to have constantly penetrated the ranks of landed society. This is the type of family that has generated the debates between historians such as Thompson, Rubinstein, Stone and Habakkuk. Thus, they are more than worthy of

[27] Lincolnshire Archives, Acc. 88/112 92/60, the papers of the Vyner family of Gautby, Lincolnshire.

[28] *Who was who, 1897–1915* (1920), p. 733.

[29] Henry Chaplin was forced to sell the Blankney estates to the Earl of Londesborough in 1897, and left a mere £4,886 in personal wealth at death. For his financially ruinous ownership of the Blankney Hunt and his famous gambling habits, D. Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy* (1989), pp. 214, 361. Also *Burke's landed gentry*, pp. 31–3.

[30] *NPC* 16/74; *The Times*, 2 Nov. 1872

[31] *The Times*, 13 Oct. 1923.

study and can be just as revealing of how new wealth and land were connected in a very complex system of wealth, status and hierarchy, particularly in Metropolitan counties such as Hertfordshire.

These short accounts of the wealthiest families illustrate some of the complexities involved in understanding gentry finances and, and particularly the difficulty of doing so without personal papers. They also reveal that a diversity of forms of investment were not uncommon amongst the wealthier sections of gentry society and, as the figures suggest, probably pervaded sections of the lesser gentry to an extent. Although there were many families who remained purely rentier in their approach to the accumulation of wealth, for many others incomes were derived from non-agricultural landownership, and their investment in industrial enterprises. The financial activities of these individuals and families testify to the wisdom of Thompson's refusal to accept the idea of solid boundaries between landed society and the upper sections of the middle classes. The efficacy of this insight is also reflected in the behaviour of a family with lower levels of wealth than those discussed previously: the Strode family.

III

We can examine the constant diversification of gentry wealth away from land through an account of an established family of a lengthy lineage, the Strodes of Devon. Their estate papers reveal how some gentry families deliberately shifted their investments from land to paper investments in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But, equally, their story also illustrates some of the problems associated with probate as a source for the study of gentry wealth, income and investments.

The Strodes had originally been landowners at Strode, in south Devon, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Newnham Park became the family's main residence from the marriage of John Strode to the co-heir of the Newnham Park estate, in Plympton St Mary in south-west Devon, in the early fifteenth century. The family held the various local offices associated with gentry status, including Justice of the Peace, Deputy Lieutenant, High Sheriff for Devon and Member of Parliament. The Strodes continued to monopolise local offices into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, although the real power of High Sheriffs and Justices of the Peace diminished and there were no MPs in the family during the modern period.[32]

Newnham Park remained the main family house from the fifteenth century until the 1950s. Between these dates it developed into the centre of a medium sized but highly diversified and widely spread gentry estate. The Strode lands were concentrated on the south-west of Devon between Plymouth and Dartmoor. But they also included land across the South Hams area of Devon and the eastern areas of Cornwall, around Callington. By the nineteenth century the family's land was largely at Newnham, Hemerdon, Plympton, Shaugh and Stoke Fleming in south east Devon and in the Callington area of east Cornwall, near Tavistock.[33]

[32] *Burke's landed gentry*, pp. 2172–3.

[33] Plymouth and West Devon Record Office (hereafter PWDRO), 72/1183, papers of the Gigg-Strode family, correspondence, accounts and bills.

At the time of the 1873 *Return of Landowners* the Strodes were receiving rents from just under 2800 acres of land in Devon and Cornwall, with an annual rental value of £2726 per year. This placed them amongst the so-called 'lesser gentry'.[34] At 35-years' purchase, the capital value of the Strode's agricultural estates can be estimated at £95,410 at the time of the New Domesday in 1873. Not all of this land was used for agricultural purposes, although the majority always appeared to have been farming land. The family invested in other types of economic venture from an early date and had longstanding interests in mining. During the eighteenth century, they invested in the Tavey Consols mine, at Tavistock in the mid-west of Devon, interests they retained into the 1880s.[35] In the Victorian period the Strodes invested in railways.[36] They bought a significant number of shares in the East Cornwall Mineral Railway, which passed through their estates in St. Cleer and St. Ive. They continued to gain revenue from their mining lands even into the twentieth century, and granted a license for tin mining at Plympton as late as 1910.[37]

The mines were eventually abandoned and along with these, the mineral railways. It seems that, as agriculture declined in the late nineteenth century, George Strode and his sister were forced to sell land. The sales began with a trickle of single farms mainly in South Devon, in the early 1880s.[38] In 1898 and after Dorothea's death, her nephew George Sidney Strode, the new owner of the estates, sold a reasonably large area of woodland by auction.[39]

The greatest concentration of sales for the Strode family, as it did for so many of English landed gentry, fell during the period of high land values between 1910 and 1920. George Sidney Strode sold land at South Hill (Devon) and at Callington (Cornwall) both before and during the war. During the summer of 1919 the family auctioned land with a reserve value of £43,095.[40] The exact sale price of the land is unknown but it was likely to be close to the reserve value figure given the high price of land generally at this time. The vast majority of the purchasers were farmers, usually sitting tenants. By 1920 the Strodes still owned two or three hundred acres, but let very little of this for farming and they had even let their grazing land in Newnham Park.[41] They had divested themselves of the burden of agriculture and were increasingly moving away from their previous interests in mining and local railways. Equally, their investments ceased to be focused on the local economy as the Strode's share portfolio expanded in geographical terms to include overseas imperial investments, including railway projects.

A series of letters between George Sidney Strode, his solicitors and his sharebrokers, Hunt, Cox and Co., written between six and twelve months after the auction of the estates, reveal the

[34] The 'lesser', 'minor' or 'parish' gentry have been defined as those in possession of between 1000 and 3000 acres in the nineteenth century. See Thompson, *English landed society*, pp. 111–2.

[35] PWDRO, 72/1183, letter to Messrs Bewes and Dickinson re. Tavy Consols mine, 29 May 1881. Also see the leases and correspondence in 72/1007–1012.

[36] PWDRO, 72/1108–1118, leases and agreements with the South Devon Railway Company.

[37] PWDRO, 72/1183, letter from Messrs Bewes and Dickinson to the Strode estate office re. the licensing of Mr Davey for mining in Cutkive Wood, 25 Apr. 1910.

[38] PWDRO, 72/1183, receipt for advertisements of eleven farms for sale in South Devon, 10 July 1886.

[39] PWDRO, 72/1183, Letter to Messrs Bewes and Dickinson from J. Crocker re. the purchase of two lots in Vernhill Wood, 6 Apr. 1898.

[40] PWDRO, 72/1183, list of lands to be sold as individual lots at auction, 24 July 1919.

[41] PWDRO, 72/1183, letter from G. S. Strode to Messrs Bewes and Dickinson re. income tax and rates, 22 July 1920.

kind of investments that the Strodes, and probably many other families, made following the sale of their estates.[42] In January 1920 George requested that his broker invest £22,000 of his family's money – we can assume the receipts of the sales made the previous year – in eleven different types of stocks and shares. Judged by the type of shares he purchased, George Strode was not interested in gambling or speculating with this wealth. The shares were generally of a safe rentier kind with a relatively low return of three or four per cent, although several investments were of a more risky nature. There was a distinct preference for investment in the colonies and the British Empire.[43]

The three biggest investments, totalling £15,000, were in Australian state government bonds. £5000 was invested in Victoria Bonds at 3.5 per cent, £5000 in South Australia Bonds at 5 per cent and £5000 in New South Wales bonds at 4.5 per cent. Other smaller investments included £2000 worth of Victory Bonds at 4.5 per cent, a £1000 investment in Melbourne Electricity Supply at 7 per cent, £500 worth of debenture stock in the Central Argentine Railway at 4 per cent and the same amount in Consuls shares in the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada, again at 4 per cent. Additionally shares to the value of £500 were purchased in the Mogyana Railways, at a rate of 5 per cent. He specified that these investments were to be passed by will to his heir as his family inheritance and that he had no '… personal and private holdings …' in these shares.

Later correspondence shows, however, that George Strode was also investing significant amounts of his own money in the stock market. His attitude to these investments was similar to that taken to the family wealth. He stated that he did '… not propose to speculate but to invest and tie up the money'. He later disagreed with his broker over the purchase of some rubber shares due to what he termed their 'speculative nature'.[44]

None of this, of course, necessarily suggests any dramatic shifts in the attitude of gentry landowners to their family's wealth. It has often been said of the concentration of land sales between 1910 and 1921 that many landowners were waiting for the opportunity to sell from the 1890s, after the Settled Land Acts had enabled them to do so.[45] The key element missing before 1910 was a lack of demand for land on the part of incoming purchasers: its low sale price made selling an unappealing prospect. Therefore, it is likely that nothing significant changed in terms of gentry attitudes to investments during the early twentieth century. Rather, they waited for the right time to divest themselves of their low-yielding landed assets. The earlier exploits of the gentry in the business world during the nineteenth century and the significant levels of interaction between landed and middling elites supports the general observation that the gentry were willing to exploit new opportunities to secure the family patrimony for later generations.

A similar interpretation can be applied to the kinds of investment patterns observed in the case of the Strode family in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In common

[42] PWDRO, 72/1183, correspondence between G. S. Strode, Newnham Park estate office and Hunt, Cox and Co. of Pinners Hall and the Stock Exchange, London, Feb.-Aug. 1920.

[43] PWDRO, 72/1183, letter from G. S. Strode to Mr Dickinson [of Messrs Bewes and Dickinson], 22 Jan. 1920.

[44] PWDRO, 72/1183, letter from G. S. Strode to Mr Dickinson, 12 and 19 Feb. 1920.

[45] Thompson, *English landed society*, p. 319; Cannadine, *Decline and fall*, p. 110.

with other landed families during this period, they had exploited local opportunities for tin mining in the eighteenth century and for investments in the regional railway system in the nineteenth.[46] The sale of family estates in south Devon was perhaps deferred during a period of harsh conditions for rentier landlords. When the value of land rose, they took the opportunity to sell. At the same time, openings for safe investments in the stock market had increased from the mid-nineteenth century, with the introduction of limited liability and a growth in the number of stockbrokers in London able and willing to deal in shares for small investors. This was where the family's wealth was increasingly located. It was the continuation of the wealth of the family and not its form that mattered. Although the Strodes doubtless had a feeling of close attachment to the locale and region in which they had been settled for centuries, the priority for the family was to protect their wealth and the status this gave them, in whatever form this might take.

Furthermore, this shift in the pattern of investment was not a defining feature of the landed gentry, but one that they shared with the wealthy middle classes. Morris' recent work on the industrial middle classes of Leeds has opened an empirical and interpretative window on the economic behaviour of this group. He found very similar spatial shifts in the pattern of middle-class investments to those of gentry families such as the Strodes.[47] Many of the business families he studied, such as the Jowitts, sought out safe rentier-type investments in older age, as pensions and as a security for the next generation. Before the coming of the railways the Jowitts had mainly chosen local urban and agricultural investments at this later stage in the lifecycle. As the railways opened new opportunities for investment in the regional and national economy, they eagerly took advantage. From the 1860s onwards, as the 'railway mania' subsided, Morris detected a move towards the international market in stocks and shares, generally within the British Empire.[48] In both landed and middle-class circles the emphasis was on the continuity of familial wealth through the exploitation of opportunity and there were few evident concerns with a precious 'class' identity. This adds another dimension to the business-land nexus so generative of historical debate in the modern period.[49] Findings such as Morris's suggest that analyses of these issues for the period covered by this study would generate clearer and more profitable results if they concentrated on the commonality of attitudes and behaviours between landed and non-landed elites, rather than the distinctions of class so central to previous studies and debates.

The probate calendars do not, of course, reveal anything like this kind of detail in relation to investments and wealth flows. Two owners of the Strode estates died between 1870 and 1935.

[46] On the commonality of this type of behaviour amongst the gentry and aristocracy see Thompson, *English landed society*, pp. 171–5, 256–63; Cannadine, *Aspects of aristocracy*; D. Cannadine, *Lords and landlords: the aristocracy and the towns, 1774–1967* (1980); J. V. Beckett, *The aristocracy in England, 1660–1914* (1989), pp. 206–87.

[47] Morris, *Men, women and property*.

[48] Ibid., pp. 172–7.

[49] Morris' book also seriously undermines the view that middling investors in real property were 'gentrified' or deferent. He shows, very convincingly, that the purchase of real property by Leeds middle class families, whether urban or rural, was a strategy for securing safe investments. Low-risk rentier investments of this kind generally occurred during the later stages of the 'property cycle' (a blend of the life-cycle and the family-cycle) when concerns for pensions (before the age of mass pensions) were paramount in the minds of the middle classes.

These were George Sidney Strode (1874) and his sister, Dorothea Admonition Strode (1896). George had died without an heir and the estate had passed to his sister.[50] The probate calendars show that George and Dorothea left a mere £6937 between them at death. It is highly likely that the probate of the later heir, George Sidney Strode (the younger), would record at least a part of the wealth realised by the move away from rural land, particularly after settled wealth was included. Since he died after 1935 this cannot be established with any certainty.

The Strode family papers do, however, show the kinds of strategies that the gentry could adopt in the face of a squeeze on their incomes through declining agricultural rent and indicate possible lines of enquiry for future research. The importance of the Empire in their investments is of particular interest. From an earlier willingness to exploit the alternative assets of their landed estates, the gentry began to invest in local industry and, eventually, the City of London and the Empire. More research is required on this aspect of their finances but this does begin to show that they responded rationally to wider changes in the economy.

IV

The findings presented here are the early results of this research and are intended to be suggestive rather than the final word. Any general conclusions should therefore be expressed cautiously. However, this work does reveal a previously hidden aspect of gentry finances. Despite their frequent claims of poverty and extinction, the total wealth of the gentry as estimated through landownership and probated wealth remained substantial. Those who were able to sell land during periods of high capital values were able to sustain the family patrimony. The gentry had made a partial strategic shift away from landownership as an economic asset, although they still understood and appreciated its social and cultural value. They could certainly still claim to be part of 'the quality' on the basis of their riches and this was as true of the lesser gentry as it was of the wealthiest. Their economic behaviour was just as rational and business-minded as that displayed by non-landed elites.

This research illustrates the strength of those arguments that have emphasised both the adaptability of the landed orders and the close relations between landed and non-landed elites. It also underlines Thompson's insistence that any meaningful analysis of the landed orders must take account of the lesser gentry as well as the more wealthy magnates. He emphasised the greater levels of 'openness' and flexibility amongst gentry society when compared with the aristocracy. Due to their lesser size, gentry estates were less expensive and troublesome to obtain, operate and transmit down the generations than aristocratic estates. Thus, those businessmen and other types of non-landed elite wishing to 'buy into' the lifestyle and social cachet of landownership, whose numbers were significant, were more likely to be nestled amongst the ranks of the landed gentry than the wealthier aristocracy.[51] Thompson's gentry were a permeable and ever-changing part of the landed classes. He has frequently stressed the

[50] *Burke's landed gentry*, pp. 2172–3.

[51] Thompson, *English landed gentry*, pp. 20–2.

importance of avoiding an over-reliance on stereotypes and ideals of landed identity, emphasising instead the variable and diverse nature of these issues.[52] Any study of the changing nature of the landed order during the modern period must adopt the powerful idea that British landed society was 'open' to new wealth, in both social and economic terms.

[52] Perhaps the best example of this even beyond Thompson's major publications, among many, was his refusal to accept the stereotypical image of the 'paternalistic landowner' seeking social control through patronage, charity and office. As David Cannadine has commented (at the conference in honour of Thompson), Michael Thompson demolished the whole of idea of 'social control' as a preoccupation of landowners and other wealth groups in one single brilliant paper. See F. M. L. Thomson, 'Social control in Victorian Britain', *EcHR* 34 (1981), pp. 189–208.

End of the Old Order? F. M. L. Thompson, the Land Question, and the burden of ownership in England, *c*.1880–*c*.1925

by John Beckett and Michael Turner

Abstract

In 1921 the *Estates Gazette* announced that one-quarter of the land of England had changed hands since the end of the war. F. M. L. Thompson has suggested that if this really was the case, then it represented a revolution in landownership on a scale unknown since the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the sixteenth century or even the Norman Conquest. This paper revisits Thompson and the land question on the eve of the First World War to ask whether such apocalyptic language truly reflected accumulating pressures on landed society, including the late nineteenth-century agricultural depression, the impact of the encumbered estates legislation, the introduction in 1894 of death duties, and the fears posed by Lloyd George's land tax proposals. To distinguish between political scaremongering and real land revolution the paper employs previously only partially used data to assess land turnover both before and after the 1918 Armistice. The credibility of contemporary claims is questioned. Was the country in the grips of a landownership revolution or were the fears expressed by landowners before 1914, and by commentators after 1918, a misunderstanding of the reality of the land question in these years?

In its final issue of 1921, published on 31 December, the *Estates Gazette*, the most influential journal of the property world at the time, reflected on four years of hectic trading in the land market since the end of the Great War. It quoted one (unnamed) London firm of agents as having sold 1,776,727 acres across the United Kingdom over the previous four years, and it speculated that if this was representative of trading in more general terms, 'one quarter of England must have changed hands in four years'.[1] Professor Michael Thompson first brought this claim to the attention of historians in 1963, when he argued that if the extrapolation was legitimate, something in the region of 6–8 million acres changed hands in England in 1918–21. If so, Thompson suggested, this was nothing short of a revolution in landownership:

> such an enormous and rapid transfer of land had not been seen since the confiscations and sequestrations of the Civil War, such a permanent transfer not since the dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth century. Indeed, a transfer on this scale and in such a short space of time had probably not been equalled since the Norman Conquest.

[1] *Estates Gazette* (hereafter *EG*), 31 Dec. 1921.

[2] F. M. L. Thompson, *English landed society in the nineteenth century* (1963), p. 332.

These changes, he suggested, also heralded a social revolution in landownership because much of the land which came on to the market went not to other owners but to farmers who had previously rented their land: 'precisely one-quarter of England and Wales … passed from being tenanted land into the possession of its farmers in the thirteen years after 1914'.[2] Thus, in so many words, the immediate aftermath of the First World War had witnessed a massive transfer of land from the old landed elite to the nation's tenant farmers.

Thompson's speculative revolution has subsequently taken on the mantle of orthodoxy, hence Alun Howkins's recent comment that 'By December 1922 [sic] about a quarter of the land of England had changed hands'.[3] But, was the original claim accurate? Did it too closely reflect the unsubstantiated claims of the trade press? Thompson himself was subsequently to have his doubts. He used his Presidential lectures to the Royal Historical Society to demonstrate that the events of these years amounted to 'something far short of the collapse or catastrophe which has been over-dramatised by many commentators'.[4] This change of mind reflected a shift in thinking about country estates. When Thompson wrote in 1963, the great estate seemed to be in terminal decline, but the subsequent revival of the fortunes of landed society brought seriously into question the whole business of just how bad things really were after 1918.[5]

Even in 1963, Thompson recognised that there were problems in accepting the word of the *Estates Gazette*, notably in relation to whether the paper's coverage of property transactions was comprehensive. By way of example he pointed out that at least 8,600 acres of the Longleat estate in Wiltshire and Somerset, sold in 1919–21, was not recorded by the *Estates Gazette*.[6] Although he subsequently collected further evidence from the *Estates Gazette* for his Royal Historical Society lectures, Thompson admits that he has done little with these data because of 'the pretty much unknowable factor of the relationship of *Estates Gazette* reporting to the total transactions'.[7]

We can offer no finer tribute to Michael Thompson's contribution to the history of the land market than to confront the problem again, but now with some slightly different angles of approach. Are there data of sufficient quality to look again at the state of the land market in and around the First World War?

I

Measuring land transfers is not straightforward. Thompson quoted the authority of the *Estates Gazette* because as the professional journal of the land agents it was an obvious and, in theory, reliable source. Yet as he, and all subsequent investigators, have noted, the coverage achieved by the trade paper is less than perfect. The problem is that England has no central register of landownership. This is in contrast to Scotland, with its Register of Sasines, the authoritative legal source of information on heritable property (land and buildings) set up in 1617, and also

[3] A. Howkins, *The death of rural England. A social history of the countryside since 1900* (2003), p. 36. P. Dewey, *War and progress. Britain, 1914–1945* (1997), p. 160.

[4] F. M. L. Thompson, 'English landed society in the twentieth century, I, property collapse and survival', *Trans. Royal Historical Society*, fifth ser., 40 (1990), p. 22.

[5] The issue was most clearly represented in the title of Peter Mandler's book *The fall and rise of the stately home* (1997).

[6] Thompson, *English landed society*, p. 332.

[7] Personal communication, 17 July 2005.

in contrast to some other European countries which introduced land registration in the Napoleonic era. England was (and still is) remarkably secretive about declaring interests and hence reticent when it comes to registration.[8]

A long history of proposals for land registration from at least the 1530s produced positive results only in Yorkshire and Middlesex,[9] and it was not until 1925 that a skeleton land registry was established on a national basis as a result of the Land Registration Act.[10] Even then, registration took place on a rolling basis, starting in London and reaching the final fourteen districts across four counties only in 1990. Although compulsory registration came into effect on 1 April 1998, the Land Registry accepts that it is far from the last word on ownership. Recent estimates suggest it is deficient in about two million titles covering as much as one-half of England and Wales. These properties will only become registered when next they change hands, but since many of these unregistered estates are held in trusts, with the current owners merely tenants for life, the land is not likely to be sold. Unless and until compulsory registration is introduced, these properties are unlikely to appear in the register.[11] In consequence of this history, neither researchers in the past nor the legislature, has managed to construct a convenient catalogue of land and property ownership.

In the absence of accessible central registration data, attempts have been made to measure landownership by different means. Of these probably the best known and most comprehensive was the *Return of owners of land, 1872–3* published as a Parliamentary Paper in 1874. The so-called New Domesday was intended to be a full survey of landownership, but it was a desktop exercise mainly using rate books, and perhaps as a result it turned out to be full of mistakes. Indeed, it was admitted in the preface to the Return that there were defects, and the first examination of the survey revealed no fewer than 250,000 errors.[12] Although John Bateman revised and updated the evidence relating to the larger landowners to form a tolerably accurate body of material, the precise ownership of much landed property remained a mystery.[13]

The Victoria County History, founded in 1899, intended to include topographical volumes

[8] A. Wightman, *Who Owns Scotland?* (1996), and see also http://www.yrtk.org/2005/who-owns-scotland/.

[9] J. Thirsk and J. P. Cooper (eds), *Seventeenth-century economic documents* (1972), p. 174; F. Sheppard and V. Belcher, 'The deeds registries of Yorkshire and Middlesex', *J. Society of Archivists* 6 (1980), pp. 272–86; F. Sheppard, V. Belcher and P. Cottrell, 'Middlesex and Yorkshire deeds registries and the study of building fluctuations', *London J.* 5 (1979), pp. 176–217. The registry for the East Riding dates from 1708: in common with the other county registries it remained in operation until local government reorganization of 1974. B. English, *The great landowners of East Yorkshire 1530–1910* (1990), pp. 2, 69–72, 246n.

[10] Land Registration Act 1925, 15 & 16 George V, c. 21.

[11] K. Cahill, *Who owns Britain?* (2001), pp. 4, 53, also p. 401. England is 33m acres in extent to the nearest million acres, Bartholomew's *Gazetteer of the British Isles* (ninth edition, 1963), pp. 246, 701. See the latest on this in *The Independent*, 9 Apr. 2007, 'Who owns Britain? Biggest landowners agree to reveal scale of holdings', http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/legal/article2434964.ece.

[12] BPP, 1874, LXXII, in 2 parts, 'England and Wales (Exclusive of the Metropolis). Return of Owners of Land, 1873'. For a brief summary of the returns see B. Afton and M. E. Turner, 'The statistical base of agricultural performance in England and Wales, 1850–1914', in E. J. T. Collins (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, VII, *1950–1914* (2000), pp. 1931–2. See also P. H. Lindert, 'Who owned Victorian England?: the debate over landed wealth and inequality', *Agricultural Hist.*, 61 (1987), p. 42.

[13] Bateman's reworking of the data in John Bateman, *The great landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* (1883).

giving accounts of the history of each parish, which would offer a 'modern Domesday' by listing all owners of estates of five acres or more, but nothing came of this good intention.[14] The documentation prepared in conjunction with Lloyd George's budgetary proposals of 1909, and the 'New Domesday' that ensued in 1910, provided a huge new source of data on ownership, but at a plot level which so far has been amenable to analyses only on a local basis.[15] The Lord Chancellor's department (now the Justice Department) is clear that the only sources available about the ownership of property in Britain are the landowners themselves, and what can be added from existing published sources.[16]

We start therefore from an awkward position. No single and consistent source exists from which to derive the evidence we need to test the assertions of the *Estates Gazette*. Our alternative approach is to ask whether the evidence produced by the land agency practitioners themselves throws more light on the true workings of the market than has previously been recognised. To this end, we looked again at the annual reviews of the market published in the *Estates Gazette*, and through the trade journal, the *Year Book of Auction Sales*.[17] The *Estates Gazette* began publication in the 1850s as a weekly journal. It was circulated to members of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) from its foundation in 1868. It was also offered for sale to non-members. From 1885 it regularly carried an analysis of the year's operations, providing a continuous series for the descriptive, although not the statistical, assessment of the market.[18] The *Year Book* had a much more restricted circulation, since it went only to the 500 or so members of the Estate Exchange, and was expected to be used by them with considerable discretion. The editorial of 1923 noted, 'it is hardly necessary to suggest that members should not allow the Year Book to be inspected by non-members'.[19]

We have extracted Table 1 from the *Year Book*. It represents an annual summary of the land market in terms of the money that changed hands in completed sales. The *Year Book* was published annually from 1892, but the table, with its retrospective view back only to 1896, was published for the first time only in 1914, and was subsequently added to until the list was discontinued in 1923. This decision seemed to be connected with a change in the nature of the *Year Book*. Until 1922 it was known officially as *The land and house property year book for 19XX: a guide to investments in real estate*, but in 1923 it became simply *The Estate Exchange year book*. The editors and compilers of the *Estates Gazette* published it until 1922, but from 1923,

[14] R. B. Pugh (ed.), *The Victoria History of the Counties of England. General Introduction* (1970), pp. 1–27.

[15] Brian Short, *Land and society in Edwardian Britain* (1997); id., *The geography of England and Wales in 1910. An evaluation of Lloyd George's 'Domesday' of landownership* (Historical Geography Research Series 22, 1989); id., *The Lloyd George Finance Act Material* (Short Guides to Records, 36, 1994). In the National Archives there are 95,000 volumes of Field Books associated with this survey. Although these documents were released by the TNA in the 1980s, the cost of extracting and using these data on anything other than a small-scale basis has been prohibitive. In theory, however, it provides a 'domesday book' of landownership on the eve of World War I.

[16] Cahill, *Who owns Britain*?

[17] Our thanks to Hilary J. Oakley of the RICS Library and Information Service, 12 Great George Street, Parliament Square, London, SW1P 3AD, who not only provided materials for us on our visits to RICS in the late summer of 2004 but who also answered innumerable emails both before and after.

[18] F. M. L. Thompson, 'The land market in the nineteenth century', *Oxford Economic Papers* 9 (1957), p. 42.

[19] *Year Book*, *1923*, preface. The *Year Book* seems to have been regarded in similar terms to the way modern second-hand car dealers use *Glass's Guide*, that is, as a source of reference for the trade, which should not be released to the wider public.

the London Auction Mart assumed responsibility for it. Both before and after the change the abbreviated title was *Year Book of auction sales*. The source poses a number of unanswered and unanswerable questions. The coverage achieved by the *Year Book* is not stated in any detail. The series starts in 1896 but the coverage of the *Year Book* at that date is uncertain. Having inspected all the subsequent volumes, we are confident that initial shortfalls in coverage improved rapidly. On the appearance of the table in 1914, the editors maintained that great care had been taken to cover the whole country.

What can we learn from Table 1, and from Figure 1 in which the data is represented graphically? We know that the landed community was pessimistic about the land market in the years after *c*.1880, a pessimism based on the perception of the likely impact on the land market of the prevailing agricultural depression, expressed in falling rent rolls, and declining land values. Yet that pessimism was not reflected in land sales over the years *c*.1890–*c*.1914. If anything, there was a decline in land sales after about 1903, perhaps in response to the higher level of land sales in the mid-1890s at the bottom of the prices depression, and after the introduction of death duties in Harcourt's 1894 budget. In the years leading up to the First World War the turnover of land seems to have been significantly less buoyant than it had been in the 1890s; indeed, only the post-war peak years of 1919 and 1920 reached levels significantly higher than those achieved in the late 1890s. However, we do observe some regional influences at play, the whole country did not move as one.

However, Table 1 and Figure 1 offer data for the market purely in nominal terms, and so in Figure 2 we have used a deflator to demonstrate this land market in real terms. It thereby accommodates the bottom of the general price deflation in the mid-1890s which gave way to a prices recovery down to the First World War, the inflation in prices during that War, and the start of the price deflation we associate with the inter-war decades.[20] The effect of the price deflator is to temper the excesses of the 1918–22 land market. It also puts the market into a 'real' long-term perspective. The end of twenty years of agricultural depression which bottomed out in the early to mid-1890s is visible, and the associated land market repercussions arising from Harcourt's budget in 1894 and the way the enhancement of death duties may have influenced the land market may be detected. The focus of attention on 1918–21 by the *Estates Gazette* is clearly well placed, but after accommodating price changes, the market in those years was not nearly as dramatic as contemporaries feared. Whatever was happening from *c*.1890 can be discerned from this evidence, but we are left with two questions.

The first question is whether the 1890s peak was a sudden peak. We suspect it was part of a long-run trend related to the previous twenty years of depression, but in the absence of aggregate auction and sale price data before 1896, this remains a speculation.[21] The second question is double headed. It involves speculation as to whether general price indexes are the appropriate deflators to use since land is such a specific commodity. An added complication is that within

[20] Our thanks to Roland Quinault for raising the question of the appropriateness of our price deflator. We have experimented with a number of price indexes and they all produce the same real price profile, with subtle differences in the extent of the peaks and the troughs in real prices, but not really in their relationship to one another. But see further below when we estimate the amount of land sold but without the need to use a deflator.

[21] F. M. L. Thompson's approach to this direction of research does not help us since he was more concerned with the influence of non-London agents than the absolute size of the market.

TABLE 1. Land Sales in England, 1896–1922

Year	*London Mart and Winchester House*	*Country*	*Private Treaty Sales*	*Grand Total*
	£	£	£	£
1896	4,476,801	3,972,190	2,105,272	10,554,263
1897	5,257,723	5,598,238	1,349,863	12,205,824
1898	6,674,428	5,372,429	1,316,013	13,362,870
1899	6,290,314	4,385,576	1,677,980	12,353,870
1900	4,934,769	2,757,101	1,310,655	9,002,525
1901	5,553,098	3,109,581	1,408,542	10,071,221
1902	5,748,221	2,705,403	1,561,896	10,015,520
1903	5,767,007	2,654,751	1,676,061	10,097,819
1904	4,896,879	1,990,212	650,316	7,537,407
1905	4,781,674	2,271,806	1,365,139	8,418,619
1906	4,335,294	2,100,690	1,552,372	7,988,356
1907	3,343,592	1,708,705	512,365	5,564,662
1908	2,733,491	1,829,562	1,056,965	5,620,018
1909	2,782,192	2,230,583	1,331,450	6,344,225
1910	2,279,727	2,547,317	867,084	5,694,128
1911	2,623,646	4,508,730	1,265,418	8,397,794
1912	2,554,302	4,698,263	1,836,978	9,089,543
1913	2,345,937	4,039,511	2,188,663	8,574,111
1914	1,866,631	3,462,110	1,357,020	6,685,761
1915	803,670	1,824,343	942,711	3,570,724
1916	928,859	2,946,455	1,232,203	5,107,517
1917	1,546,005	5,546,125	1,435,296	8,527,426
1918	2,299,376	7,148,014	1,935,208	11,382,598
1919	6,250,837	9,233,867	6,057,430	21,542,134
1920	5,655,062	7,580,898	5,039,879	18,275,839
1921	3,029,800	3,378,314	4,450,832	10,858,946
1922	3,041,772	3,322,396	4,072,535	10,436,703

Source: Year Books of Auction Sales, 1914–22

Note: Similar figures, but only to 1913, are presented in F. M. L. Thompson, 'The land market in the nineteenth century', *Oxford Economic Papers* 9 (1957), pp. 285–300, repr. in W. E. Minchinton, *Essays in Agrarian History* (2 vols, 1968), II, p. 43, but from a different source, the *Index to the Estate Exchange Register*. RICS and the publication of the *Estates Gazette* has undergone reform and reorganisation since Thompson conducted his researches in the 1950s. The Librarian and her colleagues at RICS have no knowledge of this *Index* and we have been unable to locate a copy (should one exist) through the normal library searches. To that extent we do not know what the relationship is between this source and the one that we have used, and Michael Thompson is unable to remember either.

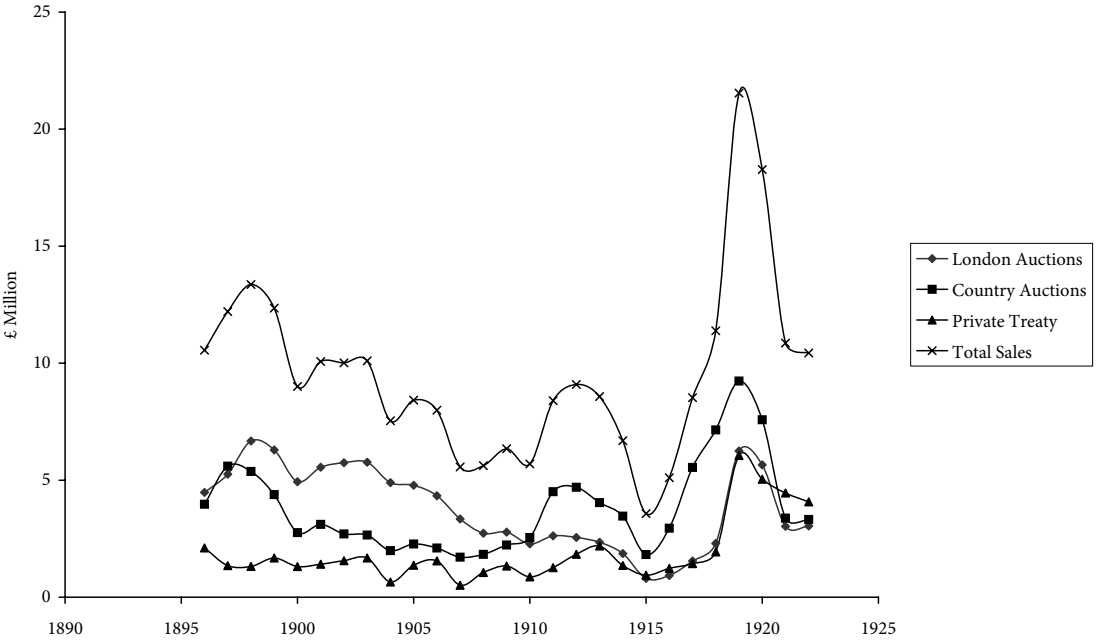


FIGURE 1. London Auction, Country Auction, and Private Treaty sales of land in England, 1896–1922 (£s Nominal)

Source: data already presented in Table 1.

each property sale, ideally, we need to separate the land from the buildings, but this is not always possible. We can solve the first question if we can simply find a price of land per acre, then the unit price of land coupled with the total price for land should yield the amount of land sold. This in turn will solve the second question because ideally we want an index of the acres of land sold rather than a proxy through sale values. We do have access to an index of the sale price of 'farms' for the period and we can apply this to the monetary market in Table 1. But these two numerators do not relate to the same thing. The one is farms, but the other is the larger property market. We can compromise the two to make an estimate of the land entering the market (average price per acre of farms times the total sales summarised in Table 1), by assuming that the monies listed in Table 1 relate to farms alone. We make this assumption in Figure 3 which is an estimate of English land sales derived from a combination of the 'Grand Total' column in Table 1 and the average farm price estimates produced by J. T. Ward in 1958.[22]

[22] J. T. Ward, 'Farm sale prices over a hundred years', *Estates Gazette*, Centenary Supplement, 3 May 1958, pp. 48–9; id., 'A study of capital and rental values of agricultural land in England and Wales between 1858 and 1958' (University of London, PhD thesis, 1958), pp. 43–5. In both of these works he makes reference to the main sources that we have used in RICS, but he also refers to the Estate Exchange, an office to which auctioneers' reports were submitted. The aggregation of reported sales is what appears in the *Year Book*. If the records of the Estate Exchange still exist it would allow the details of those aggregations to be uncovered and furnish a clearer idea how they were made. To this end we conducted an email exchange with J. T. Ward in Mar./Apr. 2005, as we did also with Hilary Oakley at RICS. Unfortunately neither of them could suggest where these records might be obtained or indeed whether they still existed. All subsequent online searches have also drawn a blank.

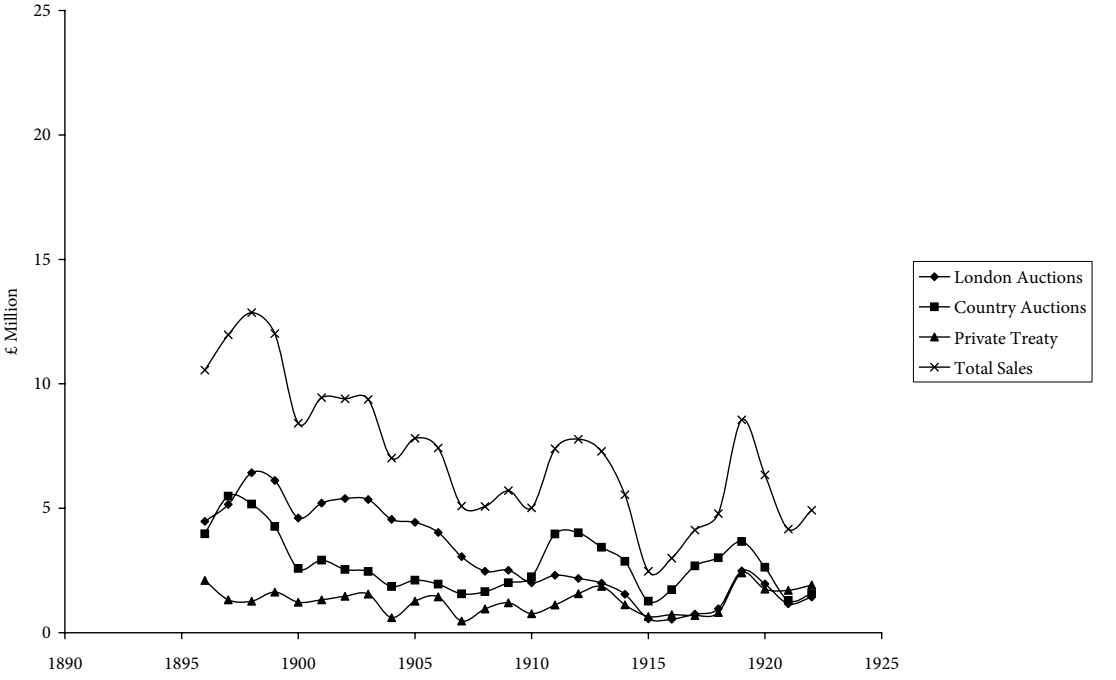


FIGURE 2. London Auction, Country Auction and Private Treaty Sales of land in England, 1896–1922 (£s 'Real')

Source: data presented in Table 1 and graphed in Figure 1, but deflated by the price index found at http://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ppoweruk/.

The detail of specific auction sales in the *Gazette* and 'other' sources made it feasible for Ward to extract farm level data to produce a survey of farm sale prices over 100 years. He avoided smallholdings by eliminating anything under five acres. In 1896 his estimate is based on 305 farms rising to 380 farms in 1897 and then falling more or less evenly to a low of 92 farms in 1907. The market then rose to a high of 497 farms in 1913, then dropped before picking up again in the middle of the war and fairly exploded to 1217 farms in 1918, 1154 in 1919, 950 in 1920 and 790 farms in 1921. Thereafter the market in farms slumped. His long-run sample of farms seems to reflect the fluctuations in the market that we have already detected, but in addition Ward added a weighting process to take into account the value per acre of any buildings included in the profile of farms. Thus higher weights were attached to larger farms to reflect the larger component of the land itself in the sale price. Therefore what Ward produced may not be a pure land index but at least it reflected the likely distortion associated with buildings. The resulting long run trend of farm acres sold in the period 1896–1922 is produced in Figure 3. It shows that indeed 1919 was the most important year, and 1920 was also prominent, but as a group of years the second half of the late 1890s was the most important. For the four years 1896–99, this estimate suggests that 2.366 million acres was sold and for the four year period 1918–21, 2.121 million acres was sold. Whatever way we cut this particular cake, two important conclusions emerge: much less than 25 per cent of England changed hands in the four highlighted

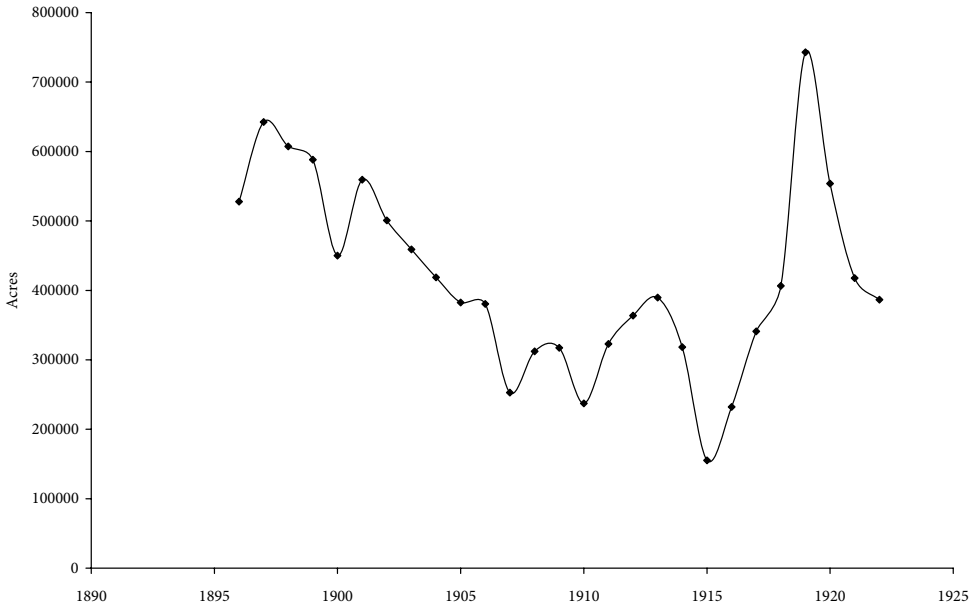


FIGURE 3. Estimate of English Land Sales, 1896–1922 (acres)

Source: Total column in Table 1, to which has been applied an annual price index calculated by J. T. Ward, 'Farm sale prices over a hundred years', *Estates Gazette*, Centenary Supplement, 3 May 1958, pp. 48–9; id., 'A study of capital and rental values of agricultural land in England and Wales between 1858 and 1858' (University of London, PhD thesis, 1958), pp. 43–5.

years 1918–21; but the bigger market, marginally, was the mid-1890s and the end of the late nineteenth-century depression.

It is not easy to demonstrate this apparent trend with helpful examples. Estates were broken up for sale in Norfolk after about 1880 as a result of the agricultural depression. Eleven major sales took place between 1893 and 1900, covering 64,400 acres.[23] In Shropshire the break up and sale of Lord Hill's 16,554-acre Hawkstone estate began in 1895, and the following year the 4,000-acre Condover estate was auctioned following Reginald Cholmondeley's death.[24] Sales in Staffordshire were delayed until the early years of the twentieth century,[25] while there seems to have been little change in the ownership of the large estates much before 1910 in East Yorkshire generally, but considerable changes on the Wolds from 1906–13, as the result of the death of sitting owners and inheritance by the next life tenants.[26]

Returning to the post-war years, it is unfortunate that the *Year Book* series does not go beyond 1922 since it looks as if 1919 and 1920 were aberrant years, and the figures were not such

[23] Pam Barnes, *Norfolk landowners since 1880* (1993), pp. 30, 60–7.

[24] VCH *Shropshire*, IV, p. 252

[25] Information prepared by Dr David Brown for A. D. M. Phillips and C. B. Phillips (eds.), *Historical atlas of Staffordshire*, forthcoming.

[26] Susan Parrott, 'A time of change: land sales in the East Riding of Yorkshire in the early twentieth century', *East Yorkshire Historian* 6 (2005), pp. 17–30, esp. 22.

as to be used as the basis for drawing bold conclusions. Indeed, when we look at these figures today we would not draw such conclusions, but for contemporaries, they were more politically significant. The long debate about the land question in the years prior to 1914 was revived in the aftermath of the war, and figures of this magnitude seemed to suggest a seismic shift in the market. If that is the case, then it also begins to reflect the power of land and landed society as a positional asset. That position was shifting, indeed had been shifting since the 1880s as the extension of the franchise diluted the power of land as an asset through which to control the vote and, by implication, the government.[27]

The first suggestion that the land market might have assumed revolutionary proportions was set down in March 1919 when the *Estates Gazette* announced that a 'revolution in landowning' was taking place as more and more estates came on to the market. Two months later an advert announced 'England changing hands', and by the end of 1919 the market reports were full of the phrase 'England is changing hands'. One market leader had announced three quarters of a million acres for sale during the year, and within a few weeks in the summer more than two million acres were advertised for sale in *The Times*, and probably well over one million had actually been sold during the year.[28]

The trade press had the benefit of having much of the data in Table 1 in front of them in the *Year Book*, but only up to the point at which they wrote, not the full profile. They were perhaps more influenced by the rising trend from about 1917 than the fact that an equivalent trend had been negotiated a generation earlier. Their conclusions were surely spiced with a few dramatic and eye-catching sales notices prominently displayed in the *Gazette*. At the end of each year, the editors of the *Gazette* printed a digest of property transactions for the previous twelve months. This was listed either in the final edition of a particular year or in the first edition of the following year. These digests took the form of a summary and commentary on the state of the property market over the previous twelve months. This was a general statement about the market, sometimes, but not always, set in the context of previous years. It included examples of property transactions, but more importantly it had a month-by-month digest of the market distinguishing broadly within each month the sale of estates, the sale of individual houses or commercial premises, and the sale of houses and premises with associated land. It is usually possible to distinguish land from built property although the land must surely have included buildings, whether houses, farms, or other premises. Sometimes these premises were specifically mentioned, but usually only because they represented a particularly fine architectural or period building, or a named building or farm. Thus, in October 1919 a 'fine old Elizabethan mansion, Calveley Hall, near Nantwich, and 539 acres' was sold for £106,270, and in September 1920 Manor Farm at Northolt, together with 139 acres, was sold for £8,000.[29] Only occasionally were the buyers and sellers actually named.

It was these discussions in the *Estates Gazette* rather than the figures in Table 1 which raised the stakes in terms of the landownership debate in the immediate aftermath of the war. Much of the land coming on to the market was in the hands of aristocratic owners, and it is not

[27] A. Offer, 'Farm tenure and land values in England, *c.*1750–1950', *EcHR* 44 (1991), pp. 1–20, esp. pp. 15–17.

[28] *EG*, 29 Mar. 1919, 3 Jan. 1920; *The Times*, 19 Mar., 15 May, 30 and 31 Dec. 1919; Thompson, *English landed society*, p. 334.

[29] *EG*, 3 Jan. 1920, p. 13; 1 Jan. 1921, p. 13.

surprising to find an emphasis on how the mighty had fallen as great landowners such as the Duke of Portland and Lord Middleton put estates on the market.[30] Subsequently, when Stowe, and Stoke Rochford, among many others, came into the market, there were good grounds for wondering whether traditional landed society was being fatally emasculated.[31] The temptation to emphasise the significance of what was happening, to interpret the figures in the worst possible light, and to suggest that doom and gloom was everywhere, was hardly one the press would overlook, as in the following extract from *The Times* in 1920, beneath the headline 'Changing Hands. A Note of Resignation':

> We all know it now … 'England is changing hands' … Will a profiteer buy it? Will it be turned into a school or institution? Has the mansion house electric light and modern drainage? … For the most part the sacrifices are made in silence. 'The privileged classes', to use the old name, take it all for granted … The sons perhaps are lying in far-away graves; the daughters, secretly mourning some one dearer than a brother, have taken up some definite work away from home, seeking thus to still their aching hearts, and the old people, knowing there is no son or near relative left to keep up the old traditions, or so crippled by necessary taxation, that they know 'the boy' will never be able to carry on when they are gone, take the irrevocable step; the obliging agent appears, deferential, sympathetic, yet businesslike.[32]

Much of this gloom was evident in aristocratic sales, but there was another side to this picture which was more difficult to tease out, and this was the question of who was acquiring the land put up for sale. The distribution of landownership was an issue dear to the hearts of all land reformers, but it was also important for the farmers who rented the land. Many of them, seeing 'their' land going under the auctioneer's hammer, preferred to purchase it rather than to take the risk of a new landlord, who might not be sympathetic to the problems of farming in the depression years, and beyond. The rise of owner-farming was not a phenomenon only of the post-war years. The *Estates Gazette* carried an editorial on 24 February 1912 entitled 'The Breaking-up of Estates'. It discussed a debate over the need for state aid to help tenants purchase their farms.[33] A government committee of 1912–13 had noted cases where owners were selling their land without much reference to the wishes of their tenants, simply citing the burdens of ownership and the complications of death duties.[34] In 1914 about 11 per cent of agricultural land in England and Wales was in the occupation of its owners, a figure including home farms occupied by larger landowners, but the proportion increased rapidly after the war.

[30] *EG*, 4 Jan. 1919, Review of the Year, 1918; 27 Dec. 1924, Review of the Year, 1924.

[31] J. V. Beckett, *The rise and fall of the Grenvilles: Dukes of Buckingham and Chandos, 1710–1921* (1994), p. 283. In the years following his marriage in 1907 Christopher Hatton Turnor rationalised the management of his estate centred on Stoke Rochford Hall ending with the sale in 1917 of the 6,000 acres of the Wragby part of the estate, 'Turnor, Christopher Hatton (1873–1940)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

[32] *The Times*, 19 May 1920, p. 19.

[33] *EG*, 24 Feb. 1912.

[34] BPP, 1912–13, XLVII, 'Report of the Departmental Committee appointed to inquire into the position of tenant farmers on the occasion of any change in the ownership of their holdings'; See also E. H. Whetham, *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, VIII, *1914–39* (1978), p. 52.

By 1927, owner-farmers occupied 36 per cent of the total acreage. In this way one-quarter of the land passed from tenant occupation to owner-farmer occupation from 1914–27.[35]

Admittedly, tenants were often given little real choice if they were offered first refusal by a landowner about to put the property on the market. As the *Liberal Land Enquiry Committee* pointed out in 1925: 'During 1919 and the early part of 1920 many landowners seized the opportunity caused by the prosperity of agriculture to sell their farms', often to tenants who felt obliged to take on loans at relatively high rates of interest.[36] The example of Sir Nicholas Bacon of Raveningham Hall in Norfolk typifies the mounting pressures the 'old order' faced and the solutions they were forced to adopt. In a letter to his tenants in the spring of 1920 he said:

> You will doubtless have heard that it has unfortunately become necessary for me to follow the course already pursued by many landowners – that is, of selling a considerable portion of my estate … It is with much regret that I do so; but heavy war taxation, the great increase of Death Duties of last year's budget, the increased cost of living, and the growing up of my family, for whom provision must be made, compel this step. I can only hope that many of my tenants may be able to purchase their farms, and so not leave their homes … [The farms] … will be offered to the tenants before going to auction, in order to give them the first opportunity of acquiring them.[37]

Whether tenants were happy to go down this route is rarely clear, and any enthusiasm for such a change in status was doubtless tempered by the removal in 1921 of corn bounties. In the 1920s and 1930s this change in government policy was to bring significant financial pressure to bear on many of the new owner occupiers, but in the meantime the sale of small properties to individual farmers was not the kind of headline news likely to stir editorial writers on the *Estates Gazette*.[38]

II

The argument so far is that the evidence for land sales 1896–1922 derived from the *Year Book* and reproduced in Table 1 and Figure 1, does not support some of the more lurid scripted accounts of what was happening in the market to be found in the columns of the *Estates Gazette* and *The Times*. Figure 3 highlights that there was a land crisis, but it is the magnitude of that crisis that we question. Indeed, we would suggest that the emotive terms were partly a result of a pre-war political legacy relating to the distribution of ownership. Whatever the pros and cons of this debate, what the press picked up after 1918 was the transfer of property away from the old landed elite. It had much less to say on the new owners. In this second part of the paper

[35] S. G. Sturmey, 'Owner farming in England and Wales, 1900–1950', *Manchester School*, 23 (1955), pp. 245–68, repr. in Minchinton (ed.), *Essays in Agrarian History*, II, pp. 281–306, esp. p. 287.

[36] Birmingham University Library, Liberal Land Enquiry, 1924–5, Charles Masterman Papers, 34/1/3.

[37] Sir Nicholas Bacon, Raveningham Hall, Norfolk, to 12 tenants (individually), 6 Apr. 1920. Raveningham MSS, Norfolk (reference courtesy of Barbara Linsley).

[38] D. K. Britton, 'The sale value of farm land between the Wars', *Farm Economist*, 6 (5) (1949), pp. 126, 129; Howkins, *The death of rural England*, p. 36; Offer, 'Farm tenure and land values'.

TABLE 2. Land Sales, 1918–21, from the *Estates Gazette*, Annual Reviews

	Recorded acres	*Recorded price (£)*	*Recorded acres where price is also known*	*Recorded prices where acres are also known (£)*
1918	279,958	6,772,930	205,017	6,505,117
1919	337,853	10,996,570	269,728	7,968,668
1920	338,559	9,788,114	271,210	7,869,590
1921	193,602	3,793,290	128,592	3,542,855
Total	1,149,972	31,350,904	874,547	25,886,230

Source: extracted from the Annual Reviews of the land market published in *Estates Gazette*.

we look to refine the figures, in order to assess whether the data we have produced so far can be further developed to assess the state of the land market.

We need to reach down below the gross figures to ask more searching questions about the land market, and to do this we have collated the detailed evidence to be found in the *Year Books* with the descriptive assessments published in the *Estates Gazette* as its annual review of the market. Sometimes sales arose from an auction, in which case an indication of the sold and unsold lots is usually given. Sometimes it appears that a whole estate was sold or came under the auctioneers' hammer though this might include items that remained unsold. The location of the property was usually given in terms either of a place, or an estate name, or by reference to a village, parish or the nearest town. Sometimes there is insufficient information to locate the property either precisely in a place, or within a county. It is in the nature of how large estates were constructed that they straddled county boundaries.

The major problem in creating a comprehensive digest of the materials is that often one or other of the acreage or the price is not given. Of the 902 separate sales we extracted for the four years 1918–21 (Table 2), acreage was given for 784 cases, and sale prices for 645. Acreages and sale prices together survive for a sub-set of 573 of the sales (64 per cent of the total). From all these data we can establish that at least 1.15 million acres were sold, and that at least £31.351 million changed hands. Where we have both area and price we can identify 0.875 million acres selling for £25.886 million. Although only 64 per cent of all listed sales are included in this sub-set of land and money, they account for 76 per cent of the land and 83 per cent of the money. As a reference point we may note from Table 1 that for the period 1918–21 we know that at least £62 million changed hands. That suggests that the *Estates Gazette* identified about half of the sales, by value.

By contrast with the Annual Review, the *Year Book* gave precise details of the land and property that was transacted, the specific location in terms of the county, and then within each county the parish or place.[39] It also included a variety of other information, although not for

[39] The volumes are not simply about large landed estates. The main contents of each volume consist of detailed information on London and suburban properties and ground rents, and country properties. Most volumes also include shorter entries on colonial properties, fishing rights, licensed properties, policies, reversions, Scottish properties, stocks and shares, tithe and rent charges, Welsh properties, and a range of minor sales such as theatre seats and insurance policies. It was this detail that made it feasible for J. T. Ward to extract farm level data to produce a survey of farm sale prices over 100 years; Ward, 'Farm sale prices'.

every property. This included the nature of tenure (mostly freehold with just a remnant of copyhold), the ground rent, the yearly rent, the acreage of land, and the purchase price. From 1923 information was also given as to whether a bid was or was not placed at auction, and whether the item was bought in because it failed to reach the reserve price or had sold privately, or indeed sold after the auction. This additional information poses some interpretive questions about whether the failure to give such detail in earlier years indicates that prior to 1923 the *Year Books* may include only items actually sold.

How do the two sources relate to each other? Unfortunately the overlap is far from perfect. There is material in the Annual Reviews that is not found in the *Year Books*, and some of the material in the *Year Books* cannot be reconciled with the Annual Reviews. The Annual Reviews may best be described as digests of the overall market, but with significant emphasis on what the *Estates Gazette* considered the most interesting transactions. The *Year Books* seem to be comprehensive, but a spot check shows that they missed recording some properties noticed by the Annual Reviews. Where both sources refer to the same property, the *Year Book* usually offers clarification of the extent of the land involved. This is because the Annual Reviews are digests in which property sizes were rounded into acres, and perhaps not always to the nearest acre but sometimes, on large properties, perhaps to the nearest ten or even 100 acres. By contrast, the *Year Books* usually give details of the acres, roods and perches.

We have collated data from these sources in two ways: first to obtain some idea of the national pattern of land turnover; and second to test the accuracy of the pattern by examining three counties in detail. We present this material, and then ask how it impacts on our understanding of the post-1918 land market. However, the collation of the two sources does present some problems of interpretation which we must bear in mind. The Annual Reviews were dominated by relatively large estates, but the *Year Books* listed all kinds of properties from entire estates to gardens, and everything in between, including the individual component parts of the larger estates. In consequence we can obtain a false impression of the average sale size when comparing the aggregated data from the Annual Reviews with the sales data broken down from the *Year Books*. The former indicate a larger average size of sale compared with the latter. Moreover, because the Annual Reviews indicate that whole estates were included in the sales, it is misleadingly easy to assume that the whole estates were sold, whereas in fact many sales were conducted by the lot and the unsold portions were not always properly distinguished. Since we cannot establish definitively the consistency of reporting practice we suspect the Annual Reviews sometimes exaggerate the sales. The *Year Books*, by contrast, appear to list actual sales rather than property simply put up for sale. This could be a misleading assumption given that the 1923 *Year Book* introduced a whole series of extra shorthand descriptions indicating intention to sell but adding reasons for failure to complete. Possibly prior to 1923 the *Year Book* sales might have been a mixture of sales and intentions to sell, and some of those intentions may not have been realised in actual transactions. In the last resort, we cannot be certain, but we are confident that the two sources were each constructed in a consistent fashion, and when used together, provide a sound indication not necessarily of the total volume of the land market, but rather of the comparative annual fluctuations and of the relative geographical variations.

Table 1 measured the land market 1896–1922, as recorded in the annual *Year Book of Auction*

Sales. The data gave us some indication of the size of the land market through this period. Not surprisingly it picked up the post-war increase in sales, although the total volume in each of 1918, 1921 and 1922, at £10–11 million pounds per annum, turns out to be not far in advance of the figures achieved around in 1896–1903. But how reliable are any of the figures? The *Year Books* were published for the first time in 1892, but the coverage achieved is not stated in any detail. It may have contained a London bias, in the sense that as the Estate Exchange was in London it might be stronger on material for London and the Home Counties, especially in the early years of the *Year Book*. Almost certainly coverage improved as time progressed. The introduction to the 1914 volume, published in 1915, maintained that great care had been taken to cover the whole country, although what this meant in practice is uncertain because in 1924 it was again stated in the preface that there was more data available than they were managing to cover:

> This is the first year during the whole of which the Estate Exchange has had the present London Auction Mart as its headquarters, and it will be noticed that a far larger number of properties have been dealt with than in any of the thirty-two previous issues of the Year Book.[40]

Another problem concerns the different categories of information. Columns 2 and 3 in Table 1 relate to auction sales. Column 2 gives figures for the London Mart and Winchester House. Column 3 simply gives 'country' auction totals. Each column was evidently compiled from a detailed assessment of the data contained within the *Year Book*, but we have no way of knowing how comprehensive the coverage of country auctions was, and in any case these events were likely to include buildings; indeed, some of the auctions may have involved only buildings. Even more problematic is the figure for Private Treaty sales. The data in column 5 appear in the *Year Book* simply as a total sum for columns 2 and 3 supplemented by 'private treaty sales'. We have therefore calculated the figure for private treaty sales as the difference between the total and the sum of London/Winchester and country sales but there is no way of knowing the origin of the figure or of assessing its accuracy, since the method of compilation is unknown. As we saw earlier, sales to tenants were likely to be 'private treaty sales', but how and whether these would be known to the profession is unclear. Clearly, much depended on the assiduity with which the material was collected and remitted to London, which we cannot determine at this distance in time.

The Annual Reviews sometimes suggested that an estate was sold, but that a certain number of the lots that comprised the sale remained unsold. We had no way of knowing whether the unsold lots were larger or smaller or proportionately the same size as the lots that were sold. Neither do we know whether they were unsold because they failed to reach a reserve price or because they were simply not bid for. This is unsatisfactory but out of our control, but

[40] *Year Book*, renamed this year as *The Estate Exchange Year Book 1924*, Preface, n.p. The long-term significance of this apparently better coverage is that we are uncertain whether Table 1 and the accompanying Graph 1 are telling a misleading story about the combined market in the 1890s, which then improves into the twentieth century, or whether the relative sizes of the London/Winchester House market and the Country market are accurate representations of the whole market over the whole period.

nevertheless we fall back on the fact that the data we have extracted indicates the desire to sell, though not always the actual sale. In May 1920, sales took place on the Wingerworth estate in Derbyshire. A total of 5,340 acres were recorded 'of which 174 lots out of 187 realised £180,000'. Unfortunately we do not know whether the figure of 5,340 represents the 187 lots put up for sale or the 174 lots that were sold.[41] Similarly, in July 1920, according to the Annual Review: 'Otterburn Hall Estate of 5,960 acres, Northumberland, £42,035 for 31 lots out of 38'. How should this be interpreted? The obvious way is to assume that the 31 lots realised £42,035 but that the full 38 lots put on the market extended to 5,960 acres, but in truth we do not know precisely how many acres were included in the 31 lots.[42] In 1921, the Bristol Municipal Charities in North Somerset put on the market '2,250 acres, of which 121 lots out of 150 sold for £122,347', which we have to assume means that the 150 lots extended to 2,250 acres, but we cannot know precisely the acreage of the 121 lots actually sold.[43] Also in 1921, the Annual Review recorded 'Stubben Edge Estate near Chesterfield, £35,000, 57 lots representing 725 acres being offered, and 44 sold'. We cannot tell from this the extent of the 44 successful sales.[44] A final example concerns 'The Earl of Ilchester's Compton, Dundon, and Somerleyton Estates, Somerset, extending to 2,145 acres of which 84 lots were sold under the hammer', from which we cannot determine how many lots and what acreage were originally offered for sale.[45]

Given these difficulties, can we attempt to estimate the total volume of property sales these figures represent, as a proportion of the overall market? The *Estates Gazette* claimed in 1891 that London sales were not far short of half the total sales. Thompson has calculated that an annual turnover of 300,000–600,000 acres was what experienced auctioneers regarded as normal for the period before 1880,[46] and this certainly fits with the figures produced by Norton, Trist and Gilbert for 1889.[47] By then, of course, the country was in the grip of a long agricultural depression, which increased the quantity of land brought to market although not necessarily the totals sold through the mechanisms recorded in the *Year Book*. Indeed, there is some evidence of a dramatic and prolonged contraction in land sales, despite the influence of the 1882 Settled Land Act in bringing land on to the market.[48]

Table 3 is our analysis of three English counties, undertaken to test whether any assumptions about the figures produced in London for a national market hold good elsewhere. The three counties were Berkshire, Gloucestershire and Norfolk. They represent a county in eastern England (Norfolk), one in western England (Gloucestershire), and one more or less in between (Berkshire), and as such satisfy James Caird's famous – if crude – division between the corn counties of the east and the more pastoral counties of the west.[49] In fact his dividing line bisected Berkshire more or less evenly. Clearly the data from the Annual Reviews and the *Year Books* are not ideal, but we have used the material they contain to construct Table 3. Where a property is clearly identifiable in both sources there should be compatibility in terms of the

[41] *EG*, 1 Jan. 1921, p. 13.
[42] *EG*, 1 Jan. 1921, p. 13.
[43] *EG*, 31 Dec. 1921, p. 909.
[44] *EG*, 31 Dec. 1921, p. 910.
[45] *EG*, 31 Dec. 1921, p. 910.
[46] Thompson, 'Land market in the nineteenth century', pp. 43–6.
[47] Norton, Trist and Gilbert, 'A century of land values: England and Wales', in *The Times*, 20 Apr. 1889, p. 11, repr. *J. Royal Statistical Society* 54 (1891), pp. 128–9.
[48] Thompson, 'Land market in the nineteenth century', pp. 49–50.
[49] James Caird, *English agriculture in 1850–51* (1852), frontispiece.

TABLE 3. Annual Reviews (AR) and *Year Book* (YB) sales: comparison of three counties, 1918–21

	Berkshire	*Gloucestershire*	*Norfolk*	*Total of three counties*
Acres in YB	14,080	24,954	33,064	72,098
As % of County/Country	2.98	3.16	2.56	0.23
No of Entries	119	227	273	619
Average size (acres)	118	110	125	116
Acres in AR	16,059	22,291	34,395	72,745
As % of County/Country	3.40	2.82	2.66	0.23
No of Entries	11	22	20	53
Average size (acres)	1,460	1,013	1,720	1,373
Acres in comm, 1st boundary	3,102	6,414	15,109	24,625
Acres in comm, 2nd boundary	3,101	9,282	15,811	28,194
Acres exclusive to YB	10,979	18,540	17,955	47,474
Acres exclusive to AR	12,957	13,009	18,584	44,550
Extent of cover, 1st boundary	27,038	37,963	51,648	116,649
Extent of cover, 2nd boundary	27,037	40,831	52,350	120,218
As % of County/Country, 1	5.73	4.8	4.0	0.37
As % of County/Country, 2	5.72	5.2	4.1	0.38

Note: These three counties represent 8.03 per cent of England. Therefore we conjecture that if 117,000–120,000 acres of 8 per cent of England was sold in these years, then an estimated 1.46 to 1.49 million acres of England was sold.

acres sold, but as we have already indicated some estates or portions of estates listed in the Annual Reviews may not actually have been sold. In the main, we think the *Year Books* were better at recording actual sales, so where the same estate is identifiable in both sources, and yet there is a mismatch in the 'common acres' in Table 3 for the three counties, the mismatch is explained by these differences. To that extent we derive two estimates of land common to both sources, and a range of total land sold for each of the three counties.

Let us now recap. Obviously our findings can only be as good as the data on which they are based. How close are we to measuring the revolution in landownership posited by Thompson on the basis of claims in the *Estates Gazette*? If we extend our data to the longer period 1917–24, we can identify at least 1.9 million acres either sold or at least listed for sale in the Annual Reviews in the *Estates Gazette*. For the shorter period 1917–22, and on the basis of Ward's index of unit acre prices, we surmise that at least 2.8 million acres were sold (and 2.1 million acres in the concentrated years 1918–21). Two million acres represents only about 6.5 per cent of the total land area of England (which is close to 32 million acres), or 8.7 per cent of the cultivated acreage (about 23 million acres). The estimate of sales is creeping up, but it remains a long way short of the 8 million acres required to satisfy the claim by the *Estates Gazette* that 25 per cent

of England changed hands. We need to establish a reason why the *Estates Gazette* was wont to exaggerate.

It is likely that the *Estates Gazette's* claim in 1921 was based on some inbuilt assumptions which led to significant bias on the part of the journal in relation to the land market. Its fascination with events post-1918 was largely governed by what was seen as the undermining of the hereditary landed aristocracy. Thus, although the narrowly circulated *Year Book* set out rather soberly what land had changed hands, the *Annual Reviews* in the *Estates Gazette* reached a larger audience and the journal took a much more political line in its reporting. It was much more concerned with the major estates which came on the market, and it was these which it picked out for particular comment. The introduction to the 1919 *Year Book* commented that:

> the property market experienced phenomenal activity … the total realisations of which have ever been surpassed, being unprecedented and indeed breaking all records. With the continued breaking up of innumerable ancestral domains, all England seemed to be changing hands, every county being represented in the great revival and in the stupendous transactions.[50]

The interest clearly was in the break-up of large estates, and the same pattern followed in 1921: 'again many large estates were broken up, a very considerable proportion of the land being acquired by the tenants'.[51]

Of the 902 separate sales entries in the Annual Reviews for 1918–21, 211 give details of the sellers. The *Estates Gazette* betrayed its concern over the 'End of the Old Order' by giving much prominence to the landed members of that selling market. The most frequent seller was the Duke of Rutland, named in five separate transactions, one in 1918 and the others in 1920. Where the acreage he sold was listed, it amounted to three sales at 28,500 acres, which yielded over £878,000, and a further two sales which raised £607,000 of which over £100,000 included town properties as well as land, though our capacity for separating the bricks and buildings from the land is compromised by the absence of detail. The Duke of Leeds, the Duke of Sutherland, and the Countess of Warwick sold three properties apiece, the Dukes of Bedford, Marlborough and Northumberland two apiece, the Earl of Pembroke three, and the Marquesses of Abergavenny, Anglesey and Northampton, and the Earls of Dysart and Yarborough two each. Lord Gerard disposed of three parts of his Eastwell Park Estate in Kent in three separate sales.

Many families simply picked up in 1918 where they had left off in 1914. In 1912 one firm claimed that during a four month period it had 'put through the market land to the value of no less than 1¼ millions Sterling'.[52] Well over 100,000 acres changed hands in both 1910 and 1911, and even more during the two following years. In 1912 nineteen aristocrats were seeking purchasers for substantial tracts of territory, among them the heavily indebted Lords Londesborough and Winchilsea. By the time the First World War broke out something in the region of 800,000 acres of English land had changed hands for £20 million in the previous five years.[53] Lord Londesborough returned to the market in 1918 to sell parts of his Willerby estate which

[50] *EG*, 3 Jan. 1920, p. 13.
[51] *EG*, 1 Jan. 1921, p. 13.
[52] H. Durant, 'The development of landownership, 1873–1925, with special reference to Bedfordshire', *Sociological Rev.* 28 (1936), p. 94.
[53] Thompson, *English landed society*, p. 322.

had not attracted a buyer in 1912.[54] Nor was it unusual for landowners to sell outliers rather than the main estate. During 1917 Lord Pembroke sold his detached estate in North Wiltshire and Sir Francis Astley-Corbett, whose seat and main estate was in Lincolnshire, sold his Everleigh estate in Wiltshire of 4,500 acres. The purchaser immediately sold all the outlying farms, totalling 3,000 acres. There were plenty of other examples.[55]

The post-1918 market was inflated by contrast with the years before the war, partly because relatively little activity had taken place while the conflict was in progress, and partly because sales took place in these years for financial reasons. This arose because of loss of heirs in the war, and also because there was a substantial increase in taxation of current income in the budgets of 1919 and 1920. Loss of heirs on the Western Front led families who were already in difficulty to sell land. Stowe, in Buckinghamshire, was sold by Lady Kinloss in 1921 after her son and heir, Richard Morgan-Grenville, fell in the war. As *The Times* commented gloomily 'the trustees simply yield to the economic conditions … the fate of Stowe is the fate of half the great places'.[56] Increases in the rates of surtax resulted in significant reductions in net income, and death duties were raised. The 1919 Finance Act, which applied to deaths after 31 July 1919, replaced an estate duty of 12 per cent by one of 20 per cent, which was a spectacular increase over the quarter of a century since death duties were introduced. Landowners claimed that the raised levels of duty forced them into the market. The Willoughbys, the Lords Middleton, faced with two sets of death duties in 1922 and 1924, brought most of their Nottinghamshire estates to the market in 1925. This included the Elizabethan prodigy house Wollaton Hall in which they no longer lived. They might have blamed death duties, but they also had mortgage debts to repay, and these sales enabled them to consolidate their property in Warwickshire. They remain significant landowners today.[57]

III

Our foray into the land market supports the contemporary perception that a great deal of land came on to the market in the immediate aftermath of the war, but it does not support the view of a revolution in landownership in the wake of the war. This is at least partly an illusion caused by attitudes towards greater landowners, to changes in the market, and to a combination of landowner pessimism, radical optimism, and journalistic licence. Undoubtedly, there were those who wished to see in the high profile land sales of 1918–21 the imminent end of the old order, but it was a potential rather than a real revolution. After all, not all the land sold by aristocrats went to tenants. Lord Leverhulme was in the market in 1918 buying the Island of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides at over 400,000 acres, and the following year he bought the island of St Kilda, and 3,000 acres of Moor Park in Hertfordshire. In this example we also see the invasion of 'new wealth' into aristocratic positions, a feature that continued throughout the twentieth

[54] H. J. Habakkuk, *Marriage, debt, and the estates system. English Landownership, 1650–1950* (1994), p. 684.

[55] Thompson, *English landed society*, p. 329 in general, but also citing *EG*, 6 Jan., 14 Apr., 16 June, 30 June, 18 Aug. 1917.

[56] Beckett, *The rise and fall of the Grenvilles*, pp. 282–3.

[57] J. V. Beckett, 'Contesting the urban fringe: Nottingham City Council, Wollaton Hall and Broxtowe Hall, 1924–37', *Trans. Thoroton Society*, 108 (2004), pp. 159–71.

century. Moreover, the aristocracy did not disappear. When they sold, they began with their outlying estates. The Dukes of Rutland may have been prominent in the land market after 1918, but they still own Belvoir Castle, which has been the family's chief seat since 1509, and they also own Haddon Hall in Derbyshire – even if it was put on the market in 1919.

A few spectacular examples grabbed the headlines, and, to put it crudely, indebted landowners made better newspaper copy than the sitting tenants who bought much of this land, and who were themselves often found in financial difficulty by the 1930s as agriculture remained in depression. One simple consequence we have so far been able to trace is that the people selling remained attached to the land far more successfully than the new wave of landowners who were buying it. The new buyers, and the rising ranks of the owner-occupiers, faced an uncertain future as agriculture plunged further into depression in the 1920s and into the 1930s. Therefore in one way or another, contemporaries in the aftermath of the Great War saw every reason to believe that the old order was changing.

The counterbalance is the subsequent revival of the group, characterised so vividly by Peter Mandler in his book *The fall and rise of the stately home*. This has brought seriously into question the whole business of just how bad things really were for the landowners of early twentieth-century Britain. Thompson also recognised the danger of exaggeration from the claims of the *Estate Gazette*.[58] Recent figures confirm the significance of a more tempered view. In 1883, the material collected in the previous decade by John Bateman from the *Return of owners of land, 1872–3*, was used by Broderick to show that 16 million acres of England were owned by men and women with a minimum holding of 1,000 acres, or 49 per cent of the 32.5 million acres.[59] By the end of 1999, according to documentation prepared by the *Estates Gazette*, there were 4,778 estates in England of more than 741 acres, averaging 1,290 acres and valued at just under £4 million each.[60] This is 6.2 million acres from a total of 32.5 million, or approximately 19 per cent of England. This does not quite compare like with like and it is clearly a significant retreat from figures derived from the *Return of Owners of Land*, but we would argue that it took place over a much longer timespan. The catastrophe of 1918–21 no longer seems quite so catastrophic, even if the psychological impact of great estates and large country houses appearing on the market led many people to believe that some sort of landed revolution was taking place in front of their very own eyes. And that psychological impact was perhaps more keenly felt in terms of the disintegration of land as the 'positional asset' of traditional landed society.[61] If possession of their asset appeared to be in free fall, their political influence might then follow.

[58] Mandler, *Fall and rise*, *passim*; Thompson, *English landed society*, *passim*.

[59] John Bateman's figures were adapted by George C. Brodrick, *English land and English landlords* (1881), pp. 173–87. We have extracted the Welsh figures, but Bateman's overall acreage for England of 30.4m acres (of which he calculated 1.2m acres were waste) is significantly less than the accepted figure of 32.5m acres for England published in Bartholomew, *Gazetteer*, p. 246.

[60] Cahill, *Who Owns Britain*?, p. 6, quoting Valuation Office Property Market Report, Autumn 2000, marketed and distributed by the *Estates Gazette*.

[61] Offer, 'Farm tenure and land values'.

The land market, 1880–1925: A reappraisal reappraised

by Michael Thompson

Abstract

The notion that there was 'a revolution in landownership' in the spate of land sales in 1918–21 was based on claims in the trade journal, the *Estates Gazette*. Beckett and Turner's article, 'The end of the old order?', demonstrates conclusively that that journal did not contain the detailed evidence to support its claims, thus appearing to demolish the 'revolution'. Consideration of the scale and timing of the growth of owner-farming, however, coupled with experimental use of data on landownership from Kelly's *Directories*, calls for second thoughts. It seems possible that something not far short of 'a quarter of England' may actually have changed hands in 1918–21.

It was a tremendous, and most touching, compliment to have the 2005 Winter Conference of the British Agricultural History Society devoted to themes from my own publications, and a very special boost to the ego to find that in their contribution John Beckett and Michael Turner had engaged in a serious, detailed, cross-examination and deconstruction of something I published more than 40 years ago. Deploying their characteristic statistical skills Beckett and Turner have reopened the question of the scale of land transfers in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, and their significance in the longer term for the structure of landownership and the nature of rural society. Since England possesses no central register of landownership and thus no public record of land transfers, as Beckett and Turner explain, it remains unlikely that the amount of land changing hands in the four years, 1918–21, can be definitively established.[1] Nevertheless, the size of these land transfers, whether exceptionally large or merely normal and average, remains of some importance to understanding some of the major socio-economic and political developments in inter-war Britain. The disappearance of the land question from its pre-1914 position in the front line of public debate, the rise of the National Farmers Union to become something not unlike a pillar of a virtual corporate state, and the accelerated decline of the landowner contingent in the House of Commons, these were matters which may, or may not, have been profoundly affected by the operations of the land market.

What is at issue for Beckett and Turner is the reliability of the claim in the *Estates Gazette* on 31 December 1921 that 'one quarter of England must have changed hands in four years'. It is true

[1] John Beckett and Michael Turner, 'End of the Old Order? F. M. L. Thompson, the Land Question, and the burden of ownership in England, *c.*1880–1925', *AgHR* 55 (2007), pp. 269–88.

that I gave renewed currency to this claim by quoting it, in 1963, and translating the concept of 'England changing hands' into land area, by pointing out that if one quarter of the country was indeed transferred, then 'it is possible that in the four years of intense activity between 1918 and 1921 something between six and eight million acres changed hands in England'.[2] The claim, however, originated in the *Estates Gazette*, albeit given considerable support by national newspapers which were well aware of the hectic activity in the land market in these years, and Beckett and Turner's prime purpose is to discover whether the *Estates Gazette* possessed enough evidence to sustain that claim.[3] A very minor subsidiary question is whether, either in 1963 or in 2005, I happened to think that that claim was reasonably accurate.

It should be readily accepted that Beckett and Turner's painstaking, ingenious, and exhaustive examination and sophisticated processing of the figures of estate sales reported in the *Estates Gazette*, and of the annual record of sales in the *Year Books of Auction Sales*, establishes that neither of those sources contains evidence of sales in the four years in question, when the individual records are aggregated, that covered anything like a quarter of the area of England. Their conclusion is that the *Estates Gazette* recorded sales which amounted to 6.5 per cent of the land area of England (or 8.7 per cent of the total cultivated area of England) that is about two million acres, nowhere near to one quarter. Their explanation of the discrepancy between the land sales which the *Estates Gazette* itself reported and its editorial assertions about their magnitude is that the journal, and the property professionals which it served, were obsessed by the break-up of large, inherited, aristocratic estates and the disappearance of the old social and political order which this break-up either reflected or caused. Hence the argument is that the trade journal, and by association the national press which was singing the same tune, exaggerated the scale of land transfers either deliberately in order to scare their followers into doing something to stop the disintegration of the old order, or from hysterical panic reaction to what they saw as approaching doom. That is of course a possibility, although it is not instantly apparent why either a calculating or a hysterical exaggeration should have been restricted to a cry that one quarter of England had changed hands.

A less emotive, and a possibly verifiable, explanation is that the *Estates Gazette* and the *Year Books of Auction Sales* under-recorded the actual volume of sales, and that those journals were well aware of this. It is possible that the editors, through their experience of the workings of the land market and their knowledge of the means by which they collected reports of its transactions, were able to make a well-informed estimate of the appropriate multiplier for converting reported acreages sold into a figure for the total area actually transferred. Since there is no evidence that the journal ever did the meticulous addition sums of sales reported in its pages in the way that Beckett and Turner have now done, it might seem unlikely that the editors' minds worked in this fashion. Nevertheless, in the 1890s the editor thought that 'the total of sales at the Estate Exchange is merely an index to, not a record of, business done in the land market … The offices of solicitors having important conveyancing practice are in themselves a medium of transfer at figures probably in excess of all the public business recorded at the

[2] F. M. L. Thompson, *English landed society in the nineteenth century* (1963), p. 332.

[3] *The Times*, which had always had a keen eye for estate sales, reported on the feverish activity, for example, on 22 Mar., 29 Mar., 15 May, 30 and 31 Dec., 1919, 19 May 1920, 15 Oct. and 31 Dec. 1921.

Auction Mart'.[4] This implied in a tentative way that the 'business done in the land market' was at least double the amount recorded in the *Estates Gazette*, and implicitly much more than double since there were also many sales at auctions, besides the private treaty sales handled by solicitors, which were not known to the London Auction Mart. There is no equivalent statement of the editorial hunch in the early 1920s, but conceivably there was still in mind a view that the reported figures represented half, or less than half, of the actual 'business done in the land market'. Some of the leading estate agents who handled many estate sales did indeed total their annual dealings, in both acreage and money terms, and publicise the figures, as Norton, Trist, and Gilbert had done in the previous century,[5] and with some idea of their market share it would have been possible to extrapolate from individual firms' turnover to an estimate of the total volume of transactions. Unfortunately there is a lack of evidence that the *Estates Gazette* carried out any of these hypothetical calculations for converting its recorded land sales into the assertion that one quarter of England had changed hands.

It is not too difficult to show that significant sales were not captured by the *Estates Gazette*.[6] It would be an altogether different matter to establish the overall scale of this under-recording by tracing a credible regional or national sample of unrecorded sales. That would entail a trawl through a large number of estate and solicitors' archives to establish details of sales, followed by comparing the results with *Estates Gazette* coverage: a laborious task which might be tacked on to the remit of, say, a VCH county researcher, but hardly one which would merit a self-standing research project. Luckily, despite the absence of a central register of land transfers, the *Estates Gazette* is not the only source available for estimating the scale of sales in the immediate aftermath of the Great War.

A starting point is the re-emergence of the yeomen, or owner-farmers, in the twentieth century. Owner-occupation generated statistics, more reliable for some years than for others, which were analysed in the classic 1955 article by S. G. Sturmey, 'Owner-farming in England and Wales, 1900–1950'.[7] Sturmey showed that owner-occupation increased from 10.9 per cent of the cultivated area of England and Wales in 1914, to 36 per cent of the cultivated area in 1927, an increase from 2.9 million acres to 9.2 million acres, that is roughly one quarter of the cultivated area changed from being tenanted land to being land owned by the farmers.[8] Beckett and Turner note this rather large transfer of land somewhat in passing, without indicating how it might affect their own estimates of the quantity of land changing hands.[9] 'The main part of the increase in owner-occupation which occurred between 1909 and 1927 occurred in the years 1919 to 1921', Sturmey concluded.[10] 1909 was chosen as the base year for this calculation because he argued that the small decline in owner-occupation between then and 1914

[4] *Estates Gazette* (hereafter *EG*), 2 Jan. 1892, p. 5, quoted in F. M. L. Thompson, 'The land market in the nineteenth century,' *Oxford Economic Paper* 9 (1957), repr. in W. E. Minchinton (ed.), *Essays in Agrarian History* (2 vols, 1968), II, p. 44.

[5] Norton, Trist, and Gilbert, 'A century of land values,' *The Times*, 20 Apr. 1889, p. 11.

[6] Thompson, *English landed society*, p. 332 (the sale of at least 8,600 acres of the Longleat estate between 1919 and 1921 was not reported in the *Estates Gazette*).

[7] S. G. Sturmey, 'Owner-farming in England and Wales, 1900–1950', *Manchester School* 23 (1955), repr. in Minchinton (ed.), *Essays in Agrarian History*, II, pp. 281–306.

[8] Ibid., Table I, p. 287.

[9] Beckett and Turner, 'End of the old order?', pp. 279–80.

[10] Sturmey, 'Owner-farming', p. 294.

shown in the Agricultural Statistics was unreal, and that in fact there was an actual increase in the last years before the start of the war, the product of the flurry of sales by landowners who were scared by the 1909 Budget and Lloyd George's Land Campaign. There were indeed many estate sales in the years 1910–14, and talk of the break-up of estates; there was also a move on many estates to lease farms that had previously been in hand, and counted in the statistics as owner-occupied. The 1914 figure was most likely less inaccurate than Sturmey argued.[11] He maintained that owner-occupation continued to rise during the war years, but without citing any specific evidence. There were certainly a handful of well-publicised sales during the war, but the general view of the property professionals was that business on the land market dwindled to a trickle, until a dramatic revival in the late 1918 season. Lord Redesdale's behaviour was perhaps characteristic of landowners anxious to sell but prudently biding their time: inheriting the Gloucestershire country house and estate of Batsford, in 1916 he resolved that it had to be sold, repeatedly telling the Mitford children who loved living there that as soon as the war was over it would have to be sold, because they were too poor to live there. In 1919 it was sold.[12] The property market collapsed towards the end of 1921; there were few sales in the next couple of years, then a recovery in demand in 1924 and 1925, which Sturmey called 'the second period of increase [in owner-farming]', concluding that 'after 1925 land sales practically ceased and with them the increase in owner-occupation'.[13]

Virtually all the increase in the area of owner-farming in these years reflected the sale of farms by landowners to sitting tenants, though some of it came via middlemen who purchased entire estates and quickly resold most of the farmland, maybe retaining land with development potential or a specially choice mansion. It was only after 1945, with tempting tax and subsidy prospects on offer, that part of the further increase in owner-farming reflected a shift from tenanted farms to direct farming by the landowner, so that this part of the increase did not reflect any sales of land. Hence the importance of clarifying the chronology of the spread of owner-farming for estimating the scale of land transfers in the years 1918–21. The Sturmey chronology suggests that some portion of the 6.3 million acres transferred from tenanted farms to owner-occupation between 1914 and 1927 should be attributed to the war years, and a rather larger portion to the years 1924–5. A trawl of sales reports in the *Estates Gazette* broadly supports this chronology, showing a steep decline in sales in 1926, to less than 9,000 acres in the year, as against recording of 50,000 acres in 1924 and 76,000 acres in 1925. In 1927 there were reports of more than 73,000 acres being sold; that included, however, 36,000 acres of poor quality land in Swaledale, and at least 27,000 acres sold after the collection of the Agricultural Statistics in June so that even if all of it had been purchased by tenants this would not have been shown in the owner-occupation figures for 1927. On the other hand, while these reports do indeed record considerable purchases by sitting tenants at the sales in 1924 and 1925, they also record similar purchases in 1922 on the Duke of Northumberland's Albury estate in Surrey, and in 1923, on Viscount Portman's Dorset estate, while purchases by tenants in 1927, such as of 5,000 acres of the Earl of Normanton's Lincolnshire estate and of 11,000 acres of the Duke of Rutland's Derbyshire estate, can be disregarded as having taken

[11] Thompson, *English landed society*, pp. 321–5.

[12] Mary S. Lovell, *The Mitford Girls* (2001, 2002 edn), pp. 38–44.

[13] Sturmey, 'Owner-farming', pp. 295–6.

place after June.[14] This evidence of course furnishes no more than a straw in the wind for estimating how much of the 6.3 million acres sold to farmers should be assigned to 1915–17 and 1922–7; it was certainly more than the 290,000 acres reported in the *Estates Gazette* as being sold in 1922–7, far from all of which was in any case bought by the tenants. A conservative guess is that one million acres went to tenants in 1922–7, and perhaps 250,000 acres in 1915–17. That would leave 5 million acres sold by established landowners to sitting tenants in the four years 1918–21, roughly two and a half times the volume of sales identified by Beckett and Turner for the rather longer period of 1917–24.

While the land market was dominated by sitting tenants as purchasers, either directly or indirectly via syndicates of speculators who bought for quick resale, they were by no means the only purchasers in these years. New men of wealth, and a few older established landowners, also entered the market as purchasers. For example, the soap-boiler and racehorse owner Joseph Watson bought Compton Verney from Lord Willoughby de Broke in September 1921; the textile manufacturer Amos Nelson purchased the 6,000 acre Gledstone estate, near Skipton, in 1922; Sir Herbert Leon, stockbroker, added to his Bletchley Park estate by purchasing the Denbigh Hall estate in 1918; Sir Alfred Mond, founder of ICI, acquired the Melchet estate in Hampshire at this time, and the Bovril fortune of George Johnston, 1st Lord Luke, was used to purchase the Stowell estate in Gloucesterhire from Lord Eldon. This was resold in 1923, rather appropriately, to the importer and retailer of beef, Samuel Vestey, Luke settling instead at Odell in Bedfordshire. At about the same time, Lord Leverhulme was busily buying land in Hertfordshire and Cheshire, as well as in the Hebrides; the brewer Nall Cain purchased the Brocket estate in Hertfordshire in 1921, Sir Herbert Smith, Kidderminster carpet manufacturer, bought Witley Court and 1,100 acres of the 8,500-acre Witley estate, Worcestershire, in 1920, and Samuel Waring, of Waring and Gillow, purchased Gopsall Hall from Earl Howe. At the same time slightly older new money used the opportunity of a super-abundant supply of land on the market to extend its territories: Weetman Pearson, who had already used some of his fortune from civil engineering and Mexican oil to acquire Cowdray Park and his peerage before 1910, used more of it to enlarge his estate, in Scotland as well as in Sussex; and Lord Wimborne, grandson of Josiah Guest of Dowlais, was active in the market, selling Canford, which became a school (rather less well-known than Stowe, which had similar origins), and buying more land near his favoured second seat at Ashby St Ledger.[15]

[14] *EG*, 30 Dec. 1922, p. 923 for the Albury estate sale; 22 Sept. 1923, p. 371 for the Portman estate sale; 29 Oct. 1927, p. 589 for the Normanton sale, 2 July 1927, p. 15, 9 July 1927, p. 51, and 13 Aug. 1927, p. 223 for the Rutland sale. Major sales recorded in the *EG* in 1924 include a further sale to 117 tenants, by Portman, 7 June, p. 825; the sale of 2300 acres in Lincolnshire to tenants by Tyrwhitt Drake, 22 Mar., p. 393; the sale of 1700 acres in Cheshire to tenants by the Marquess of Cholmondeley, 6 Sept., p. 313; 3600 acres in Warwickshire by Lord Middleton, 8 Nov., p. 643; and 3500 acres in Oxfordshire by Lord Harcourt, 6 Sept., p. 325. In 1925 sales included 11,000 acres in Derbyshire to tenants by Lord Howard of Glossop, 7 Feb., p. 193; 5092 acres at Bedale, Yorks, sold by Sir William C. Gray in 'a remarkable instance of combination by the tenants', 1 Aug., p. 156; 5000 acres in Lancashire by the Earl of Derby, 30 May, p. 801; and 2054 acres in Oxfordshire by Lord Redesdale, 26 Sept., pp. 419, 428.

[15] H. J. Habakkuk, *Marriage, debt, and the estates system. English Landownership, 1650–1950* (1994), p. 691, for Nall Cain, Samuel Waring, Joseph Watson, and Herbert Smith. F. M. L. Thompson, *Gentrification and the enterprise culture* (2001), p. 71 for Amos Nelson, App. 3 for Alfred Mond, App. 4 (ii) for George Johnston, Herbert Leon. Beckett and Turner, 'End of the old order?', p. 287, for Leverhulme. *EG*, 21 Feb. 1922, p. 89, for Cowdray.

Even a dozen swallows, however, do not make a summer, and a handful of instances of purchasers who were not tenant farmers does little to establish how much of the flood of land on the market ended up in the hands of 'conventional' landowners, although it is clear that something needs to be added to the five million acres acquired by sitting tenants in 1918–21. There are no known sources that could furnish a conclusive answer to this question, but Kelly's county directories may be of some help, albeit of a somewhat impressionistic sort. These directories identify by name the principal landowners, parish by parish, and although it is not at present known what the sources of this information were – local vicars, solicitors, and post offices being obvious candidates – it is apparent from the changes recorded that the information was kept reasonably up to date. The compilers were status-conscious, and distinguished carefully between 'landowners', 'residents' (who would include resident-landowners), and 'commercial farmers', so that it is fairly certain that those identified as 'landowners' were not owner-farmers. Reinforcing this assumption is the habit of recording that 'the land all belongs to the farmers', 'most of the farmers own their own land', or 'nearly all the farmers own their own land', or words to similar effect, in those parishes for which no 'principal landowners' are mentioned. Such parish entries, infrequent before 1910, become frequent in post-1920 editions, thus further enhancing confidence in the accuracy of the directories. As might be expected, many parishes were accredited with several 'principal landowners', and in those parishes it is impossible to know how the land was distributed among them. Where a single 'principal owner', often named as 'sole owner', is identified, however, it is a reasonable assumption that the major part of the parish area, perhaps around 75 to 80 per cent, was in single ownership; in other words, such parishes were what used to be called closed parishes. For present purposes it is largely immaterial whether such 'single owners' were landed gentry or aristocracy, or local professionals, businessmen, or traders: it suffices that by Kelly's own definitions they were not farmers. In principle, therefore, by establishing the extent of changes among 'single owners' by comparing successive editions of the directories – disregarding changes due to inheritance – it should be possible to estimate the rough order of magnitude of sales by landowners to new, non-farmer, landowners.

As an initial attempt to test this possibility a sample of five counties has been analysed: Berkshire, Devon, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, and Northamptonshire, selected for no good reason except that a batch of Kelly's Directories suitable for extracting the pre-1914 and 1920s landownership information was readily available.[16] Neither the geographical coverage nor the dates of the available editions are ideal for isolating changes in ownership in 1918–21 in England as a whole, but the broad outlines of changes which are suggested by the data may encourage others to undertake a more systematic and rigorous use of this source. The results of this exercise are presented in Table 1. The 589 parishes in the five counties which were recorded as having 'single owners' before 1914 comprised 30 per cent of the total area of those counties, and together the five counties account for 14.3 per cent of the total land area of England.

Note 15 continued
Kelly's *Northamptonshire* (1920 edn), p. 23 for Wimborne.

[16] Kelly's *Directories* for Berkshire (1911 and 1928 edns); for Devon (1906 and 1926 edns); for Gloucestershire (1906 and 1931 edns); for Hampshire (1907 and 1923 edns); for Northamptonshire (1903, 1920 and 1928 edns).

TABLE 1. Ownership changes, 1906–late 1920s

County	*County area ('000 acres)*	*Parishes*	*Number of 'single owner' parishes*	*Area of 'single owner' parishes ('000 acres)*	*Changes to owners of 'single owner' parishes*			
					to owner-farmers		*to new landowners*	
					number of parishes	*area ('000 acres)*	*number of parishes*	*area ('000 acres)*
Devon	1,633	478	106	377	29	73	30	62
Gloucestershire	813	364	150	287	30	42	40	59
Northamptonshire	617	314	143	241	23	34	43	70
Three counties	3,063	1,156	399	905	82	149	113	191
Berkshire	436	192	79	133	4	7	22	38
Hampshire	1,049	343	111	314	7	9	24	67
Five counties	4,548	1,691	589	1,352	93	165	159	296

Source: calculated from Kelly's *Directories* as explained in the text.

A possible drawback to reliance on these figures is that the amount of land passing to owner-farmers appears to be seriously understated, for the Kelly figures imply that no more than 1.1 to 3.8 million acres were transferred into owner-occupation, whereas the actual amount was 6.3 million acres.[17] The data in Table 1, however, capture the transfer to owner-farmers only in those parishes which Kelly identified as having 'single owners' before 1914, that is a little over one-third of the parishes in the five counties. In the remaining 1,100 parishes which were recorded as having two or more 'principal owners' there were ownership changes in 758. Many of these were to sitting tenants, although as Kelly's practice seems to have been only to mention the presence of owner-farmers when it could state that 'the parish is chiefly owned by the farmers' the directories were unlikely to mention the farmers when ownership of a parish was actually divided between some 'principal landowners' and some farmers. Nevertheless, some of the rise in owner-occupation outside the 'single owner' parishes was captured: in Devon, for example, parishes with a total area of 225,000 acres were identified as being chiefly owned by the farmers in 1926, while the transfers to owner-farmers in 'single owner' parishes accounted for no more than one-third of that area. Thus while the Kelly figures for the owner-farmer presence in Berkshire and Hampshire appear to be particularly suspect, one can be cautiously confident that in the other three counties the information does relate to transfers to new, non-farmer, landowners.

Upper and lower estimates of the acreage of land transferred between 1906 and the late 1920s from landowners to new landowners who were not owner-farmers can thus be calculated by extrapolation from the data for the three counties, Devon, Gloucestershire, and Northamptonshire,

[17] Column 7, transfers in single-owner parishes to owner-farmers = 12% of the total area of single-owner parishes in the five counties: applied to England as a whole that would equal 1.15m acres. Since single-owner parishes formed 30% of the total area of the five counties, and the five counties were 14% of the area of England, the upper estimate would be 165,000 acres x 3.3 x 7 = 3.8m acres. The 6.3m acres transferred to owner-occupiers between 1914 and 1927 related to England and Wales, and there is no readily accessible means of removing the Welsh element from this figure.

with some confidence that they do not under-record the owner-farmer element but less confidence that they are representative of England as a whole than the data for the entire five-county group, which since they under-record the owner-farmers, must exaggerate the extent of the transfer to new landowners. All the estimates are based on the assumption that the county groups are representative of England as a whole: the three counties cover 9.5 per cent of the land area of England, and the five counties, 14.3 per cent. The lower estimates assume that the land changing hands was confined to the 'single owner' parishes, which obviously grossly underestimates the actual extent of the transfers, while the upper estimates assume that the same proportion of land changed hands in the counties as a whole as in the 'sole owner' parishes, which is likely to overestimate the actual extent of the transfers. Middling estimates can also be made, by making separate estimates for the volume of changes in parishes with two or more owners, and adding those to the estimated changes in 'single owner' parishes. Sixty five per cent of parishes had two or more owners, covering over 70 per cent of the total area of both three and five county sets. In both sets 69 per cent of such parishes recorded ownership changes in the relevant period, and the middling estimates assume that the changes in these parishes were similar to the changes in the 'single owner' parishes. These six estimates are presented in Table 2.

There is little difference between the estimates based on the three counties and the five counties figures, and the mean of the six estimates suggests that something of the order of four and a half million acres may have been transferred from old landowners to new, non-farmer, landowners between 1906 and the late 1920s. That, however, refers to the total area of the parishes in which such transfers occurred, and it is unlikely that the landowners concerned owned more than three-quarters to four-fifths of the parish areas, so that perhaps 3.3 million acres, rather than 4.5 million acres, changed hands in this direction. The known behaviour of the land market over this period makes it possible to make a shrewd guess about how much of this possible 3.3 million acres changed hands in the four years 1918 to 1921. A first spurt of great activity and talk of the break-up of estates between 1910 and 1914, followed by quiescence during the Great War, the big spurt of 1918–21, followed by little activity in 1922–3, a short revival of business in 1924–5, and few transactions in the remainder of the 1920s, suggest that it may not be unreasonable to attribute one-quarter of the transfers to the pre-1914 period, one-quarter to the relatively quiet years 1915–17 and 1922 to the late 1920s, leaving one-half, or 1.5 million acres, as the share of 1918–21.

Hence, if the Kelly evidence and the rather involved calculations based upon it are to be believed, the four years 1918 to 1921 witnessed something of the order of 1.5 million acres changing hands from one set of landowners to a different set of landowners[18] to add to the 5 million

[18] Some of them were established landowners adding to their estates, for example Sir Spencer Maryon Wilson and Lord Stalbridge in Berkshire, Sir Wilfrid Peek and Lord Mildmay in Devon, Sir B. M. Eyres-Monsell and Sir H. Ingram in Gloucestershire, Viscounts Woolmer and Peel in Hampshire, and Edward Scawen Wyndham and Sir George Reresby Sitwell in Northamptonshire. Others were 'new men', for example Sir Edward Mauger Iliffe (later created Lord Iliffe), press baron and owner of Kelly's *Directories*, and Sir Robert James Black, banker, in Berkshire, Sir Raymond Beck, Lloyds underwriter, and Sir Trehawke Kekewich, lawyer, in Devon, Lord Dulverton, tobacco manufacturer, and Samuel Vestey, meat importer and retailer, in Gloucestershire, Sir Charles Greenway, Anglo-Persian Oil, and Sir Heath Harrison, Liverpool shipowner, in Hampshire, and Sir P. S. Stott, architect, and Sir Charles Kenneth Murchison, stockbroker and politician, in Northamptonshire.

TABLE 2. Some estimates of area changing hands in England, *c.*1906–late 1920s (million acres)

	Lower estimates[a]	*Middling estimates*[b]	*Upper estimates*[c]
On three-county data;[d]			
to new landowners	2.0	5.2	6.6
to owner-farmers	1.5	3.9	5.1
On five-county data;[e]			
to new landowners	2.11	5.6	6.9
to owner-farmers	1.15	3.0	3.8

Notes:

[a] Lower estimates assume that the only changes were those in 'single owner' parishes, i.e. in 30% of the area of England either 21% or 22% of the area went to new landowners and 12% or 16% went to owner-farmers.

[b] Middling estimates assume that in those parishes with two or more owners which experienced ownership changes such changes were the same as those in 'single owner' parishes, i.e. that 21% or 22% of their area went to new landowners and 12% or 16% went to owner-farmers. The area thus calculated has then been added to the area of changes in 'single owner' parishes detailed in column 1.

[c] Upper estimates assume that changes in 'single owner' parishes were mirrored by similar changes in other parishes, i.e. that 21% or 22% of the area went to new landowners, and 12% or 16% went to owner-farmers.

[d] In the three-county set 21% of the area of 'single owner' parishes went to new landowners and 16% to owner-farmers.

[e] In the five-county set 22% of the area of 'single owner' parishes went to new landowners and 12% to owner-farmers.

Sources: based on a comparisons of Kelly's *Directories* as follows: Berkshire (1911 and 1928 edns); Devon (1906 and 1926 edns); Gloucestershire (1906 and 1931 edns); Hampshire (1907 and 1923 edns); Northamptonshire (1903, 1920, and 1928 edns).

acres changing hands from landowners to former tenant farmers, in all 6.5 million acres: that is to say, about one-quarter of the cultivated acreage of England, or one-fifth of the total land area of England.[19] Of course, neither the *Estates Gazette* nor *The Times* – or for that matter any other contemporary – could have possessed such evidence in 1921, and it remains true, as Beckett and Turner demonstrate, that the internal evidence recorded in the *Estates Gazette* does not support the claim that one-quarter of England had changed hands. It is even suggested that the internal evidence available to that journal through the records of the Estate Exchange can be made to show that the volume of estate sales in 1918–21 was no larger than the volume of sales in 1896–9.[20] This suggestion derives from an implicit assumption about the share of urban property sales in the figures for the two periods, and from the possibly debateable conversion of nominal sales figures into real terms, which should depend on an index of the price of land (assuming that the sales figures related to land alone and not to some mixture of land and houses). In any case it is true that no cry was raised in the late 1890s that England was changing hands – although in the 1880s the Duke of Marlborough had remarked that 'were there any

[19] Since the 5m acres going to owner-farmers relates to England and Wales, the figure for England alone must have been somewhat smaller, although as noted before, at present there is no way of disaggregating the Welsh element.

[20] Beckett and Turner, 'End of the Old Order?', p. 281.

effective demand for the purchase of land, half the land of England would be in the market tomorrow'.[21] One good reason for this silence was that there is little evidence that any appreciable portion of aristocratic or gentry England did change hands in the late 1890s. A thorough, and extremely painstaking, investigation of the 1909–10 land valuation records for Staffordshire, piecing together from the parish returns the total holdings of individual landowners, has shown that of the 37 large estates (of 3,000 acres upwards) at the time of Bateman's 1883 listing only six had been sold or broken up before 1909, four of them between 1904 and 1909, one in 1891, and only one possibly in the late 1890s; between 1883 and 1909 while some sixteen estates had seen comparatively minor sales, five actually recorded larger acreages in 1909 than in 1883, and the remaining ten estates remained pretty much unchanged. In addition four new estates of over 3,000 acres had emerged, two of them based on Bateman-era estates.[22] The message from Kelly's *Directories* is much the same. To be sure in Berkshire there were changes in the landowners of a quarter of the 'single owner' parishes between 1888 and 1911, and while some of these may have happened after the 1909 Budget scare, the county, with its strong attractions for court and metropolitan high society, had traditionally experienced a high turnover of estates, one that was only slightly raised between 1911 and the late 1920s to reflect changes in one-third of the same parishes. By contrast, in Devon, Gloucestershire, and Northamptonshire only seven per cent of the 399 'single owner' parishes saw changes in their landowners between the late 1880s and 1906, compared with ownership changes in almost half of those parishes between 1906 and the late 1920s.[23] It is thus tolerably certain that whether the press exaggerated the scale of estate sales in 1918–21 or not, the volume of those sales greatly exceeded that of the late 1890s and was understandably thought to be of a different order of magnitude to anything experienced within living memory.

The apparent accuracy of the claim that a quarter of England had changed hands might perhaps have derived from the knowledge and experience of the land market professionals, rather than it being a mere fluke that a wild exaggeration inspired by hysteria, panic, and political bias chanced to be retrospectively authenticated. The idea that the press was producing inflated figures because it believed or feared that the torrent of sales portended the collapse of the old landed order is attractive, but possibly flawed even without this degree of retrospective justification. The argument seems to be that the end of the war saw, or was most likely to see, a resumption of the pre-war political assault on the hereditary landed aristocracy, reinforced by the increased wartime taxation and the fresh challenge of bolshevism, although the clarity of this cocktail is a little muddied by the curious observation that there were financial reasons for the post-1918 sales, as if there had not been financial reasons for any previous sales. As it happens, however, there was little in the actual political actions or developments in the years between 1918 and the 1921 press assertions about land sales to indicate an imminent resumption of the pre-war assault on landowners. Lloyd George, whose vitriolic rhetoric at the time of the

[21] Thompson, *English landed society*, p. 319.

[22] Dr David Brown has kindly shown me advance information from his contribution to A. D. M. Phillips and C. B. Phillips (eds), *A Staffordshire Atlas* (forthcoming). Ten of the 37 large estates in Staffordshire were either partly or completely sold in 1919–21.

[23] Kelly's *Directories* for Berkshire (1888 edn), for Devon (1888 edn), for Gloucestershire (1897 edn), and for Northamptonshire (1894 edn), in addition to those cited in n.16. These editions are clearly not ideal for capturing changes confined to the years 1896–9.

1909 Budget and the 1913–14 Land Campaign had thoroughly scared the landowners, was no longer breathing fire and brimstone and his land campaign immediately after 1918 was confined to advocating the provision of smallholdings for ex-servicemen. It was not until 1925, well after the press had had its say, that he reverted to something like his pre-1914 form on the land issue, with the rather obscure but undoubtedly anti-landlord policy of 'cultivating tenures' launched in the highly unsuccessful and quickly forgotten Liberal Green Book. Meanwhile the tiny group of ardent Liberal land-taxers which survived the 1918 election – Outhwaite, Wedgwood, Trevelyan – migrated to Labour, which was not yet regarded as an altogether serious contender for power, and the land taxes and valuation system of the 1909–10 Budget were repealed in 1920 by Lloyd George's Chancellor of the Exchequer, Austen Chamberlain. Of course Chamberlain, as a Tory, could be expected to act as the landowners' friend: so when he made massive increases in death duties and supertax in his 1919 Budget he presumably did not have landowners particularly in his sights.[24]

The Bolshevik threat was indeed a new factor, and the propertied classes were indeed seriously alarmed by the 1917 Revolution. Whether this scare prompted sales of land is less certain. On the whole, unless land was converted into something portable like gold or diamonds, of which there is no sign, turning land into another form of property such as stocks and shares or houses would not seem likely to ward off Bolshevik expropriation. The property press may have wilfully exaggerated the scale of the land sales, and may have persuaded itself that the collapse of the landed elite was imminent. With hindsight it is evident that in the event the landed elite did not collapse overnight. It has always been the case that if a quarter of England changed hands between 1918 and 1921, then three-quarters did not. That three-quarters has by no means subsequently remained in unchanged ownership, but since the land market has never repeated such frenzied activity concentrated into three or four years those changes have been spread out over the intervening decades without becoming headline-grabbing material – though that has not been true of the abandonment or demolition of some famous country houses. Many, perhaps most, of the large landowning families of the early twentieth century remain landowning families in the twenty-first century, having shed detached and outlying properties and retained their core estates. Many of the landed gentry and squirearchy, however, those who had estates of 1,000 to 3,000 acres or thereabouts, have parted with all their land. What has survived is very much a radically slimmed down version of the old landed elite, reinforced, as has always been the case, by new money – whose origins have lately tended to reflect sports and entertainment celebrities as well as the traditional finance and business fortunes. As Beckett and Turner point out, citing the *Estates Gazette* statement, in 1999 there were thought to be 4778 estates of more than 741 acres, which in aggregate owned just over 6 million acres, a little less than 20 per cent of the land area of England, or a little over 25 per cent of the cultivated area. Beckett and Turner rightly remark that this marks 'a significant retreat' from the distribution of landownership derived from the *Return of owners of land, 1873*. Such figures actually show that in 1873 – or as refined by Bateman and more precisely relating to 1883 – estates of 1,000 acres and upwards aggregated more than 17 million acres, 53 per cent of the land area of England,

[24] Roy Douglas, *Land, people, and politics. A history of the Land Question in the United Kingdom, 1878–1952* (1976), pp. 175–82.

or two-thirds of the cultivated acreage.[25] The true difference in the structure of landowning between 1873/83 and 1999 was in fact rather larger than this, since estates of between 741 and 1,000 acres are missing from the 1873/83 data, and would be difficult to find. In any case the six million acres in estates of more than 741 acres in 1999 included a great deal of land which had changed hands, perhaps more than once, in passing from its pre-1914 owners into the hands of the owners in 1999 who included many new men and women. Somewhere along the line the landowning classes, a group composed of a changing mixture of families, had shed more than half of their former estates, while the group of pre-1914 landed families had parted with much more than that. It still seems likely that the immediate aftermath of the Great War accounted for a large slice of this remodelling of the landscape of English landownership.

[25] There are many sources for the 1873 figures: they are usefully presented in the County Tables provided by J. Bateman, in G. C. Brodrick, *English land and landlords* (1881), pp. 173–83 for English counties, and p. 187 for a summary table for England and Wales. More accurate figures, based on the 1883 version of Bateman's revisions, can be calculated from Thompson, *English landed society*, Tables II, IV, and V.

Work in Progress on agrarian and rural history, 2007*

Compiled by Nicola Verdon

ATKINS, Dr Peter, Department of Geography, University of Durham, Durham, DH1 3LE, p.j.atkins@durham.ac.uk
Nineteenth- and twentieth-century food systems; food and health

BAILEY, Dr Mark (Senior Visiting Lecturer, University of Leeds), Leeds Grammar School, Alwoodley Gates, Leeds, LS17 8GS, mb@gsal.org.uk
Economic history of England 1200–1500, especially agriculture in East Anglia

BANGOR-JONES, Dr Malcolm, 1 North Somerville Place, Dundee, DD3 6JU, malcolm.bangor-jones@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
Social and economic history of the northern Highlands of Scotland, *c.*1600–1914

BECKETT, Prof. John, Department of History, University Park, Nottingham, NG7 2RD, john.beckett@nottingham.ac.uk
Landownership in the UK, 1500–2000; sustainability in English agriculture, 1500–2000

BEECH, Gareth, Social and Cultural History Department, St Fagans National History Museum, St Fagans, Cardiff, CF5 6XB, Gareth.beech@museumwales.ac.uk
Agriculture in Wales from 1945 to 2005, with an emphasis on the lives of farming families

BETTEY, Dr J. H. (University of Bristol), Clayley Cottage, Hunstrete, Pensford, Bristol, BS39 4NX
Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century agriculture and rural society in Somerset, Wiltshire and Dorset

BONE, Mike, 'Sunnyside', Avon Close, Keynsham, Bristol, BS31 2UL, mike_bone@lineone.net
Brewing and matting trades in the south-west, esp. Bath, Bristol and Exeter; distilleries in Bath and Bristol from *c.*1750; research strategy in industrial archaeology for the south-west region

BRAMMER, Mrs Betty (postgraduate, Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester), Bramlea, Station Road, Hubberts Bridge, Boston, Lincs., PE20 3QT, tnb.brammer@tiscali.co.uk
The Holland Fen: topographical and social changes in a fenland environment, 1750–1945 focusing on drainage and legal procedures

BRASSLEY, Dr Paul, School of Geography, University of Plymouth, 7 Kirkby Place, Plymouth, PL4 8AA, pbrassley@plymouth.ac.uk
Technical change in English agriculture in the twentieth century; changes in landownership and tenure in Europe, 1918–1939

BRIGGS, Dr Chris, Cambridge Group, Dept of Geography, University of Cambridge, Downing Place, Cambridge, CB2 3EN, cdb23@cam.ac.uk
'Private law and medieval village society: personal actions in manor courts, *c.*1250–*c.*1350' (AHRB-funded); rural credit, manorial officials, peasants in royal and church courts and medieval land markets

BROAD, John, Department of Humanities, Arts and Languages, London Metropolitan University, 166–220 Holloway Road, London, N7 8DB, j.broad@londonmet.ac.uk
Rural housing since 1500; dairying and pastoral agriculture, 1600–1870; the south Midlands and its agriculture; rural social structure *c.*1700

BROOK, Dr Shirley, 10 Manor Road, Lincoln, LN2 1RJ, asb@rivus.org.uk
Victorian High Farming; farm buildings; Lincolnshire agriculture; nineteenth-century land improvement loans; nineteenth-century clergy farming activities

* From time to time the *Review* has carried listings of Work in Progress, mainly work on British agricultural and rural history being undertaken by historians resident in Britain. The present list is based on forms circulated in the Winter of 2006–7: it makes no claim to being comprehensive. Where a person's institutional affiliation does not appear from their address, it is given in parentheses.

BUJAK, Dr Edward, Harlaxton College, Harlaxton Manor, Grantham, Lincs., NG32 1AG, ebujak@harlaxton.ac.uk
England's rural realms; comparison of Victorian and Edwardian estates.

BULMER, Miss Gillian, Little Breinton, Breinton, Hereford, HR4 7PH, pommearbre35@aol.com
The history of cider fruit – growing, harvesting and hauling

BURCHARDT, Dr Jeremy, Department of History, University of Reading, RG6 6AA, j.f.s.burchardt@reading.ac.uk
Attitudes to the countryside, esp. during inter-war period; rural leisure in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; village halls, allotments

BURNETTE, Dr Joyce, Department of Economics, Wabash College, Crawfordsville, Indiana, 47933 USA, burnettj@wabash.edu
English farm wage accounts, 1740–1850, focusing on women's wages and employment, child labour and forms of payment

CAMPBELL, Prof. Bruce M. S., School of Geography, Queen's University, Belfast, BT7 1NN
Crop yields on English demesnes, 1200–1500; land use, agricultural output, population and economic growth in England and beyond, 1200–1800; landlord-tenant and inter-tenant relations in the Middle Ages

CARRICK, Miss Mary (postgraduate, University of Hull), 13 Glebe Road, Wawne, Hull, HU7 5XR, m.carrick@hull.ac.uk
Water management in agriculture in the lower Hull valley, 1150–1750

CAUNCE, Dr Stephen, Department of Humanities, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 2HE, sacaunce@uclan.ac.uk
Agriculture in northern England, *c.*1650–1950, and its role in the industrialisation of that region, specifically farm service and hiring fairs, farming in the industrial Pennines, and agricultural mechanisation

CHAPMAN, Dr John, Geography Department, University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth, PO1 3HE, john.chapman@port.ac.uk
Formal and informal enclosures in England and Wales after *c.*1650; Queen Anne's bounty as a source for agricultural history

CHARTRES, Prof. John A., School of History, University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT, j.a.chartres@leeds.ac.uk
UK domestic trades in agricultural commodities, 1500–1900; distilling, pig-keeping and other agricultural processing industries; mercantile systems and agricultural improvement, 1500–1850; cultures of drinking and supplying alcoholic beverages, 1600–1850; niche producing and marketing in early modern/modern farming

CHURCHLEY, Mr Richard (University of Birmingham), 1293 Evesham Road, Astwood Bank, Redditch, Worcestershire, B96 6AY, rachurchley@totalise.co.uk
Rural crafts and industries in Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Gloucestershire, 1600–1860: change and continuity in occupational structure of rural communities

CLARKE, Dr Gill, School of Education, University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton, SO17 1BJ, gmc@soton.ac.uk
The history of the Women's Land Army and its recruits and the portrayal of the WLA by war artists in the First and Second World War

COLLINS, Prof. E. J. T., Department of Agriculture and Food Economics, University of Reading, PO Box 237, Reading, RG6 6AR, e.j.t.collins@reading.ac.uk
English woodland histories, nineteenth and twentieth centuries; working oxen post-1750; manufacture of agricultural edge tools in south and south-west England, 1750–1939

CONFORD, Dr Philip (Department of History, University of Reading), 88 St Pancras, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 7LR, paconford@aol.com
Growth and change in the British organic movement from 1946 to the twenty-first century

CRAGOE, Professor Matthew, School of Humanities, University of Hertfordshire, College Land, Hatfield, Herts, AL10 9AB, m.cragoe@Herts.ac.uk
Parliamentary enclosures, 1700–1900; the church in the Victorian countryside; aristocracy; rural Wales

CROOT, Dr Patricia, 165 Russell Court, Woburn Place, London, WC1H 0LR, patricia@croot.plus.com
The economic and inheritance choices of farming families in nineteenth-century Somerset; agrarian society in the Somerset Levels; agricultural and landownership history in Westminster (for VCH Middlesex)

CROSSKILL, Mr Stuart, 37 South Avenue, Darley Abbey, Derby, DE22 1FB, stuart.crosskill@one-name.org
A study of the various agricultural implement businesses founded by William Crosskill in Beverley, East Yorkshire, carried on by his son and other family members in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

CROWE, Hilary (postgraduate, University of Sussex), Middle Blakebank, Broom Land, Underbarrow, Cumbria, LA8 8HP, Taxcaddy@aol.com
Upland rural communities: the Lake District, 1910–1946, specifically the impact of two world wars and worldwide economic depression on upland farming

DEWEY, Dr Peter, 71 Berwick Road, Marlow, Bucks, SL7 3AS, deweysabroad@hotmail.com
History of world agricultural engineering industry since *c.*1800

DILLEY, Dr Robert, Department of Geography, Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada, P7B 5EI, Robert.dilley@lakeheadu.ca
Common lands and enclosure in Cumberland

DODDS, Dr Ben, History Department, University of Durham, 43 North Bailey, Durham, DH1 3EX, benjamin.dodds@durham.ac.uk
Peasant economy in medieval England; tithes as a source for the agricultural historian

DYER, Prof. Christopher, Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester, Leicester, LE1 7QR, cd50@le.ac.uk
Agriculture and trade *c.*1500 (study of a wool merchant's account book); rural settlements and landscape history; poverty and diet, 1200–1550

DYMOND, Dr D. P. (University of Cambridge), 4 Honey Hill, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1RT
Social and economic significance of glebe terriers; medieval parishes and guilds

EDWARDS, Prof. Peter, Schools of Arts, Roehampton University, Digby Stuart College, Roehampton Lane, London, SW15 5PH, p.Edwards@roehampton.ac.uk
Horses in early modern society; economic, social and cultural roles

EVERITT, Alan (Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester), Fieldedge, Poultney Lane, Kimcote, near Lutterworth, Leicestershire, LE17 5RX
Commonland country: topography, settlement, society (with special reference to the period of transformation *c.*1690–1900)

FALVEY, Mrs Heather (University of Warwick), 119 Winton Drive, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, WD3 3QS, hfalvey1@tiscali.co.uk
The politics of custom: improvement, enclosure and social unrest in seventeenth-century England, with special reference to the enclosure of Duffield Frith (Derbyshire) and the draining and enclosure around Whittlesey (Isle of Ely)

FEW, Mrs Janet (postgraduate, University of Exeter), Coles Manning, Buckland Brewer, Bideford, EX39 5LP, janet@fewiow.freeserve.co.uk
Faith, fish, farm, family – the impact of kinship links on migration choices and residential persistence in north Devon, 1841–1901

FRENCH, Dr Henry, Department of History, Amory Building, University of Exeter, EX4 4RJ, H.French@exeter.ac.uk
Fate of small landowners in England, 1500–1800; sub-tenancy and leasehold land tenancy, 1500–1800; urban commons and commoners in England, 1500–1800

GARDINER, Dr Mark, Department of Archaeology, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, BT7 1NN, m.gardiner@qub.ac.uk
The development of farmsteads and farmhouses in late medieval England; the evolution and character of medieval manorial sites; the development of rural landscapes in late medieval England, particularly changing methods of exploiting the resources of the countryside

GAYTON, Juliet (postgraduate, University of Exeter), J.D.Gayton@exeter.ac.uk
Changes in customary landholding, 1650–1750, in the chalk downlands of Hampshire

GODDARD, Prof. Nicholas (St Mary's University College, Twickenham), Chickenden Farmhouse, Staplehurst, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 0DP, n.p.w.goddard@anglia.ac.uk
Agricultural technology, nineteenth-twentieth centuries; links between agricultural and environmental history

GOOSE, Prof. Nigel, Department of Humanities, University of Hertfordshire, College Land, Hatfield, Herts, AL10 9AB, n.goose@herts.ac.uk
Nineteenth-century farm service, casualisation of labour and seasonal unemployment; rural poverty; bastardy; Hertfordshire

GRACE, Mr David (Beauford School, Gloucester), 17, Oakbank, Gloucester, GL4 0AZ, d.grace@tesco.net
The development of the agricultural engineering industry in Britain, 1750–1914

GREENAWAY, Mr R. G., rg.greenaway@btinternet.com
The archaeology and history of woodland and in woodland, with particular interest in the Pang Valley area in West Berkshire

GREENER, Mrs Clare (University of Exeter), 26 Linden Road, Dawlish, Devon, EX7 9QA, claregreener@tiscali.co.uk
Devon allotments; Devon gardeners in the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries; market gardeners, nurseries and nurserymen of Devon

GRIEVES, Dr Keith, School of Education, Kingston University, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, KT2 7LB, K.Grieves@kingston.ac.uk
Impact of the Great War on rural communities in southern England, including war memorial proceedings, the construction of common meeting places, landscape preservation, the rural soldier poet, food control and military recruitment, 1914–25

GRIFFIN, Dr Carl J., School of Geography, Queen's University Belfast, BT7 1NN, Carl.Griffin@qub.ac.uk
Popular protest in rural England, 1720–1850; cultures of criminality; the human ecology of forests and chases; human and non-human engagements

GRITT, Dr Andrew, Department of Humanities, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, PR1 2HE, ajgritt1@uclan.ac.uk
Land drainage in Britain since 1560; agricultural labour in England, 1600–1950; agriculture and rural society in north-west England, 1600–1950, including tenurial systems, 1650–1850

HAGGERTY, Mr Martin, 7 Palace Hill, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, YO11 1NL, martin@envoy.dircon.co.uk
English cultural history from 1780 to the present, especially human relationships with local and regional landscapes and how these have been expressed in the arts; history of environmentalism, radicalism and alternative lifestyles

HARE, Dr John N., Peter Symonds' College, Owens Road, Winchester, SO22 6RX, jhare@psc.ac.uk
Agrarian history, towns and cloth production in southern England (especially Wiltshire and Hampshire), *c*.1350–1520

HARVEY, Prof Paul D. A. (University of Durham), Lyndhurst, Farnley Hey Road, Durham, DH1 4EA, pda.y.harvey@btopenworld.com
English estate organisation, tenth-fourteenth centuries; peasant land market in medieval England

HAVINDEN, Michael (MERL, University of Reading), 38 Bickerton Road, Headington, Oxford, OX3 7LS
History of landownership in Oxfordshire since 1500

HEALEY, Mr Jonathan (postgraduate, University of Oxford), Magdalen College, University of Oxford, OX1 4AU, jonathan.healey@magd.ox.ac.uk
Poverty and welfare in England, *c*.1600–1780; dearth, famine and economic crises in England, *c*.1500–1750; social history of the uplands *c*.1400–1850; social history of pre-modern industry, esp cotton-using textiles, *c*.1570–1780

HEWER, Mrs Sue (University of Dundee), Clintlaw Farmhouse, Lintrathen, Kirriemuir, Angus, DD8 5JF, suehewer1@btopenworld.com
Self-sufficiency, surplus and conspicuous consumption in Scottish country houses from the Restoration to the Enlightenment

HEY, Professor David (University of Sheffield), 12 Ashford Road, Dronfield Woodhouse, Dronfield, S18 8RQ, dg.hey@btinternet.com
History of Derbyshire; Wombwell, the landscape history of a South Yorkshire Township (with J. S. Rodwell)

HILL, Judy (University of Roehampton), High Pines, Blackdown Avenue, Pyrford, Woking, Surrey, GU22 8QG, judy@judyhill.co.uk
Poverty and unrest in Surrey, 1815–34; poor emigration to North America

HILL, Dr Trevor and Mrs Margaret, 5 Severn Way, Cressage, Shrewsbury, SY5 6DS, local.history.doc@virgin.net
A demographic and landscape study of fourteen parishes in mid-Shropshire, 1750–1871, comprising family reconstitution from parish registers and census returns

HILLMAN, Anne (University of Central Lancashire), Tailrace Cottage, Mill Land, Milnthorpe, LA7 7QR, anne@cwaas.org.uk
Common rights to natural resources, especially stone and peat, in south Westmorland, before and after enclosure

HINDE, Dr Andrew, Division of Social Statistics, School of Social Sciences, Southampton, SO17 1BJ, PRAHinde@aol.com
Out-migration from rural southern England mid-late nineteenth century, esp. impact of New Poor Law; Morbidity among rural working classes in southern England, late nineteenth to early twentieth century (with Prof Bernard Harris and Dr Martin Gorsky, ESRC-funded)

HINDLE, Prof. Steve, Department of History, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7NL, steve.hindle@warwick.ac.uk
Poverty, charity and welfare; dearth and food supply; popular protest; space and the built environment – all in early modern England

HODGES, Mr C. (Archaeology Department, University of Wales, Lampeter), 35 Coalway Road, Coleford, Gloucestershire, GL16 7HQ, chod@fsmail.net
Deserted settlements in the Black Mountains of south-east Wales

HOLLAND, Mr Michael, 156 Westbury Road, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 4DN, MHOL190246@AOL.com
Rural Queries; Agricultural unrest

HOLMES, Dr Heather, Heather.Holmes@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
Production, distribution and reception of the Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement's county agricultural reports (1793–1817); Scottish agricultural books in the eighteenth century

HOLT, Jennifer, 258 Blackburn Road, Haslingden, Rossendale, Lancashire, BB4 5JF
Social and economic history of the Lune Valley, *c*.1500–1800; textiles and iron industry of the same region in the early modern period

HOWKINS, Prof Alun, Department of History, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9SH, a.j.howkins@sussex.ac.uk
Resistance to enclosure after 1850; the survival of living in farm service in England after 1850; the history of the English farm worker since 1830

HOWLETT, Neil, 6 West End, Frome, Somerset, BA11 3AD, neilmhowlett@hotmail.com
Badgers: commodity and food supply in the regions, especially the south-west, in the early modern period; field names, place names and the distribution of literature and ideas

HOYLE, Prof. R. W., Department of History, University of Reading, Whiteknights, Reading, RG6 6AA, r.w.hoyle@reading.ac.uk
British rural history 1400 to date, including tenurial change in England, 1500–1640 and in Britain/Ireland generally; agrarian capitalism, land markets 1540–1800, non-agricultural uses of the countryside including field sports, popular recreation and water gathering, *c.*1850 to date

JENNINGS, Professor Bernard, Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Hull, HU6 7RX
History of Yorkshire farming; History of Kilham and district in the Yorks Wolds

JOHNSTONE, Mr Muir (postgraduate, Department of Geography, Lancaster University), 7, Tayinloan Drive, South Lanarkshire, Carluke, ML8 4LS, loujohnstone@tiscali.co.uk
Agrarian change in two Scottish Lowland counties (East Lothian and Lanarkshire), 1700–1830

JONES, Mrs Gwendoline, 9 Cockcrow Wood, St Leonards, East Sussex, TN37 7HW, oastess@lineone.net
The growth of the hop industry and the development of the oasthouse

JONES, Mrs Judith, Clwydtrawscae Farm, Bedlinog, Treharris, CF46 6TA, clwydfarm@tiscali.co.uk
Gelligaer and Merthyr common; South Wales – local agricultural societies; Merthyr and Gelligaer parishes, pre-industrial period

JONES, Professor Melvyn (Visiting Professor, Tourism and Environmental Change Research Unit, Sheffield Hallam University), Kirkstead Abbey Grange, 4 Kirkstead Abbey Mews, Thorpe Hesley, Rotherham, S61 2OZ, melvyn@jones4797.freeserve.co.uk
Woodland history and woodland-based industries in south Yorkshire; landscape history of south Yorkshire; history of Fitzwilliam Wentworth estates in south Yorkshire and Ireland

KAIN, Prof. Roger J. P., Northcote House, University of Exeter, Exeter, EX4 4QJ, r.j.p.kain@exeter.ac.uk
History of maps and mapping (tithe surveys and enclosure maps in particular); landscape history

KIRBY, Mr Michael, PO Box 1055, Baulkham Hills, NSW, Australia, 1755, mikekirby@e-management.com.au
Social settings and agricultural history to 1840, esp. Kirby yeoman farmers from Blakesley, Northants; recently discovered Viking wharf

LANHAM, Neil, The Helions Bumpstead Gramophone Co., Ivy Todd, Helions Bumpstead, Suffolk, CB9 7AT, neil@traditionsofsuffolk.com
Orality: camcording stories of working life through the eyes of the indigenous inhabitants of Suffolk

LEWIS, Dr C. P. (VCH Sussex), 102 Magazine Lane, Wallasey, CH45 1LX, chris.lewis@sas.ac.uk
Parish histories for VCH Sussex, currently in area between Arundel and Storrington; estates of St Werburgh's Minster, Chester

LINSLEY, Dr Barbara (Archivist to the Raveningham Estate, Norfolk), Ellingham House, 61 Yarmouth Road, Ellingham, Bungay, NR35 2PH, bjlinsley@btinternet.com
Rural housing, local government and agriculture in the inter-war period; Bacon family history and Raveningham estate, south Norfolk

MACDOUGALL, Dr Philip, 62 Maybush Drive, Chidham, Chichester, PO18 8SS, Philip.Macdougall@tpc.ac.uk
Agricultural changes and social conditions of rural labourers in West Sussex during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars

MARTIN, Dr John, Faculty of Humanities, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH, jfmartin@dmu.ac.uk
Twentieth-century agricultural and rural development with particular reference to the role of the state in the transformation of the agrarian sector; wartime mobilisation of the rural workforce, rural sports and leisure activities, counter-urbanisation and sustainable farming

MARTIN, Dr John M., 11 Quedgeley Court Park, Greenhill Drive, Quedgeley, Gloucester, GL2 4NH
Mortality rates and living standards in two rural districts (Gloucestershire and north Wiltshire), *c.*1800–1879

MATTHEWS, Mr J. S., 7 Riddings Road, Hale, Altringham, WA15 9DS, Stephen.Matthews@virgin.net
Mid nineteenth-century agricultural history, centred on Cheshire; cattle epidemics

MEREDITH, Dr Anne, anne.meredith@ntlworld.com
Women in horticulture and agriculture from the late nineteenth century through to 1939, especially women and horticultural education and women and dairy education using Somerset as a case study

MILLS, Dr Dennis R., 17 Rectory Lane, Branston, Lincoln, LN4 1NA, d.r.mills@virgin.net
Harvest transport in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, specifically the hermaphrodite cart/wagons of the East Midlands and East Anglia – origins, designs and distribution

MITCHELL, Dr Ian, 4 Church Lane, Kirk Langley, Ashbourne, DE6 4NG, ianandmarym@tiscali.co.uk
Fairs in England from the late seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries

MOORE-COLYER, Prof. Richard, Department of History, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, SY23 3DY, rim@aber.ac.uk
The Home Front in the Second World War; rural England and Wales between the wars; French prisoners of war, 1800–15; the history of the horse in Britain; the history of the hills and uplands in Wales

MORGAN, Mr J. C. (Dr William's Library), 8, Elia Street, Islington, London, N1 8DE, jonathan.morgan6@btopenworld.com
Agricultural history of Lincolnshire as context for study of High Calvinism in the south of the county in the nineteenth century

MOSES, Dr Gary, School of Arts and Humanities, Nottingham Trent University, Clifton, Nottingham, NG11 8NS, gary.moses@ntu.ac.uk
The marginal workforce and the moral entrepreneur; examining perceptions of mobile and marginal workers in English rural society, 1830–1900, focusing on the Church of England in high farming areas of Yorkshire, Lincs. and Notts.

NESBITT, Dr Mark, Jodrell Laboratory, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, TW9 3AB, m.nesbitt@kew.org
Rural life through plant materials and artefacts from the UK housed in the Economic Botany Collection at Kew Gardens. Current work on history of wheat and barley samples from the Great Exhibition and other sources.

NEWTON TAYLOR, Mr Paul (postgraduate, University of Essex), 110 Loose Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 7UB, paulnt@hotmail.com
Nineteenth-century landownership, rural demography and rural protest

NICOL, Mr Nic, Sinfin Community School Library, Farmhouse Road, Derby, DE24 0FL, NicNicol@sinfin.derby.shu.uk
Use of German POW labour, 1916–19 including site of camps, numbers held and general usage

OSBORNE, Dr Harvey (University Campus Suffolk), 44 Meadow Cottages, Iken, nr Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 2EU, harveyosborne@suffolk.ac.uk
Rural crime and protest; field sports; poor law disturbances and administration

OVERTON, Professor Mark, Department of History, University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter, EX4 4RJ, M.Overton@exeter.ac.uk
The agrarian history of England, 1500–2000; production and consumption in early modern England; economic growth in England 1550–1750

OWEN, Mr Arthur E. B., Old Manor House, Thimbleby, Horncastle, Lincs., LN9 5RE
History of land drainage; coastal erosion, especially in eastern England; historical geography of Lindsey Marsh (with Prof. Ian Simmons, Durham)

PAGE, Dr Mark, VCH Oxfordshire, Clarendon Building, Bodleian Library, Broad Street, Oxford, OX1 3BG, Mrp15@le.ac.uk
Local history; medieval settlement and landscape; medieval bishops of Winchester

PALGRAVE, Mr Derek A., Cambridge University Institute of Continuing Education, Crossfield House, Dale Road, Stanton, Suffolk, IP31 2DY, palgrave@one-name.org
History of fertilizers and fertilizer technology; history and development of rural technology, including potash farmers and coprolite diggers in East Anglia; ramifications of occupational surnames and evolution of rural customs

PARK, Mr Peter (University of Central Lancashire), 483 Brook Street North, Fulwood, Preston, PR2 3QE, peterbpark@tiscali.co.uk
The movement of people from the agricultural areas of southern/eastern England to the manufacturing districts of the north under the Poor Law Commissioners migration scheme, 1835–7

PARROTT, Mrs Susan, Bridlington, Yorks.
Study of the movement and migration patterns of farmers, families and labour on six Wolds estates in East Yorkshire in the late nineteenth century

PERREN, Dr Richard, Department of History, University of Aberdeen, Crombie Avenue, King's College, Aberdeen, AB24 3FX, r.perren@abdn.ac.uk
Filth and profit, disease and heath: public and private impediments to slaughterhouse reform in Victorian Britain

PETERS, Dr J. E. C., Malvern Wells, Worcs.
Development of farm buildings up to about 1900, particularly in Worcestershire, Herefordshire and North Somersetshire

PHILLIPS, Dr A. D. M., Department of Geography, Keele University, Keele, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG, a.d.m.phillips@keele.ac.uk
An historical atlas of Staffordshire; Andrew Thompson's report to the inclosure commissioners, 1850–70; Gregory King's Staffordshire survey, 1679–80; Landlord investment in English agriculture, 1850–1900; cropping and land use change in England, 1815–75

POPE, Stephen (Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse Museum), 26 Hick House Road, Besycay, Dereham, Norfolk, NR20 4BY
Early use of combine harvesters; union workhouses; industrial farms; Norfolk agricultural machine manufacturers

POSTLES, Dr Dave, Department of English, University of Leicester, Leicester, LE1 7QR, pot@le.ac.uk
An early modern small town: Loughborough; late medieval religious commitment and social status in the diocese of Lichfield; literature and society in early modern England; spatial organisation, representation and experience in early modern England

POWELL, Bob, (Principal Museums Officer, Highland Council), 'The Haven', 23 Hillside Avenue, Kingussie, Inverness-shire, PH21 1PA, Bob.powell53@btopenworld.com
National, regional and local traditional management practices and associated culture, material and non-material, of the heavy horse in British agriculture, *c.*1750–1950

PRATT, Mr D., The Grange, Welsh Frankton, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY11 4NX
The 1391 Survey of Wrexham; Seven 'Inspeximus' charters of Valle Crucis Abbey (1295)

PURCHON, Mrs Jenny, purchon@ashwell.com
Parliamentary enclosure and commutation of tithes in Bedfordshire; the rural communities of central south Carmarthenshire in mid-nineteenth century

READMAN, Dr Paul, Department of History, King's College London, Strand, London, WC2R 2LS, Paul.readman@kcl.ac.uk
The 'land question' in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain; 'Englishness' and the rural; history of the English landscape in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

ROBERTS, Dr Ian D. (Honorary Fellow, Department of History, University of Durham), Redewater View, Rochester, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE19 1RH
The Anglo-Irish cattle trade in the Borders, 1922–80; beer production, illegal whiskey trading and hostelries in the Middle March, 1700–1950; Coursing and other field sports in Northumberland, 1750–2000

ROSS, Dr Alasdair, Research Centre for Environmental History, University of Stirling, FK9 4LA
Land assessment and lordship in medieval Scotland (a monograph on northern Scotland completed, now to be extended into other areas of Scotland)

SCHOFIELD, Prof. P. R., Dept of History , Dept of History & Welsh History, Hugh Owen Building, The University of Wales, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3DY
Private litigation in medieval manorial courts: 'Peasants and historians', the historiography of the medieval English peasantry

SHANNON, William D., (postgraduate, University of Lancaster), 12A Carleton Avenue, Preston, PR2 6YA, bill_shannon@msn.com
Wasteland enclosure in the lowlands of the Northern and Western province of England, *c.*1500–1700

SHAW-TAYLOR, Dr Leigh, Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, West Road, Cambridge, lmws2@cam.ac.uk
The changing occupational structure of England and Wales, 1389–1911; the industrial revolution; development of agrarian capitalism, parliamentary enclosure and proletarianisation, common rights and common land; Women's work, 1600–1881

SHORT, Professor Brian, Department of Geography, Arts C, University of Sussex, Brighton, BN1 9SJ, b.m.short@sussex.ac.uk
Nineteenth- and twentieth-century agrarian landscape and social change; land ownership; British farming in the Second World War

SMOUT, Professor T. C. (University of St Andrews), Chesterhill, Shore Road, Anstruther, Fife, KY10 3DZ, tes1@standrews.ac.uk
The relationship between farming and biodiversity loss in the UK since 1900

SNEDDON, Dr Sam (Universities of Surrey and Nottingham), 53 Christchurch Close, Stamford, PE9 1HS, sam_sneddon@hotmail.com
Infant health and mortality in the rural Fens of Lincs, Cambs and Norfolk, 1850–1910, with particular regard to the role of women working in the fields

SPUFFORD, Prof Margaret (University of Roehampton), The Guildhall, Whittlesford, Cambridge, CB2 4NZ
Fuel (wood and coal) in the sixteenth/seventeenth centuries; clothing of the 'common sort' in sixteenth and seventeenth-century rural England; Hearth Taxes of the 1660/70s in rural England; Reading matter available to the poor in rural England in sixteenth/seventeenth centuries

STEAD, Dr David R., Agriculture and Food Science Centre, University College Dublin, Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland, david.stead@ucd.ie
Agriculture, food and environmental policy in Ireland and Britain

TAYLOR, Miss Katherine (Kingston University), 46 Bittams Lane, Chertsey, Surrey, KT16 9QX, taylor@katherinej.freeserve.co.uk
Reconstructing the agricultural environment of East Sussex, *c.*1935–59 using aerial photographs and the National Farm Survey

THIRSK, Dr Joan (St Hilda's College, University of Oxford), 1 Hadlow Castle, Hadlow, Tonbridge, Kent, TN11 0EG, j.thirsk@onetel.com
Development of market gardening, 1500–1800; dietary fashions: their transmission across Europe and the agricultural consequences

THOMPSON, F. M. L. (Institute of Historical Research), Holy Cottage, Sheepcote Lane, Wheathampstead, Herts, AL4 8NJ, fmholly@tesco.net
The country house system, *c.*1830–1939; the land market in the twentieth century, women landowners in England, nineteenth and twentieth centuries

THOMPSON, Lynn (Honorary Fellow, University of Exeter), 72 Ragbank Road, Carnforth, Lancashire, LA5 9JB, L.Thompson@exeter.ac.uk
Agricultural education and training in England and Wales, 1889–1950 with particular reference to the contributions of voluntary organisations such as the Women's Institutes and Young Farmers' Clubs

THWAITES, Dr Wendy, 1 The Drift, Pickworth, Stamford, Lincolnshire, PE9 4DH
Agricultural marketing and trade in general, and specifically licensed badgers (agricultural produce dealers), 1552–1772

TITTENSOR, Mrs Ruth M. (Countryside Management Consultancy), 'Faenol', 6 East Oonington Street, Darvel, Ayrshire, KA17 0JR, ruth@johnwalters.com
History ecology and landscape history; 'Whitelee Forest Oral History Project' – the agricultural, social and ecological changes associated with statutory twentieth-century afforestation in Scotland

TOWERS, Mrs Jean, 'Malpas', 436 Brant Road, Waddington, near Lincoln, LN5 9AN
The development of Waddington from enclosure onwards

TRANTER, Mr Richard, Museum of English Rural Life, The University of Reading, Redlands Road, Reading, RG1 5EX, r.b.tranter@rdg.ac.uk
The effect of the agricultural recession of 1921–38 on farming on the Berkshire Downs

TURNER, Prof. Michael, Department of History, University of Hull, HU6 7RX, M.E.Turner@hull.ac.uk
Land tenure in England *c.*1820–1950; the Land Question 1880–1940 (with Prof John Beckett)

UTTLEY, Dr David, David.uttley@btinternet.com
Changes in the pattern of land ownership in Cumberland, 1780–*c.*1913: the decline of the 'yeoman'

VERDON, Dr Nicola, Department of History, Falmer, University of Sussex, BN1 9SH, n.j.verdon@sussex.ac.uk
Employment in the nineteenth and twentieth century English countryside, with special reference to women's work and farm service; farming families in the inter-war period

VERNEY, Miss Caroline (postgraduate, University of Exeter), Cheglinch End, West Down, Ilfracombe, EX34 8NW, C.M.Verney@exeter.ac.uk
Family and community in ninteenth-century rural north Devon using family reconstitution

WADE-MARTINS, Dr S. (School of History, University of East Anglia), The Longhouse, Eastgate Street, North Elmham, Dereham, Norfolk, NR20 5HD
The East Anglian landscape, 1870–1950 (Leverhulme-funded research project with Dr Tom Williamson)

WALTON, Dr J. R., Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, University of Wales Aberystwyth, SY23 3DB
'Archaic' tenures as investment in England and Wales, 1700–1900; working oxen in nineteenth-century Oxfordshire

WARDE, Dr Paul, Department of History, University of East Anglia, Norwich, NR4 7TJ, p.warde@uea.ac.uk
The fuel economy of England and Wales, *c.*1550–1850 with special emphasis on wood; comparative history of energy consumption in Europe, especially wood use and draft power; environmental history

WATKINS, Dr Andrew, 26 Packington Lane, Coleshill, Birmingham, B46 3EL, Awatkins20010k@yahoo.co.uk
Society and economy in the forest of Arden, Warwickshire in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries

WATKINS, Prof. Charles, School of Geography, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, NG7 2RD, Charles.Watkins@Nottingham.ac.uk
The National Farm Survey, 1941–3; Forest and woodland history; Landownership; landscape aesthetics

WEBSTER, Dr Sarah, School of Humanities, University of Hertfordshire, College Land, Hatfield, Herts, AL10 9AB, s.webster@herts.ac.uk
Transnational landscape improvement, estate management and the circulation of ideas, capital and people on the Egremont estates from 1770–1840

WHITTLE, Dr Jane, History department, University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter, EX4 4RJ, J.C.Whittle@ex.ac.uk
The late medieval and early modern history of rural England. Current research projects on women's work, servants, gentry household accounts, patterns of consumption (particularly food) and popular rebellion (particularly Kett's rebellion)

WHYTE, Prof Ian, Dept of Geography, Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4YQ, i.whyte@lancaster.ac.uk
Landscape, economic and society change in the uplands of northern England, seveteenth–nineteenth centuries; the impact of floods on rural communities in north-west England from AD 1600

WIFFEN, Neil (University of Essex), 30 Main Road, Broomfield, Chelmsford, CM1 7EF, neilwiffen@hotmail.com
The impact of agricultural depression on numerous parishes around Chelmsford, 1866–1901

WINCHESTER, Dr Angus J. L., Department of History, Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4YG, a.winchester@lancaster.ac.uk
Hill farming in upland Britain, particularly northern England, in medieval and early modern periods; management of common land; rural society in Cumbria

WITTERING, Mrs Shirley (MStud, University of Cambridge), The Spinney, 24a Middle Street, Thriplow, Royston, Herts, SG8 7RD, shirley@wittering.f2s.com
The ecology of enclosure – a study of the effect of parliamentary enclosure on the chalk villages of south Cambridgeshire

WOODS, Dr Abigail, Centre for the history of science, technology and medicine, Imperial College London, 2nd floor, central library, South Kensington campus, London, SW7 2AZ, a.woods@imperial.ac.uk
British veterinary history: science, practice and professional identity; animal plagues and policies for their control; the construction of veterinary expertise in cattle breeding; the history of herd health, preventive medicine and 'farm health planning'

YATES, Dr Margaret, Department of History, University of Reading, Whiteknights, Reading, RG6 6AA, m.h.yates@reading.ac.uk
Social and economic change in the late medieval period with a special emphasis on conditions in Berkshire

YOUNG, Dr Mary, Archives, Records Management and Museum Services, Tower Building, Nethergate, Dundee, DD1 4HN, m.z.young@dundee.ac.uk
Rural communities in the eastern lowlands of Scotland, 1600–2000, with particular reference to agricultural, landscape and economic change.

Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

RICHARD JONES and MARK PAGE, *Medieval villages in an English landscape. Beginnings and ends* (Windgather Press, 2006). xviii + 270 pp. 78 figs. £19.99.

The possible emergence between about 800 and 1200 of nucleated settlement and common-field systems continues to present problems to landscape historians and archaeologists. The form and chronology of the introduction of nucleated settlement and common fields across central southern England in the later Saxon and early medieval centuries remain contested, as does the connection between settlement nucleation and common fields, and the restriction of such landscapes to 'champion' England.

The book reviewed here focuses on twelve parishes within the medieval royal forest of Whittlewood, lying across the borders of Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, an area of wood and wood-pasture relatively marginal and atypical given its location in the heart of 'champion' England. It aims to explore the problems outlined above in the belief that 'many English landscapes and settlements followed similar paths of development, so … the interpretation [of this research has] significance beyond the boundaries of Whittlewood' (p. xvii).

This is an engaging and readable book which provides a consistent and coherent narrative, describing the development of a localized landscape from the prehistoric into the early modern periods. As the landscape history of a diverse and under-researched region, it is first class. There is, however, some ambiguity concerning the link between the narrow geographic focus of the book and the wider questions it hopes to address. That difficulty lies squarely in the applicability of its results to landscapes of nucleated settlement and large open arable fields, since Whittlewood is not representative of 'champion' England.

Whittlewood appears to have been a lightly-populated area from the post-Roman centuries onwards, characterized by large areas of woodland and grassland. It was peripheral to the more arable regions in which estate centres were located, and with which its landscape contrasts. Its pastoral character appears, moreover, to have been deliberately protected and preserved throughout the late Saxon and early medieval periods, so that not only were settlement planning and common-field creation delayed until much later than elsewhere, but significant areas of wood and wood-pasture survived into the medieval landscape. Such differences in landscape character and in the contexts of landscape change must suggest doubts about the general applicability of Whittlewood to questions about the chronology and origins of the form and distribution of nucleated settlement and common fields. It seems unlikely that the political, economic and cultural drivers in predominantly arable areas in the eighth and ninth centuries were identical to those in a region of mixed husbandry two centuries later.

On the other hand, many of the more generalized conclusions drawn by the authors resonate with those of current research in areas more typical of 'champion' England. Settlement nucleation throughout the Anglo-Saxon period *does* appear to be a more hesitant, staged and complex process than hitherto supposed. Settlement planning *does* appear to be a late phase of that process. Common fields *do* appear to result from slow expansion from an arable core. And, perhaps most importantly, 'What cannot be substantiated anywhere but in a few special cases … is a link between nucleation and the abandonment of outlying farmsteads, the freeing up of the countryside, and the laying-out of the open fields' (p. 104). Such general conclusions, while important, now need more refinement.

It seems that the Whittlewood Project, far from being complete, has only just begun. The important distinction between Whittlewood and champion landscapes needs to be grasped firmly and set at the centre of research. That research needs to test rather than state the belief that processes of settlement nucleation and common field creation followed roughly the same trajectories across the central province regardless of agricultural economy or of period, by comparing Whittlewood with straightforwardly champion parishes. This might allow the construction of detailed chronologies and processes that flesh out and make more meaningful the more general conclusions now current.

This fascinating and detailed study of the landscape development of twelve parishes in central England has

done what good research should: illuminate problems as well as conclusions and point the way to further work. It will provide a rich resource for many years to come.

SUSAN OOSTHUIZEN
University of Cambridge

ADRIAN BELL, CHRIS BROOKS and PAUL DRYBURGH (eds), *Advance contracts for the sale of wool, c.1200–c.1327* (List and Index Society, 315, 2006). l + 244 pp. £27 to non-members from The Hon. Secretary, List and Index Society, The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU.

Any student of the medieval and early-modern history of England knows full well the great importance of wool in its economy and society. From at least the eleventh to the mid-fifteenth century, it provided England's overwhelmingly dominant export, accounting for at least ninety per cent of total export revenues; and from then until the mid seventeenth century it accounted for the very same proportion of export revenues in the form of manufactured woollen (and worsted) cloths. Scholars are therefore highly indebted to the List and Index Society, and especially to the three editors named above, for the publication – in both the original Latin and in English translation – of 203 wool contracts, arranged in chronological order, from 1231 to 1325, taken from TNA's Exchequer Memoranda Rolls (E 159, E 368) and also from the Plea Rolls (E 13) and Close Rolls (C 54). The exceptionally important Appendix I (pp. 176–219) presents the first complete publication of the well-known 'Exchequer Schedule' of 1294 (E 101/126/7), when Edward I sequestered the assets of foreign merchants during his war with France. It contains the submissions of the twelve leading Italian mercantile companies involved in the English wool trade, providing another 220 implicit wool contracts (contained within document nos. 204–16: one for each firm, plus the cover document), presented in full detail. Appendix II presents some dozen miscellaneous documents (nos. 217–228) on wool sales that have been selected from various other archival sources in TNA.

The bulk of the documents, those in the main section, are entitled 'advance contracts for the sale of wool', though not all the documents in this collection are in fact such contracts. The actual 'advance contracts' are chiefly in the form of *recognizances* of debt by which the English wool sellers acknowledge having received specific sums of money, in English sterling, for the future delivery of specified quantities of wool, at specific dates. It is possible, as the editors admit, that some of these contracts were drawn up to disguise usurious and thus forbidden loans; but most certainly appear to be genuine contracts for future deliveries of wool to a wide variety of firms whose importance in the English wool-export trade cannot be doubted. Such contracts will undoubtedly prove to be of very great interest (and perhaps astonishment) to financial historians, for most them would not know that such supposedly modern financial instruments were so used as early as the thirteenth century. Whether the Italian merchant firms had purchased the wools at a cash discount for future delivery up to twenty years later, or whether they had made loan transactions with the wool as the collateral, the 'implied rates of interest', according to the editors, 'have been calculated as between 10 and 40 per cent with the median rates being between 18 and 22 per cent per year'.

For readers of this journal, however, the more important issues are the voluminous data on the wool sales themselves: the identities of the buyers and sellers, and the prices (though discounted) of a wide variety of wools, some of which were then the very finest that Europe had produced, and, as such, an absolute requisite for the production of the highest quality luxury woollen broadcloths. These 203 contracts (all of which this reviewer read) contain the names of 101 lay producers and 114 monastic producers, listed in the introductory information that the editors supplied. In terms of volumes of wool sold, however, the balance was far more highly skewed towards the latter. Thus, while the lay growers sold, over this 95-year period, a total of only 983.827 sacks (each of 364lb weight, or 26 stones of 14 lb), religious orders had contracted to sell 4600.827 sacks, along with ten whole annual crops, and other wools worth £571 6*s*. 8*d*. (sold by the Templars). Of these orders, the Cistercians – not surprisingly – were by far the most important in selling about 2900 sacks in 73 contracts. The others were: the Cluniacs with 963 sacks in eight contracts; the Benedictines with 403 sacks and one crop in seven contracts; the Augustinians with 372 sacks in 13 contracts, and the Premonstratensians with five sacks and two whole crops in three contracts.

Of equal interest is the identity and rank order of the buyers. English and other northern European merchants constituted a very distinct minority: the English accounted for only 1128.231 sacks and two crops (38 contracts); the Flemish, even more surprisingly, for only 18 sacks (in three contracts); the northern French, for only 50.462 sacks (five contracts); and the Germans, for only one sack and one crop (in two contracts). Thus the bulk went to southern merchants, of which the French Cahorsins (major medieval bankers) accounted for 600 sacks and one crop (20 contracts). The Italian merchants, chiefly from Lucca and Florence, then enjoying their heyday in both the English wool trade and English finances, purchased the largest single share: almost 4000 sacks and six whole crops in 150 contracts. Those from

Lucca accounted for 1990 sacks and two whole crops, in 97 contracts. The most important by far were the Riccardi, with 1400 sacks (87 contracts). They were followed by the Gualtieri, with 450 sacks (five contracts); the Bettori, with 31 sacks (one contract); the Bellardi, with 20 sacks (two contracts); and the Gotele, with two whole crops. Florentine merchant-banking houses accounted for even more: 2000 sacks and four whole crops, in 47 contracts. That included: the Frescobaldi, with 1258.519 sacks (28 contracts) and the above-mentioned Templar wools; the Cerchi with 249 sacks (two contracts); the Mozzi with 229 sacks (two contracts); the Pulci-Rimbertini with 69 sacks (three contracts); the Spini with 50 sacks (one contract); the Falconieri with 38.154 sacks (four contracts); the Bardi with 13 sacks (five contracts); and the Peruzzi, even more surprisingly, with only 8 sacks (one contract).

As the editors are quick to point out, the aggregate total of the wool in these advance sales contracts represents only a very small percentage of total exports over this long period. Indeed, the seeming preponderance of the religious orders may reflect the fact that most of them were asset rich (in lands and livestock) but cash poor, and thus in greater need than most lay estates of such liquid funds, chiefly of course from Italian merchant-bankers. That very, very few Flemish wool merchants were also bankers may also explain their minimal role in these 'advance contracts'.

The wealth of data in these documents cries out for tabulation in spreadsheets, which, I hope, the editors will provide in their forthcoming book, *The English wool market, c.1250–1350* (CUP). It would be fascinating to see, for both sellers and buyers, in chronological order, the exact quantities of wool in each of these transactions, the institutional and geographic location of the wools so produced, the names and locations of the buyers, the grades of wool, and the related prices, even if discounted, compared with those in other wool price schedules from this era.

I have two minor criticisms about an otherwise exceptionally valuable publication. First, the editors should have taken care to inform the readers that, while some of the English and Welsh wools were indeed the finest ever produced, some were not, because England, especially then, produced a very wide variety of wools, some of which were mediocre in quality. Furthermore, in this period both the Low Countries and Italy also produced a very wide variety of woollen cloths, and neither region came to specialize in very high quality, costly woollens, requiring uniquely, as noted earlier, the highest grades of English wools (from the Welsh Marches, the Cotswolds, and Lincolnshire) until after the 1330s, i.e., after the end of this series of documents, by which time, furthermore, the Cistercians and other monasteries had largely ceased to play a major role in the English wool export trade.

The other and very minor criticism is that the editors should also have informed the reader that wools were priced both in pounds sterling and more commonly in marks. The latter, whose abbreviation was simply m. (not explained in the text), was worth two-thirds of a pound sterling: i.e. 13*s*. 4*d*. Seasoned scholars already know that – but probably not many graduate students who are just beginning their doctoral research.

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JEAN BIRRELL (ed.), *Records of Feckenham Forest, Worcestershire, c.1236–1377* (Worcestershire Historical Society, New Series 21, 2006). xxvi + 212 pp. 2 illus; 2 maps. £28 plus p&p from WHS, Worcestershire Record Office, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester WR5 2NP.

The royal forests were a point of contention for the English since they were first created by William the Conqueror after he took control of England. The new conqueror created royal forest preserves and maintained control over the right to hunt deer, wild boar and hare, to cut trees, and to clear any area for agriculture (assart). Perhaps about a quarter of England was reserved as royal forests in the twelfth century and in the thirteenth century there were still seventy royal forests. The control over the forests deprived the upper classes of the right to hunt in royal forests without a warrant from the king and promised stiff penalties to ordinary men who wanted to claim a bit of protein or wood for their own use. The royal forests were a new imposition and resistance to forest laws never died out. Poaching and other encroachments were common. Magna Carta also addressed the issue of forest rights.

Birrell, who has written on the royal forests, has provided a very valuable resource for students of the forest with her book of records of Feckenham Forest. While still one of the most important forests in the middle ages, it is only a part of what was reserved in 1086, according to the *Domesday Book*. A map shows the extent of the forest in 1300. Royal rights to forest lands had to be protected with keepers, who patrolled the forests, and courts that could arrest offenders. The chief forest court was the eyre. Itinerant justices work as a team and moved from forest to forest on specific circuits. They visited at several year intervals and the trials and reviews of the king's forest rights went on for weeks. The justices called together hundreds of men who had property near the forest. It was a cumbersome business and died out by the end of the thirteenth century.

Birrell has published the plea rolls from the eyres of

1262, 1270, and 1280. A bill of complaint about felonies and trespasses is late thirteenth century. In addition she has included early rolls of assarts in the forest, a perambulation of the forest in 1300, and an inquisition of 1362. These records, located in The National Archives, are now available through her translations in full or in abstract. A glossary of terms at the end makes the cases easily accessible. An index of persons, places, and subjects aids researchers in pursuing their specific interests in the records of the royal forest.

Forest rolls are under-utilized for the study of economic and environmental history. The records show the importance of the forests for timber, as a source of additional agricultural land through assarting, and for the use of acorns for feeding pigs. Environmental history is just becoming an important area of historical research and forest records would be an exciting source on both the illegal pursuit of animals and also on the use of the vert (or the green materials and land of the forest). Those studying the economic and social history of a region could enrich their accounts by looking beyond manorial records to see how the forests supplemented local economies. For those who would like to know about the role of forests in the life of the nobility and other poachers, the forest rolls are invaluable.

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BRYAN WAITES, *Monasteries and landscape of the North York Moors and Wolds* (Tempus Publishing, 2007). 65 figs. £17.99.

In 1997 Bryan Waites published *Monasteries and landscape in north-east England* (Oakham: Multum in Parvo Press), which brought together a number of his earlier papers, notably in the *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* and *Borthwick Paper* 32 published by the University of York. The preface to *Monasteries and landscape of the North York Moors and Wolds* describes it as a 'new edition in a completely different format, with extra illustrations and some revision of the text' of Waites's earlier book. However, the revisions are not numerous. With some changes in paragraphing and the addition of a new concluding paragraph for the Introduction, the text is basically the same as the earlier edition. Some of the Latin has now been translated for the benefit of non-Latinists but some minor errors have been perpetuated. The notes have not been updated and there are still some references from earlier articles to cartularies in the British Museum rather than the British Library; only a handful of references to works published in the last decade has been added to the notes and bibliography. It is disconcerting that all matter in the endnotes – text as well as authors, titles, and page numbers – are in italics rather than following the conventional format. The text is nicely laid out and the maps are more professionally produced than in the 1997 edition. The number of illustrations has been increased; however, many are of a quality inferior to their counterparts in the 1997 edition: for instance, that of Rosedale on p. 154 (1997) is clearer than that on p. 169 (2007), and the photograph of Rievaulx Abbey in 1956 (p. 145) has been replaced by a much less clear illustration of the abbey in 1840 (p. 158). Some errors seem to have crept in during the process of reprinting (e.g. p. 232, note 58 has Burton Flerning for Burton Fleming). In this respect the book is rather disappointing.

However the text remains a thorough assessment of the importance of the monastic orders in the development of the landscape of the North York Moors and Wolds. The major houses discussed are those of Whitby, a Benedictine abbey enjoying a location on the cliff tops above the North Sea; Cistercian Rievaulx on the southern edge of the Moors; and the priory of Augustinian canons at Guisborough on the northern fringes of the Moors. However Waites's analysis is set in the broader context of the expansion and dominance of abbeys and priories of all orders within the geographical region. There is a wealth of information here on arable and pastoral farming on monastic estates, monastic industrial enterprise, and the monastic contribution to the medieval wool trade. This book will remain a valuable resource for monastic historians and those with an interest in the North.

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OLIVER RACKHAM, *Woodlands* (Collins, New Naturalist Library, 100, 2006). xiv + 609 pp. 26 tables; 172 figs. £45.

This beautifully produced and profusely illustrated book is the latest product of a scholarly career spanning many decades and several disciplines. With chapters on the historical development of woodland, the sources for studying woods and the history of modern forestry, as well as on the properties of trees and woodland ecology, it will appeal to historians, botanists and foresters alike. *Woodlands* contains a good deal that is familiar, but it is not an attempt at a definitive summation of the author's past publications. Some new topics are interspersed among old favourites, and there is more emphasis than previously on comparing British woodlands with those of other countries, particularly Greece, Japan and North America. Just as significantly, here the author is concerned more with 'investigations' than 'results', and has 'no particular theory to promote' (p. ix). The nagging question for many readers will be whether this book

pushes the conceptual bounds established by Rackham's earlier work.

Woodlands includes some 22 chapters on a variety of topics. The first two chapters outline the properties of trees, followed by several on woodland history. A slightly isolated chapter on wood-pasture (or 'savannah') is succeeded by four on sources. These chapters discuss archives, archaeology, pictures, photographs and fieldwork, pollen analysis having been treated with the woodland history earlier on. Later subjects include the uses of wood and timber, woodland plants, highland and lowland types of woodland, and the pathology of trees. Some chapters are analytical in approach (like those on forestry), others more descriptive (studies of Blackmoor Forest in Somerset and Scottish pinewoods). The free rein given throughout to 'investigations' proves a useful antidote to gliding over uncertainties in difficult areas, but it does not always help to sustain a strong sense of direction. There are few obvious errors, though the misdating of the Black Death and of the important accounting day of Michaelmas (29 September) appear to be unfortunate typos (pp. 66, 173). The index-cum-glossary is excellent, but the bibliography is notably short and does not include everything cited in the footnotes.

It is a strength of Rackham's approach that he seeks to understand woods as an active ecological force, not simply a plastic and finite resource moulded by human intervention, and this is elegantly summed up by a description of landscape history as 'the history of human default as much as of human action' (p. 184). But at the same time, historical readers at least might have liked to have seen more analysis of the human dimension: perceptive passages on the significance of cultural attitudes and economic circumstances in shaping man's exploitation of woods could have been extended and tied in more closely with the treatment of ecology. More could have been said, for instance, about how the development of woods has been affected by regional and local differences in access to rivers and markets. There is some fresh new thinking on the impact of modern forestry and on conservation and future prospects. The extended treatment of highland as well as lowland woodlands broadens the East-Anglian basis of much of his research, while the brief excursions overseas suggest future lines of enquiry for comparative studies.

One or two of Rackham's longstanding views, such as those on medieval parks and hunting, are coming to be challenged by recent research, and it would have been interesting to see more of a response from him to this. The work of landscape historians, for instance, is increasingly suggesting an early and widespread interest in establishing parks both as hunting grounds and as landscapes designed to convey a sense of grandeur around high-status residences. This interest seems to have been shared by kings, lords and gentry, and to have influenced the choice of sites for parks and the way they were managed, including perhaps the cutting of clearings (or 'trenches') in woods, which Rackham appears to view solely as anti-highwayman measures (p. 208). It may not, therefore, be adequate to distinguish forty medieval 'country-house parks' from what he sees as the usual 'deer-farm parks' of that period (p. 138). Likewise, research on hunting is making it less tenable to characterize the twelfth to fifteenth centuries as a lull between peaks of royal and noble participation (pp. 158–9); hunting was a leisure activity which developed in sophistication and social meaning over the course of the middle ages.

This book is a trove of information and insightful comment. Those familiar with Rackham's previous publications will come across a few new ideas, while newcomers will find this an enticing introduction.

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DAVID DICKSON, *Old world colony. Cork and south Munster, 1630–1830* (Cork University Press, 2005). xviii + 726 pp. 20 tables; 110 illus; 8 maps. £33.00 (hbk); £19.95 (pbk).

Make no mistake about it, this is one of the great books of rural history (and much more) of our generation. Dickson's book tells the story of Cork and its hinterland ('south Munster') over a period of 200 years, from the maturity of the Munster plantation before the cataclysm of 1641–2 and the Cromwellian reconquest, to the collapse of the regional economy after 1820. Hence the book is divided into two broad sections: 'Crescent, *c.*1630–*c.*1770' and 'Reckoning: *c.*1780–*c.*1830' separated by a single chapter, 'Intermezzo'. The ambition of writing a history of a city and its hinterland over such a long period is probably unparalleled in British and Irish history and the results are simply marvellous. There are few aspects of society which are left unconsidered. Dickson moves with ease between the rural and urban economies, between Protestant and Catholic society, between gentry demesnes and the rise of the malt and porter trade. The learning is enormous: Dickson is equally adept with Irish verse and customs accounts. The prose purrs along like a Rolls Royce, with some memorable turns of phrase coined along the way. The penalty of such a breathtaking vision of a whole society over 200 years is size and, one might add, portability. The text runs to 500 pages, supplemented by a further 141 pages of endnotes, plus appendices and index. I suspect that few other than reviewers will read it from cover to cover. Most will see it as three parallel books – about rural, urban and

commercial, and religious developments – and will read selectively just as this review concentrates on one of the three themes.

Munster was the earliest area in Ireland to be extensively colonized by the English in the late sixteenth century. The first Munster plantation was overthrown in 1598 and then re-established after the final English defeat of the Ulster Gaelic lords in 1603. It was a colony based on a paranoid fear of the native Irish: but by the 1630s the English, first and second generation, seem to have relaxed with a degree of tolerance of the Catholic Irish. This all fell apart in the months after the Ulster Rising in 1641 and there then followed a decade of war, and, at the end of that war, renewed confiscation and expulsion. Over the following thirty years, colonial society was re-established, only to collapse once more after the accession of James II and the war of reconquest fought by William III on his accession. Again, there were confiscations, and by the early eighteenth century laws were increasingly being introduced to place the Catholic population under a variety of disabilities. The story of the seventeenth century is thus one of confidence built – and lost; of capital created – and wasted; of uncertainties and instabilities in landowning. Land confiscated was not inevitably lost to the families of its previous owners, some of whom continued as lessees; but each successive period of disturbance allowed more English settlers to secure land. There were large-scale expulsions of Catholics after the Williamite wars of 1690–1 and a determination to make the new Protestant settlement 'impregnable and irreversible'. Confiscation of land was matched by the exclusion of Catholics from the civic life of Cork. Uncertainty remained until the accession of George I: Dickson quotes a writer of 1714 as saying that 'people begin to improve, plant etc. as expecting they are now doing it for themselves and their own prosperity, and not for those to whom the lands would certainly have come, if the grand design had taken place' (p. 67). The big trade of Cork remained largely in Protestant hands for much of the eighteenth century but the diaspora of Catholics onto the continent gave them the networks of relatives, friends and co-religionists on which international trade could be sustained.

The first half of the seventeenth century is marked by the emergence of the great Anglo-Irish settler families of whom the Boyles, earls of Cork, were the greatest (they acquired several additional titles for cadet branches). They remained an organizing principle in Munster society throughout the seventeenth century: in the early eighteenth, in a reversal of the expected processes, they tended to sell out (often because, like the senior line of the Boyles, by then earls of Burlington, their attention became focussed on England), and for that reason Munster society in the eighteenth century became a much more open gentry society. 'The regime of the gentry' is described at length in Chapter 3, where we learn not only who the new entrants to the gentry were, but of their tastes, houses, marriages and political interests. They had the advantage throughout the eighteenth century of sitting on an appreciating asset. Dickson estimates that the income of solvent proprietors rose five- to six-fold between the 1690s and 1810s. The background to this, in the first instance, was the development of an efficient cattle-processing industry based on Cork and a more dispersed butter export trade. Later, in an about turn, cattle were largely abandoned for corn, especially in those districts with access to the sea or inland waterways.

In Chapter 4 Dickson describes the development of the Cork victualling trade based on bullocks from north and west Cork, but also from further afield in north Kerry, east Limerick and much of Tipperary. Beeves sent to Cork were slaughtered and the meat barrelled, much of it for export to the Americas. Dickson suggests 50–80,000 head of animals were slaughtered annually (although some late seventeenth-century writers offered higher estimates) in a short slaughtering season. There were secondary industries based on the hides, tallow, glue-making and the like. The Munster economy also had extensive rural textile industries. Indeed, one of the many areas in which Dickson is marvellous is in his painstaking assembly of all the local – often estate-sponsored – attempts to develop artisan industries.

This prosperity was achieved despite the best efforts of the English. One of the paradoxes of English policy in Ireland is the paranoia with which they viewed Irish Catholics but their determination to exclude the Irish from English markets and economically hobble the Protestant colony. What one therefore sees are repeated moments of reinvention as the Irish, excluded from markets by English legislation, looked for new outlets or products. This is not simply the familiar banning of live cattle imports into England. In 1699 for instance, the export of Irish cloth (except to England) was banned although there is some evidence of a continued (but illegal) cloth trade to Portugal. Subsequently yarn spinning for Norwich and other English towns emerged as a profitable trade, the duty on which was finally lifted in 1739, a rare victory for Irish interests over the English. The development of sail cloth manufacture trade from the 1720s was assisted from 1745 with an Irish export bounty: the English retaliated in 1750 with their own export bounty which severely knocked back the Cork manufactory.

This reinvention also characterized the overall farming economy of the region. Having been forced into

the butter and Atlantic victualling trades in the later seventeenth century when the export of live cattle was forbidden, from the second quarter of the eighteenth century there was a further re-orientation of the rural economy into arable and mixed agriculture to produce corn for the English market (Chapter 8). The result was that corn was grown in the most improbable of places – certainly where no one would attempt to break the ground today – and butter production confined to more remote areas. The trade in barrelled beef declined and in its place emerged a trade in preserved pork. By the end of the eighteenth century a new trade in live animals had emerged and in processed or semi-processed goods – bacon, candles, soap, shoes.

Naval victualling offered considerable opportunities during both the war against the thirteen colonies and the Napoleonic Wars. Dickson describes the development of such specialities as the supply of ships' biscuits: but this trade largely crashed with the downsizing of the army and navy after 1815. The cost of wartime bonanzas was that Cork was unable to serve its normal markets to anything like the same degree and by the end of the Napoleonic wars, the options for export from Cork had become far more limited than they had been half a century before. Wartime prosperity fed back into – and was assisted by – the development of the regional infrastructure in terms of both roads but also coastal shipping. Practical steps were taken to improve the quality of butter coming to market: again, all aspects of enterprising self-help. The impression is that at the beginning of the nineteenth century – and perhaps for a decade or two thereafter – south Munster had achieved a degree of prosperity and commercial success, not only as an agricultural producer but also as a manufacturing centre with a nascent factory manufacturing trade. This is not to say that Munster society was wholly comfortable with itself. Catholics had achieved a high degree of integration into society by the end of the century and looked for emancipation, the possibility of which seemed close in the early 1790s and then receded for a generation (the young Daniel O'Connell makes his appearance in the final pages of the book). There remained a residual preference amongst landlords for Protestant tenants, but there is no real sign that Catholics were still discriminated against in the way they had been. Indeed, they were welcomed into some of the voluntary militias of the late 1770s. But there was an increasing level of agrarian disturbance in the 1790s which developed out of earlier agitations against enclosures and tithes and elided into the more revolutionary ambitions of the United Irishmen. The disturbances of 1798 in Munster were just that, disturbances rather than rebellion, but also a part of the development of a political consciousness which operated below the horizon of parliamentary politics. Attacks on tithes were perhaps inevitable as the re-orientation of the agrarian economy revitalised corn tithes: but the campaigns against tithes can also be seen as a means by which small producers under price pressure hoped to cut their costs.

The truth is that the reappearance of commercial *arable* agricultural in Munster in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was only possible because of the potato (discussed in Chapter 8). In Munster we have a society which grew a crop substantially for export and in which not only the labourers, but the farmers themselves, lived for the most part (if not exclusively) off another which had only a limited export potential. The high yields of the potato from indifferent ground with a modicum of manure and the willingness of labourers (or the entrapment of labourers) to take a cottage and potato ground in lieu of wages allowed the emergence of a low wage-cost economy with no incentive to achieve real gains in labour productivity. There was perhaps nothing wrong with this if we approach the matter without hindsight; but it is a further element in the costs carried by Munster as the distant supplier of a highly commercial and sometimes fickle market. This was the key problem for the south Munster economy. Local demand was not large – especially given the immiseration of a large part of the population and their reliance on self-produced potatoes – and the very commercialization of the economy made it vulnerable to falling prices and changes in taste in the English market. The end of war, the running down of military victualling, the post-war slump after 1815 and the default of the leading Cork banks in 1820 all made the 1820s a desperate decade in Munster. Its textile trades were overwhelmed by English factory manufactures. The later spread of the Dublin banks into the area suggests that the essential vigour of the Cork economy had been undermined. The response to under- and unemployment was migration, and Dickson argues that the 1820s were more of a turning point in Munster history than the Famine decade.

It would be an interesting exercise for Dickson or someone else to examine the parallels for the trajectory of the Cork economy elsewhere in Britain: in such an account the failure of provincial banks – expressions of local loyalties and regional commercial networks as well as repositories of local savings – will doubtless play a part. Where Cork certainly differs from England is in the arc curved by its landlords. It is clear enough from what Dickson says that the larger Plantation estates tended to dissolve in the first half of the eighteenth century and sold out to the sitting tenants. The remaining estates also tended to withdraw from active estate management through the use of leases for three lives and leases

to middlemen – a form of subcontracting – until late in the century. Some landowners queried whether the letting out of large parcels to reliable Protestants who sub-let was the best way of proceeding as early as the 1740s, but it was only much later in the century when a general distaste for middlemen emerged and estates – often in the teeth of opposition from their existing lessees – started to re-establish direct tenurial contact with the individual occupiers of their lands. This was perhaps the adoption of English estate management by Irish estates, sometimes overseen by English stewards. (Arthur Young spent a year as an absentee's estate steward in 1777–8 and appears to have suffered for the precocity of his reforming ideas.) Other late eighteenth-century resident landowners also experimented with agrarian improvements and exhibited a willingness to invest in new buildings. Some circulated improving agricultural literature: but it is unclear how far they influenced their tenants.

What was unclear to this reader is whether late eighteenth-century Cork rural society should be characterized as one of small, independent freeholding farmers and small gentry (often sub-tenants) or of absentee estates. The correspondence between the local agents of the Anglo-Irish estates and their head agents or English-domiciled proprietors is the bedrock on which some of the later chapters of the book are built and this perhaps gives a rather misleading impression. And one would like to know to what degree freeholding farmers were bought out by their neighbours, surrounding gentry and Cork merchants in the more depressed years of the century. We need to resolve these questions to achieve an understanding of the rising agrarian violence of the district. To judge from their pre-occupations, these were movements of farmers, but were they movements of tenants or freeholders? Given the absence of any all-embracing late eighteenth-century source, even of the quality of the English land tax, there is perhaps no easy way of establishing this without assembling the data townland by townland, but this might usefully be done in the future. Local history in its purest form might also do something to clothe the farmers – whether tenants or otherwise – and even their labourers. Of necessity, this is a book of the broad sweep rather than the individual, but one hopes that more can be done to recover individuals, their experiences and attitudes, for one of the most interesting questions posed by the book – and again a comparative matter – is how it was possible for such strong solidarities against tithe owners and landlords to emerge in Ireland but not in Britain.

Dickson's is not a theoretical work. The Cork region, or south Munster, is pragmatically defined as the reach of the Cork newspaper (pp. xii–xiii) and whilst Dickson often seems to exclude the peninsulas of west Cork from consideration, copper mining in Allihes and the urban development of Kenmare and Bantry do creep into his account. Nor is there any attempt to place the development of Munster in any intellectual frame drawn from development economics; indeed there is little reference to the modern literature of the industrial revolution. And so some will feel that the work is old fashioned, a piece of local history rather than contemporary economic history: and yet it is hard to see what more theory could have contributed. Nor does it have a political axe to grind although some will doubtless raise an eyebrow at the title. There are occasional difficulties following the text when the focus of the work remains Munster but the prime action is happening elsewhere – a problem notably in the account of 1798. There is also an element of mystery about the illustrations. At one level the book is well-illustrated with 110 figures: but these are never referred to in the text (nor are they indexed) and have a largely separate existence with long explanatory captions. Was the book envisaged as an unillustrated one, with the figures added in during production? Regrettably the quality of their production is not always high and what are plainly glorious oils and watercolours of Cork and its surrounding district do not always convey their full impact. To have had figures such as no. 74 (Grogan, 'Boats on the Lee below Tivoli') or no. 89 (Rienzi, attrib., 'Panorama over Fermoy') as colour plates would have allowed them to sing.

In this respect a little more expenditure would have been beneficial, but it would be wrong to end without offering a word of congratulation to the publishers. If Dickson says that 'it is of course somewhat unfashionable in the present age to attempt a monograph on this scale', then it is even more unusual these days for a publisher to accept the risk of such an enormous project and we must be grateful to Cork University Press.

Whether in hardback or paperback, the book is a bargain. The journey it traces is a fascinating one with repercussions and echoes for other pre-industrial economies in Ireland, Britain and further afield. It is a journey I urge you to undertake. In a word, wow!

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HADRIAN COOK and TOM WILLIAMSON (eds), *Water meadows. History, ecology and conservation* (Windgather Press, 2007). viii + 151 pp. 48 figs. £19.99.

I gave one of my first papers, together with a colleague (an ecologist), at a joint archaeological/ecological symposium in 1969. We sought to distinguish, in an historical-ecological context, the water meadow from the flood meadow and washland, and to emphasize the need to preserve examples of each. We were both taken aback at

question time, when the distinguished field archaeologist, Collin Bowen, made a trenchant attack upon water meadows for the destruction they had inflicted upon the archaeological evidence for the earlier use and occupation of riparian lands. However grievous the loss, Collin Bowen would surely and warmly welcome, some forty years later, the present volume of cross-disciplinary studies – an approach he did so much to promote.

The volume arises from a conference held in Salisbury, close to the famous Harnham Meadows, in March 2004, which drew on published, archival and field evidence, enlarged by the insights provided by present-day practices, including current agri-environmental grant-aided schemes. Jointly edited by a hydrologist and soil scientist, and by a landscape historian, the volume includes many highly relevant and well-produced maps, diagrams and photographs, which illustrate further the significance, location and functioning of this almost-lost agricultural technology.

There are contributions from Joe Bettey, Christopher Taylor and Tom Williamson, and two chapters by Roger Cutting and Ian Cummings providing what has been lacking for so long from such studies, the experimental evidence as might help assess the validity or otherwise of the various claims made for such irrigation systems – the heating of the sward so as to induce an early bite, the alleged fertilizing effect upon the meadow soils, and how such effects were optimally achieved through the timing and rapidity of surface flow. The findings of my co-presenter, Derek Wells, those forty years ago as to the comparative species-poverty of the watermeadows are generally borne out, albeit now more comprehensively and with much greater rigour. The substantial chapter by Hadrian Cook reports what I guess to be the closest study made so far of the hydrology, soils and underlying geology of the Wessex watermeadows. Another by Kathy Stearne assesses the feasibility of sustaining and extending the few remaining operational watermeadows. Without close knowledge of the variety and complexity of former systems, attempts at reinstatement might easily give an erroneous impression of past usage and, unwittingly, further impair such archaeological evidence as remains of the watermeadows themselves. There is distillation of the skills and experience gained by Peter Martin on the Britford Water Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest, on the River Avon near Salisbury, since the 1950s.

The threat to the 'floated' water meadows of the Golden Valley in Herefordshire from a natural-gas pipeline, described in the current issue of *Rural History Today* (13, July 2007), emphasizes the topicality of the issue, and the fragility of such historical evidence as does survive. All the contributors stress how much there remains to be discovered about the origins and development of such bed- and catch-works in Britain and the near continent, including the extent to which such visually-striking investment met an essential agricultural-need rather than being a response, in part at least, to fashion. Did water meadows ever realise the potential their boosters claimed?

The present volume is likely to have a very long shelf-life, whether as an aid to research and teaching, as a guide to the conservation of such meadows, or simply as an immensely readable and attractive reference work, frequently referred to by those fascinated by the farmed landscape.

JOHN SHEAIL
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MICHAEL HANSON (ed.), *Ducal estate management in Georgian Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. The diary of William Gould, 1783–1788* (Thoroton Society, 44, 2006). £16.50 incl. p&p from Adrian Henstock, 24 Long Acre, Bingham, Nottingham NG13 8BG.

William Gould came from an old-established farming family in upper Dovedale on the Derbyshire-Staffordshire border, where he was the tenant of a substantial farm at Pilsbury, a former monastic grange that been part of the Chatsworth estate since the Dissolution. His reputation as a progressive farmer led to his appointment, when he was 40 years old, as chief land agent and house steward to the Welbeck abbey estate of William Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, third Duke of Portland and future Prime Minister, a position that he held until his death fifteen years later. He kept up the tenancy at Pilsbury, even though it was many miles away, and in 1784 took on further estate duties at Chatsworth, where his son, Joseph, eventually became land agent to the fifth and sixth Dukes of Devonshire. During his time at Welbeck, William kept a detailed diary, of which four of the original five volumes survive in the possession of his descendants. Michael Hanson's edition contains an informative Introduction, placed in the context of wider scholarship, and provides lengthy selected entries (in modern spellings) from the years 1783 to 1788.

Gould was responsible to John Heaton, one of the leading land agents of his day, who was based in London and had an estate near Romford. Heaton was not only auditor to the Duke of Portland, but also agent to the Duke of Devonshire. The Duke of Portland was absent for most of the time, but took a keen interest in his estate during his visits. Gould provides many interesting and sometimes amusing comments about his aristocratic employers, such as:

> 1 October 1787: The Duke went out with Boaler to shoot on Carburton Forest this morning, though

> I suppose he has not shot these twenty years, they found plenty of partridges and His Grace shot a number of times but did not kill a bird, on his return he told me he thought shooting the most insipid diversion a man could follow, and thought he should not go any more.

As for the servants in the great house, Gould thought 'they are in general a parcel of thieves and designing persons'.

Gould was assiduous in the performance of his duties. The editor has calculated that in the five years beginning in 1783 he visited 144 different locations on horseback, by chaise or coach, in many parts of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and also into Cheshire, Staffordshire and Leicestershire, with two visits to London. He travelled about 9,265 miles in these five years and was on horseback nearly one day in three, in all weathers. He was a man of strong religious and moral beliefs, with only occasional lapses, such as the one noted in the entry for 20 February 1783: 'Fit for very little business today from drinking too freely last night.'

His job involved collecting rents and tithes, viewing and valuing properties, chairing meetings of parishioners to discuss enclosure, supervising the erection of farm buildings, devising ways of improving land (including drainage schemes), and prosecuting poachers. Much of his time was spent on 'improving' the poor-quality land in the district that we now know as The Dukeries. He found, for instance, a 'rabbit warren upward of 800 acres of barren poor land, it lays open to some other lordships and is good for little, the stock of rabbits upon it is by no means sufficient'. On 2 April 1783 he noted that:

> Frith Pasture, which contains about 400 acres of very poor land. I compute there is about 170 of white dry land, 130 ling inclining to peat moss, neither very wet nor dry, and 100 very wet and strong peat moss, it lays exceeding cold and high and is of but very little value, and when improved will answer very little other purpose than a sheep farm.

On 16 June 1783: he observed that in one of the woods 'no care has been taken to keep up the fence, consequently the young spring is ruined by the cattle, and have ordered it all to be stubbed and the trees felled in order to convert it to tillage'. Woodland management was one of his major concerns. His diary contains numerous references to the planting on a large scale of thousands of ash, thorn, sycamore and oak trees. On 6 January 1783, for instance, he

> viewed the unimproved Carburton Forest piece, and find about 5 acres covered pretty strong with gorse, the other chiefly ling, we propose taking up about 20 acres for a crop of turnips to prepare the same to sow ash-keys and acorns next winter.

Again, on 15 January 1783, he visited the Nursery, where

> we agreed the spruce firs, Virginian cedars, American plants, walnut trees and elm should stand another year, the remaining part of the ground [to be] prepared to receive grass seeds or whatever His Grace may direct'.

The diary has numerous entries of general interest. On 10 June 1783 he visited Beeston and 'saw the procession of a number of young men incorporated together for the purpose of supporting each other, commonly called a sick club'. On 19 February 1784 he

> divided the Scotch bullock and about 14 stone of beef purchased at Worksop with about five pounds-worth of bread among the poor at Welbeck, Carburton, Norton, etc. We made the collection for bread amongst ourselves and the farmers … which afforded a liberal supply to all the industrious poor of those places and was very acceptable at this inclement season.

And on 16 March 1787, in a scene reminiscent of Anthony Trollope's *The duke's children*, he noted that more than 100 gentlemen of the hunt and hounds at Worksop Manor Lodge had hunted all day but had failed to find a fox.

This edition of Gould's diary is illustrated with contemporary views, maps and portraits. It is a very useful contribution to the local history of the east Midlands and will provide agricultural historians with many small insights into a period when land agents were becoming influential figures as great landowners invested in improving their estates.

DAVID HEY
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K. D. M. SNELL, *Parish and belonging. Community, identity and welfare in England and Wales, 1700–1950* (CUP, 2006). xiv + 541 pp. 5 tables; 31 figs. £60.

It could be argued that Keith Snell has been working on the parish and local attachment for the whole of his prolific academic life: from the ground-breaking *Annals of the labouring poor* (1985) to the superb *Rival Jerusalems* (2000), not to mention his impressive interdisciplinary work on the regional novel. *Annals* was a perfect demonstration of combining the quantitative and the qualitative; *Rival Jerusalems* showed the possibilities of high-level number crunching. There is no other historian like Snell; in terms of historical technique, energy, and range, he is like a one-person combination of E. P. Thompson and (the whole) Cambridge Group!

So another book from the world's leading historian of rural England is cause for celebration. And Snell has more to say about the parish and belonging: over 500 pages worth. One chapter, on the new poor law, is the size of a small monograph.

Parish and belonging has the Snell wit. This is, he writes, a book about belonging by someone with no 'strong sense of belonging' (p. 3). There are quips about the tendencies of poor law guardians, including their inability to see their desks for the drawers (pp. 246–7). We are told of the place called 'Nowhere' near Yarmouth (p. 375). There are intriguing asides, including one about the impact of the 1850s drawing pin on church and chapel doors (p. 344). The book has his unique combination of scholarly fetishism and diligence – footnotes jostle with the main text again and again, sometimes even achieving formatting dominance. There is much evidence of the Snell range: from George Eliot to the chants of Chelsea football fans; from folktales to the UK Data Archive, SPSS, and GenMap. The book has his local enthusiasms that become the reader's enthusiasms – this time it is the Forest of Dean. It has impressive quantification expressed almost laconically: 'To explore these issues more extensively, 18,442 marriages were analysed from the published registers of sixty-nine parishes, scattered across eight counties' (p. 168). 'To explore the issue further I analysed about 16,000 gravestones in eighty-seven burial grounds' (p. 469). Finally, there are themes within themes: regional variation comes through strongly in chapter after chapter.

Most importantly, *Parish and belonging* demonstrates Snell's ability to totally rethink accepted wisdom, and to do so openly: 'When I began to explore this subject, I anticipated finding …' (p. 178). The marriage patterns that he established, different to those predicted, were an increase in endogamy (both partners from the parish) from 1740–1840, and with a decline when it came (Snell uses the work of others here) notable both for its lateness in the late nineteenth century and its rapidity. He establishes that relief under the new poor law (1834–1929) was in the local community, the parish rather than the workhouse, as it had been under the old poor law. Eighty per cent of poor relief was outdoor relief. The symbolism of the new poor law workhouse was powerful but scarcely represented the reality of day-to-day practice. Though this chapter returns to the theme of the centrality of the parish in the nineteenth and early twentieth century world, it could stand alone as the best short history of the new poor law. In short, the parish was important throughout the nineteenth century (Chapter 6 is a fascinating account of the role of the parish overseer); and may have actually increased in importance. Over 4000 new parishes were created in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see Chapter 7).

Parish and belonging is an impressive administrative history – one could call it 'the new administrative history' at the risk of unleashing another historiographical beast – but it is far more than that. Snell is concerned with cultural practice as well as structures. It is not mere chance that he begins the book with chapters on local xenophobia and the languages of settlement, and ends with one on the inscriptions on gravestones – that is, belonging demonstrated in widely differing cultural forms. *Parish and belonging* is a fine work of rural history by a masterful practitioner, rethinking, reconstructing, (gently) challenging, and dazzling at every turn of the page.

BARRY REAY
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ROGER YOUNG (ed.), *Sparsholt, 1841–1901. A Hampshire village microhistory* (Wessex Historical Databases 3, 2006). CD. £11.75 incl. UK p&p from Wessex Historical Databases, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Winchester, Winchester SO22 4NR.

'Microhistory' involves studying a community in minute detail from a wide range of sources, thereby gaining insight into the history of all its individual families, buildings and institutions. More importantly, by studying such aspects as demography, occupations, household size, migration and servants, the wider picture of the community's fortunes can be traced over time and both its social structure and geography can be reconstructed. Many of these results can be displayed on tables and maps.

This CD publication uses as a case study the village of Sparsholt three miles outside Winchester, which is fairly typical of many arable estate villages in the south and east of England with a Victorian population of fewer than 500. It provides a guide to the *process* of microhistory and begins with a sound introduction succinctly summarizing the methodology involved, grounded on the latest thinking on census and demographic analysis. However after this there is no further text, simply a series of tabulated transcripts of the census data for Sparsholt from 1841 to 1901 and of two detailed estate surveys of 1842 and 1851, together with a useful blank template for anyone wishing to carry out similar exercises for other communities. A serious omission is a map which would have allowed readers to gain a feel for the local topography.

The census tables are annotated with additional information from other sources, including the results of a 'house repopulation' exercise. This is one of the key processes of nineteenth-century microhistory – a technique

to give a spatial dimension to census data by matching all the households listed in 1841 or 1851 with the properties in which they lived. For this purpose the existence of a near-contemporary tithe map and schedule, or similarly detailed survey is vital. In the case of Sparsholt, only just over ten per cent of households were initially identified with properties on the 1841–3 tithe record (compared with nearly 17 per cent for a similar exercise in a Derbyshire market town). However by bringing in a variety of other sources such as parish rate books, estate rentals, and parish registers the matching was completed with approximately 98 per cent success. Again, however, neither maps nor analytical tables are provided to demonstrate what has been learnt from this exercise. In addition one would expect such a detailed study to throw up occasional stories of 'human interest' – extended households of farm labourers, interesting migrants, sad cases of hardship and so forth – but the text is not enlivened by one single example.

The basic problem with this CD is that it does not deliver what it says on the can, which claims to show 'in micro-detail the changing demographics of a Hampshire village through the time of feast and famine in Victorian England'. In practice there is more famine than feast as one seeks in vain for meaningful summaries of the *results* of such a study; in fact it had this reviewer re-examining the CD case to see if he had missed a second disk! For example, although the author tells us that the national agricultural returns for the village were a useful source for charting the effects of the agricultural depression from the 1870s onwards, he does not hint at what these were.

Although production on CD has the advantage of offering electronic searching of the data, the layout of the census tables (on Microsoft Excel spreadsheets) is frustrating to use. Each household is not separated from the next by a space or a bold line (as in the original records) and the over-generous width of the columns means that personal information such as occupation, age and birthplace cannot be read in one view without constant resort to the horizontal scroll bar.

This publication introduces a valuable case study which is a useful template for comparative researches in other communities. It is just a pity that the author could not have included a few more samples of his conclusions to prove to others *why* such exercises are worth doing. As it is he has provided the user with the tools, some building blocks and a tantalizing plan but rarely revealed any parts of the finished structures. Is it too much to ask for a Volume Two?

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HEATHER HOLMES, *Tattie howkers. Irish potato workers in Ayrshire* (Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, Ayrshire Monographs 31, 2005). 192 pp. 10 tables; 12 illus; 2 figs. £4.50 from William Layhe, Chairman Publications Committee AANHS, 30 Woodend Road, Alloway, Ayr KA7 4QR

This study is an outgrowth of Heather Holmes' wider research programme focussing on the history of Irish migratory potato workers in Scotland, who formed the backbone of the seasonal agricultural workforce in many parts of the country until after the Second World War. It complements her more extended analysis of potato workers in the Lothians, published as series of articles and in her fine monograph *'As good as a holiday'. Potato harvesting in the Lothians from 1870 to the present* (2000). In contrast to that expansive study, this enterprise is narrower in scope, with a different geographic focus. It documents the experiences of Ayrshire workers – who have tended to be at the margins of most narratives of the migratory labour force – and extends the analysis of their work in the potato fields beyond the Second World War. A scholarly apparatus is evident in the study's 884 endnotes (which are not, curiously, structured by chapter); readers seeking more sustained historiographical, theoretical and methodological discussions (particularly critical evaluations of reports, printed and oral, that are key sources for this study) are best advised to consult Holmes' other monograph. In this study they will find rich detail of the rhythm of the Ayrshire harvest. Indeed, the great merit of this slim book is the window it offers onto the daily work of the potato workers over a hundred years, as well as the insight it provides into the commercial, agricultural and legal regimes which governed their work in the fields. Drawing on a range of evidence, it encompasses analyses of the age- and sexual profile of the workforce, the (changing) structure of the labour market, and critical discussions of the relatively slow adoption of harvesting technology. On this last point Holmes' work makes a valuable contribution to the wider literature on labour systems and the dissemination and adoption of agricultural technology. Evidently the availability of a low-cost, flexible supply of Irish seasonal labour served to extend the period of manual harvesting in Ayrshire longer than in other potato-growing districts of Britain (pp. 69–70). Readers seeking details on the experience of these workers from the Irish side of the migration process (beyond the relatively short discussion here, drawn from parliamentary reports whose empirical accuracy Holmes and others have wisely qualified), would benefit from reading this study alongside Anne O'Dowd's *Spalpeens and tattie hokers. History and folklore of the Irish migratory agricultural worker in Ireland and Britain* (Irish Academic Press, 1991). It details

complex household labour strategies which embraced a range of activities, including migratory labour to Britain. Holmes acknowledges the paucity of sources available to reconstruct the volume of seasonal traffic across the Irish Sea, as well to document the early development of large-scale potato farming in Ayrshire, which centred on the early 'Epicure' variety. She is precise in her delineation of the commercial structures which underpinned the industry until the 1960s, and in discussing systems of labour recruitment that proved resilient over many decades. Dimensions of this study which merit further analysis include the ethnic division of labour on the potato farms, especially in relation to new technologies and systems of authority in the potato field (mentioned briefly on p. 61), as well as a sustained examination of the role that the Second World War played in reorganizing (or perhaps maintaining) pre-war commercial and labour structures. Evidently, in the composition of the workforce, and in the systems of harvesting potatoes, the war induced some significant changes; but the curious persistence of this workforce through the following two decades also raises intriguing questions about the extent to which the conflict disrupted the patterns of seasonal migration and systems of labour. This study complements Holmes' extensive examination of the Lothian workforce. It surveys a broad range of features of work in the south-west Lowlands, some of which were distinctive and linked to the unique rhythm of the early harvest, while others, such as the protracted efforts to establish legal oversight over accommodation, were broadly similar to experiences in the Lothians. It will no doubt lead many interested readers to Holmes' other studies, in which they will find comprehensive documentation and a valuable historiography of this much-understudied workforce in Scottish agriculture.

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ROBERT MALCOLMSON and PETER SEARBY (eds), *Wartime Norfolk. The diary of Rachel Dhonau, 1941–1942* (Norfolk Records Society, 58, 2004). xiv + 269 pp. 6 plates. £18 plus £4 p&p from Hon. Secretary, NRS, 29 Cintra Road, Norwich NR1 4AE.

Mass-Observation was founded in 1937 by Tom Harrison and Charles Madge to create 'an anthropology of ourselves'. This was to be achieved by enlisting 'ordinary people' as volunteers to 'observe' the world around them and report to the organization on a regular basis through open-ended questionnaires ('directives'). These asked for opinions on current events, fashions or simply everyday life. They were also asked to observe other people going about their day-to day lives. In 1939 fearing (unjustifiably as it turned out) that the organization would be suppressed under wartime regulations, they asked their members to keep diaries for the duration of the War with a view to producing a unique record of the conflict.

The M-O observers responded well. In the next six years several hundred diaries were sent to M-O in London. A few lasted all six years, more, like the one reprinted here, lasted only part of the War. What is certain is that the vast majority succeeded in their aims and present a unique insight into the experiences of the people of wartime Britain. The diaries, and the rest of the collection covering the period 1937 to 1947 is now held in the Mass-Observation archive in the library of the University of Sussex.

However, very little of the material generated by M-O is rural. The reasons for this are simple. Although there was no attempt to discourage rural writers, those who founded M-O believed that the nature of 'mass' modern society was urban, and much of their own work was centred on Bolton and London as representative of that society. Nevertheless there is some rural material in both the directives and especially in a small number (about 20) diaries. These vary in quality and interest for the agricultural or rural social historian. There is, for instance, the diary of a Cambridge undergraduate which contains excellent material on wartime farming. Despite being medically unfit, he wished to contribute to the war effort and worked as a farm worker in Buckinghamshire and then as a forestry worker in the east Midlands. Another diary, that of a rural schoolmistress in Sussex, gives a detailed account for the whole of the War of village social life.

The diary of Rachel Dhonau is one of the 'rural' diaries, although it has to be said it offers little, on the surface at least, for the agricultural historian. Against that, it does present a fascinating account of a rural small town, Sheringham on the north Norfolk coast, in the middle years of the war. Although born in Norfolk, Rachel and her husband Jakob spent the immediate pre-war years in Paris. With the fall of France they returned with their young son to London, and then with the onset of the blitz they moved in September 1940 to Rachel's mother's home in Sheringham. At that point Jakob volunteered and entered the army as a private.

By 1941, when the diary begins, Rachel was very unhappily separated from Jakob and working full-time in the Sheringham food office, one of some 1500 local offices dealing with the administration of wartime food regulations. In March 1942, she took up a teaching post in Norwich, where she stayed two or three nights a week in a hostel.

Like many of the other wartime diaries, Rachel's is at the core a personal account. We know what she reads, what films she saw, what programmes she listened to on

the radio and what she thought of them all. In March 1942 the *News of the World* is delivered instead of the *Observer* and she is horrified, '… what an incredible paper. Murder, rape, pornography. What a world this is' (p. 115). She also reports the war and especially the rumours of war, which are again a feature of most diaries. It is difficult from the standpoint of the present-day to see how much credence was given to rumours of invasion, always thwarted with terrible German casualties, and second-hand accounts of the carnage inflicted by bombing. She herself experienced some of that first hand in Norwich, and wrote an account of bombing and morale for M-O which is included as an appendix. Aircraft, ours and theirs, provide a constant, noisy and fearful backdrop to the whole text.

It is in these details of the everyday that the strength of the diary lies – an authentic voice of rural, provincial England all too seldom heard in accounts of wartime. However, to many who read this journal the account of the food office with its day-to-day bureaucracy will provide a real insight into the local world of wartime food production and distribution. In August 1941, for example, she confronts the seasonal demands of agriculture alongside the normal work of the day:

> I dealt with the harvest applications (most of the farmers who have already applied and had permits for tea, sugar and margarine begin again with applications for cheese), bee applications, counterfoils, coupons (Monday being the day when butcher's supplementary permits have to be issued), queries about milk and eggs (p. 19).

She also dealt with animal feed and with farmers confused and angered by wartime regulations:

> … did a few animal feeding stuff permits and took phone calls, largely from milk retailers, informing us they wouldn't retail milk under the rationing scheme. All this milk business is made difficult because we also have the Milk Marketing Board to cope with. These poor farmers feel quite confused having separate sets of instructions to cope with (p. 25).

As well as the particular needs of the farming community, the day-to-day business of rationing, of shortages and even the black market recur, constantly giving an insight into local problems which are absent from the bigger accounts of wartime. There is also a memorable description of the petty tyrant who ran the office, was universally disliked and, in the end, was her main reason for leaving to teach in Norwich.

Very few of the M-O diaries are available outside the archive, and for that reason alone this is a very welcome publication. But there is more than that. It gives a very unusual inside account of the war from, if not the countryside, at least a country town. It is full of insight on day-to-day life which constantly reminds us of the local, mundane realties of wartime, but it also speaks to national concerns. Rachel, in common with many diarists, comments on the war and social change. As someone who was broadly left-wing, she welcomed Beveridge and supported the Soviet Union, even starting to learn Russian. However, especially given the years of the diary which are reprinted here (there are a further 14 months in the archive) it is the grimness of wartime provincial life which comes through time and again. Rationing, widespread shortages of the items of everyday life, the absence of a loved one, and, in the middle of the war, no real end in sight, dominate, and point out time and again, just how central simply making ends meet was, especially for a woman. She sums this up in a part of the diary not printed in full: 'I am getting extremely tired of this shoddiness. Everything is shoddy – paper, clothes, wool, food. Ersatz. Truly the era of the second rate' (p. 241).

Yet like many of her generation she had hopes for the future. Beveridge promised a better land after the War in both rural and urban areas. She read widely and critically and was very uncertain about the conduct of the war, especially the bombing of Germany. But she hoped for better. In September 1942 she replied to an M-O directive on post-war problems which mentioned agriculture. Her comments, not in the diary, are simple and express the feelings of many country people of her generation: 'I wish things could be arranged that my husband and I could have a farm after the war'. Unfortunately this was not to be.

ALUN HOWKINS
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Elsewhere and General

DALE SERJEANTSON and DAVID FIELD, *Animals in the Neolithic of Britain and Europe* (Oxbow Books, 2006). xii + 178 pp. £28.

Animals were of central importance in the lives of Neolithic people in Europe and Britain (from the seventh millennium cal BC in Greece, and from the fourth millennium cal BC in Britain). They were staples of subsistence, means of exchange, sources of wealth and standing, both as living stock and meat to be distributed in feasts, and potent symbols, both in themselves and by association with human identities; they were good to think as well as good to eat. But was their significance the same everywhere? Did people rely on animals in different ways in different places and at different times? Can we see pattern in the development of animal use

through time and from region to region? And can we address all dimensions of the importance of animals with equal success using archaeological evidence?

Studies of animals in the Neolithic, and in both earlier and later periods of prehistory, are at a very interesting stage. Specialists maintain their necessary rigorous skills of identification and analysis, but have broadened the scope of their interpretations beyond the purely economic and technical (if they were ever quite so neatly confined), and at the time more prehistorians interested in modelling social and conceptual aspects of past communities have been looking at animal bone data much more closely, especially at their deposition and treatment in varying contexts. This book, another in an established and successful Neolithic Studies Group series, and produced to its usual high standards by Oxbow Books, very nicely illustrates many of these trends. Its range is impressive: geographically from Greece to Britain, and thematically from wolves and dogs (Clark), wild game (Boyle, Zeiler) and animal fodder (Dineley) to the integration of sheep with crop cultivation in lowland Greece (Halstead), evidence for ploughing with cows on a modest scale from an early stage at Knossos on Crete (Isaakidou), patterns of consumption at caves on the Adriatic coast (Miracle), and feasting and symbolism in southern Britain (Serjeantson, Pollard, Field). Diversity is the overall impression, and this is celebrated in the closing paper by Alberella.

There are both possible trends and stubborn questions remaining within this diversity. The use of wild game declines quite rapidly in some contexts, both in the early Neolithic of Greece and that of southern Britain. Halstead argues in passing for this as a clue to an introduced way of life in Greece, more or less sedentary from the outset, while Pollard is inclined to see potential symbolic or conceptual significance in the avoidance of wild game in southern Britain. Boyle, on the other hand, underscores the point that wild game can still be plentiful in later Neolithic assemblages in parts of central and western Europe. The killing and partial dismemberment of an aurochs in a late Neolithic or early Bronze Age context in west London are suggested by Cotton and colleagues to have been done in a consciously archaic manner.

Using the rich data from the settlement mounds of northern Greece, Halstead argues that animals, notably the numerically dominant sheep, were closely integrated with crop cultivation, but played a subsidiary role overall in early Neolithic diet. They may have functioned, within small-scale, intensive subsistence regimes, as sources of manure, grazers of crops in danger of excessive early growth and hence frost damage, and as a flexible alternative to crops when and if those failed, though normally crops and plants may have provided the major portion of consumed food. Cattle and pigs became more prominent in later stages of the Greek Neolithic. Other contexts provide both comparison and contrast. Using the data from one Croatian cave, Miracle documents how people in the middle Neolithic were concerned with the herding of sheep in spring, culling very young animals to boost milk or cheese production (in the late Neolithic, more cattle and pigs and also game and sub-adult sheep were slaughtered for meat in autumn). Whatever the overall patterns of use in the region, the experience of people, and the associations of the place, changed over time.

In southern Britain, Pollard argues for possible and fluid conceptual distinctions and human associations between wild game (perhaps deliberately avoided on the whole, but regarded as powerful and special), cows (perhaps redolent of the ancestral dead), pigs (sometimes associated with dead males) and sheep (perhaps on occasions associated with routine and even female activities). These suggestions are drawn from broad synthesis of the early Neolithic, whereas Serjeantson presents a long-awaited first detailed study of the animal bones from just one settlement, at Runnymede in the middle Thames valley. It is much harder here to provide models which integrate crop and animal evidence. Though the spectrum of use was probably broad, it is possible that here animals were more important than cereal or dairy products. Most of the meat eaten was from pigs and cattle, especially the latter. Most cattle were fully grown, and their apparently regular or at least recurrent slaughter implies consumption on a collective scale, perhaps in the form of feasts. An important, detailed study of bone fragmentation, however, serves to complicate this straightforward picture. The bones of both cattle and pigs are highly fragmented, which may imply their use in soups and stews rather than in fillets or roasts. Whether this indicates other forms of communal eating is left as an open question.

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JOYCE MARCUS and CHARLES STANDISH (eds), *Agricultural strategies* (Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California Los Angeles, 2006; distributed by Oxbow Books in the UK). x + 424 pp. 6 tables; 86 figs. £18.

Without doubt, the most troubling aspect of this book is its inappropriate and misleading title. The product of a symposium on water management and agricultural strategies, the book's focus is more on the former than the latter. The book contains little about crop plants, tillage, planting, harvesting, and related aspects and activities

such as calendars and labour. It is almost entirely about water, its management, and the physical and social systems developed for its distribution and utilization. And, were it not published by an archaeological institute named prominently on the cover, one would not quickly realize that it is about prehistory. It does, however, draw on numerous ethnohistoric and ethnographic parallels.

Containing fifteen chapters by some of the best archaeologists working in the field, the book is organized regionally – Middle East, South Asia, Europe, Oceania, Mesoamerica, South America – as well as having an introductory and a discussion chapter. Africa, East Asia, Southeast Asia, and North America apparently did not have any hydraulic societies worthy of inclusion, or, perhaps, they will comprise a future volume. Each chapter has its own list of references, which frugal scholars, especially those with strong regional interests, who prefer to photocopy chapters rather than buy books, will surely appreciate. This format, however, has its drawbacks. There is much duplication in citations, but more problematic than an increased page length is the lack of consistency in regard to subtitles. For example, Ester Boserup's 1965 book, *The conditions of agricultural growth*, is cited in six chapters, only two of which include the all-important subtitle – *The economics of agrarian change under population pressure*. And, this oversight is more than simply one of copy-editing. All too often, indeed nearly always, archaeologists focus on the shortcomings of population pressure as an explanation, and forget that Boserup was not an anthropologist but an agricultural economist by training and a development consultant by profession, and that the real importance of her work lies in microeconomic theory. Only three of the contributors, Morrison, Kirch and Erickson, seem to understand and appreciate this point, and their chapters are richer for it.

Given the book's sub-continental organization, myopic, parochial, and provincial regional specialists will quickly thumb their way to those two or three chapters that cover their area of interest. This is of course due to archaeology being regionally-rooted rather than topically-focused. The book would be much more important than it is had it been organized thematically. For example, one of the symposium's goals was to develop comprehensive models to explain how water management and agricultural strategies operated over long spans of time (p. 2). Models of sustainability, an issue not even mentioned in the index, based on data synthesized from a number of examples (not case studies) would be a monumental contribution. The same goes for other issues such as localized versus centralized decision-making, and household consumption versus state use.

Although this book is not all that it could be, it is nevertheless a fine volume. Each of the chapters is a major contribution in its own right. For brevity, I will only highlight a few. Robert McC. Adams articulates convincingly that as large as the irrigation system was in Sasanian Mesopotamia, it was actually only one aspect of a complex society that constructed other equally large features with 'top-down' policies. Heather M.-L. Miller provides great insight into the way land ownership and its correlates restricted the hierarchical power of state-level political units. In dealing with medieval Spain, Thomas F. Glick makes an important point by illustrating the difference between the long-held notion of 'variability' and the previously not-considered notion of 'stochasticity' in regards to stream flow and the availability of water for agriculture. Finally, Gary M. Feinman demonstrates that the prehispanic Zapatec had a powerful state even though agriculture in general and irrigation specifically, as well as other aspects of the economy, were situated domestically.

These few examples should illustrate that two themes run through the entire volume, the seminal ideas of Karl Wittfogel, and scale. Much has been written about the former, and doubtless will be for years to come, even though there is probably not much more to be said. The latter, however, is a topic that deserves a great deal of future attention, and this volume might be considered a call-to-arms on this point. There are many nuances to water control and agriculture that have long been overlooked – overshadowed – by previous work that focused on obviously important large features, systems, and issues.

WILLIAM E. DOOLITTLE
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ISABEL ALFONSO (ed.), *The rural history of medieval European societies. Trends and perspectives* (Brepols, 2007). viii + 310 pp. €60.

This is a book which compares the 'national historiographies' (the editor's phrase) concerning the medieval rural histories of several countries or regions across Europe. What I had expected when I began to read the book was a series of useful essays concerning the current state of knowledge about medieval rural societies across Europe and how that knowledge base had formed over recent decades. The illusion of such a consistent approach was quickly dispelled, however, as the content of the various chapters seemed very much determined by the authors' respective expertises and sometimes, it appeared, by their obsessions, to the point that what was actually in a chapter often seemed at odds with its title. For example, the chapter written by Christopher Dyer and Phillipp Schofield about the agrarian history of medieval Britain

was really only about England (there is a single reference to the large or multiple estates in late medieval Wales and Scotland but nothing else Welsh or Scottish in their chapter); Benoît Cursente's on the rural history of medieval France was almost solely concerned with southern France (Cursente almost seemed to consider northern France as being 'done' and thus, by implication no longer interesting); while Julien Demade's somewhat polemical (but fascinating) chapter on the medieval countryside in German-language historiography seemed mostly concerned with the contention that Third Reich interests and agenda, particularly over the issue of 'domination', have continued an eerie march of the undead through post-war German historiography.

None of the above is meant as severe criticism of this volume. Although the content and perspectives of the various chapters may strike readers as uneven and at times eccentric, there is certainly much to be learned from this book. The chapter by Dyer and Schofield mentioned above did conform most to my preconception of what the book would contain, especially in providing an informative and very valuable overview of recent work on medieval *English* society from the Anglo-Saxon period to the sixteenth century. The chapters on Spanish (by José Ángel García de Cortázar and Pascual Martínez Sopena) and Italian medieval rural society (by Luigi Provero), two historiographies which lagged behind other countries in Europe, show how much was owed to neighbouring countries, especially France. Pierre Toubert's *encastellamento* thesis, for instance, stressing the importance of fortification to rural social development, was important to both Spanish and Italian scholars in developing their views about their respective rural societies during the middle ages. The vibrancy of the new work on medieval rural society is also strongly featured in the volume, particularly in Cursente's chapter on southern France, where the footnotes bristle with references to new PhD theses, while the recent flurry of academic meetings and conferences in facilitating new information and views about medieval rural society is strikingly displayed in Garcia de Cortázar and Martínez Sopena's chapter on Spain.

Perhaps, though, the volume is more important for what it says about how these historiographies were formed than about the information and metanarratives contained within them. Outside influences clearly shaped some historiographies (notably that of Spain's) more than others (English historiography has long been relatively insulated from outside influence, with perhaps the exception of the great French historians, Marc Bloch and Georges Duby). As mentioned above, the Demade chapter takes an admittedly controversial position, but nonetheless brings to our attention the importance of the national and political context in the creation of these historiographies. One spinoff from this that surprised this reviewer was how consensus often seemed most forcefully expressed when actual information was most lacking. This comes through strongly in Piotr Górecki's excellent chapter on medieval peasants in Polish historiography, especially in the way that the rise of the Piast ducal power during the tenth and eleventh century has been seen to colour virtually all issues of the age, including that of rural society. There is almost a waiting for Godot quality here, as academics discuss various elaborations, all from the same scant evidential base, in expectation of the next seam of information (from wherever!) or perhaps the next great person's thoughts, before the field can move on to a fundamentally different view. In such intellectual environments, more emotionally charged elements about medieval rural societies can easily take hold, such as the heroic (if futile, according to Malthusian precepts) and surprisingly technically-oriented struggle for improvement in physical well-being, the clash between lords and peasants, the spirit of the 'frontier' (and its reaction, as in the ambivalence concerning Germanic settlement of the east, particularly prevalent in Polish historiography). The marked degree to which the emotional quotient subsides when considering early modern rural societies in western Europe, yet continues with arguably renewed vigour for this later period in eastern Europe (as perhaps most forcefully expressed in the Brenner debate of the late 1970s and early 1980s, to which curiously only the Dyer/Schofield chapter refers) signifies a major geographical fault line between eastern and western Europe in the consideration of their medieval and early modern rural societies. Nor has this fault line been driven solely by the 'facts', but also according to the emotional and political considerations existing within the various parts of Europe that have always had a much more important impact on history than the discipline likes to admit. Although this volume never articulates this in such a pointed way (Demade comes closest, as does Alfonso in her somewhat bemused introductory remarks concerning the directions that the various chapters took – like herding cats), the sheer unpredictability of how societies come to view and shape their histories is abundantly clear and forms a large part of the charm of this volume.

JOHN LANGDON
University of Alberta

PERRINE MANE, *Le travail à la campagne au moyen âge. Étude iconographique* (Editions Picard, 2006). 471 pp. €70.

Perrine Mane's book is a study of medieval agrarian techniques as represented in the iconographical evidence, and is the outcome of more than twenty years of work. Its intended audience is archaeologists and historians interested in tools and farming techniques. The book focuses on the study of the *realia* represented in iconography, and how it compares with the evidence of contemporary textual sources and archaeological findings, rather than on the iconographical material for its own sake.

The documentation involved is huge. Perrine Mane's study is based on more than 15,000 images ranging from the ninth century to the beginning of the sixteenth and covering a large part of western Europe, including France, England, Germany, Bohemia, Italy and Spain. The author surveys sculptures and paintings on monuments, tapestries, ivory carvings, seals, enamels, and, above all, illuminations and engravings illustrating a great variety of books from the Bible to medieval agricultural treatises, medieval encyclopaedias, medieval herbaries and bestiaries, armorials, astrological treatises showing the effects of planets on everyday rural life, and medieval legal sources dealing with agrarian practice. Due to the lack of historical sensitivity on the part of medieval iconographers, illuminations found in medieval copies of Roman books (such as Columella's or Palladius's agricultural treatises or Virgil's poetry) show peasants dressed in medieval garments and using contemporary tools.

Perrine Mane's book is in three parts. The first deals with the sources, and the problem of determining the date and origin of the images. The second part, which covers the production of crops, is divided into three chapters: the successive stages of cereal cultivation from ploughing to conservation of the crop; viticulture and winemaking; and more specialist crops such as Leguminosae, textile plants, herbaries and garden plants, fruit cultivation, tree felling and coppicing. The author draws on textual sources to cover important stages in agriculture's production chain (manuring the fields for example) which are usually missing in the iconographical record.

The third part is devoted to domestic animals and wildlife. The first chapter deals with sources of animal fodder including meadows and the use of scythes to mow hay crops, the second with animal husbandry (cattle, horses, donkeys and mules, pigs, sheep, goats, poultry, and bee-keeping), and the third with hunting and fishing.

Iconographical sources give us a unique opportunity to understand better not just the materials of past agricultural practice but their mode of use. Their drawback is a lack of specificity with respect to place and time. Perrine Mane relies on the evidence of calendars to substantiate her argument that this iconographical material to some extent reflected local practices. Harvesting was usually represented in July in France, but in June in Italy and Spain, and in August in England and Flanders. This shows a degree of sensitivity to local conditions. Regional variations appear to be captured for some of the techniques represented, such as ploughing, threshing, the slaughtering of pigs, and the form of bee-hives.

Perrine Mane's book provides a comprehensive picture of medieval farming practices and peasant life, largely on the evidence of iconography but also drawing extensively on medieval agricultural treatises and other sources. A forty-page bibliography gives a wealth of references to recent publications – mainly in French. The subject index is most welcome, and will prove very useful for historians and archaeologists looking for information on specific tools, domestic animals or farming techniques.

ELISABETH ZADORA-RIO
CNRS, Tours

WERNER TROSSBACH and CLEMENS ZIMMERMANN, *Die Geschichte des Dorfes. Von den Anfängen im Frankenreich bis zur bundesdeutschen Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: UTB/Verlag Eugen Ulmer, 2006), 336 pp. 12 tables; 43 figs and illus. €39.90.

This is one of the most ambitious works to have appeared in European agrarian history in recent times, a history of Germany's rural communities over a period of fifteen centuries. Such a labour is beyond the scope of a single scholar, and the writing is shared between two of Germany's more active agrarian historians, with Werner Trossbach covering the period up until 1800, and Clemens Zimmermann the last two centuries; a temporal break that also roughly divides the book in half. The book provides an almost exhaustive and impressive synthesis of recent work on the authors' main themes and provides an essential guide to German agrarian history. It should be a recommended first port of call for anyone wishing to work in this area.

Why a history of the 'village', rather than a history of rural society more generally? What the volume really offers is a history of rural farming *communities*, and the focus of the work is firmly on the quality of interaction among villagers, and between villagers and outsiders. Great weight is placed upon rural social structures, and forms of communication, especially in more recent times the development of 'new' media such as the cinema. This social history has strong economic

roots as control over, and dissemination of property is presented as the key to the social order and attendant kin relations. This reflects recent trends in German agrarian history that have provided a wealth of detail on property-holding and, especially for the period since the eighteenth century, anthropologically-influenced studies of village life; a literature much richer than that available on the same themes for Britain. This methodological and thematic emphasis means, however, that areas prominent in recent British rural history receive less attention here: the practice and achievements of agriculture itself, lordly culture and practices, manorial organization, and material culture.

The book proposes eight main chronological periods. The establishment of lordly controls over the land and serfdom between 750 and 1150; settlement expansion and the formation of village 'communes' (*Gemeinden*) between 1150 and 1350; a time of settlement 'stabilization and differentiation' lasting up until the Thirty Years War (1618–48); the time of the well-studied pre-industrial village 'on the threshold of modernity' between 1650 and 1800; developments between 1800 and 1880; an age of increasing penetration of the village by outside influences, and new forms of social organization such as voluntary associations between *c.*1880 and 1933; the Nazi period; and the age of most rapid change from 1949 on. Of these, it is the late medieval and early modern that receive the greatest weight, for it is argued that much of Germany's economic geography and forms of communal life were essentially laid down quite early in this period and consolidated as time went on. Indeed, while the authors, in line with recent studies, are keen to stress the continually-evolving lines of tension in village life, change and social polarization occurred at a slow, drawn-out pace. Only after 1880 did the institutional and social lines of village life begin to shift more rapidly.

The authors view the long-term history of village life as characterized by tensions between a hierarchical order, exemplified at an early date by lordship, but later by oligarchies of powerful property-holders increasingly integrated into the functions of the state; and a more egalitarian, corporative principle largely expressed between property-holders and reaching a highpoint in the Peasants' War of 1525, but that re-merged in various forms, including southern German liberalism, during the revolutions of 1848. This argument of a *longue durée* of rural politics that continued to exercise strong influence in the twentieth century, along with the longevity of rural institutions, should present British readers with a striking point for comparison. Is the apparent absence of anything equivalent 'on the island' the result of different property and institutional structures, or simply the absence of research? The authors are also drawn to the conclusion that the level of rural support achieved by the Nazis in 1933 was not the culmination of long-term developments, but a rather more contingent event responding to the agricultural crisis of the preceding years and to some extent a generational revolution among rural powerbrokers.

However, the deepest shifts in village life belong to the period after 1949, with the consolidation of large-scale, technology-driven farming, and the shrinking of the agricultural workforce to a small minority within the countryside – patterns that have tended to reinforce the importance of the family in farm organization and as a focus of collective life, as ties with other groups have weakened. These trends appear similar in both of the post-war German republics, although deliberate management in favour of rural continuity characterized the east more than the west, with collective farm organizations providing substitutes for the village's older forms of sociability. The village as settlement, of course, endures, and may even be undergoing a revival. However, it is hard to see how the particular qualities of a *community* orientated around these settlements, the core matter of this excellent book, will be resuscitated in the new century.

PAUL WARDE
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ROSA CONGOST, *Tierra, leyes, historia. Estudios sobre 'la gran obra de la propiedad'* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2007). 347 pp. €23.50.

According to Rosa Congost, we should all be suspicious of writings on landed property. Many scholars, she argues, assume an excessively linear view of history, whilst others are guilty of adopting a 'statist' or 'legalistic' notion of property, regarding as 'property rights' only those rights which a country's legislators agreed to enshrine in laws. Her deliberately provocative new book starts with the proposition that property relations – being social relations – must be observed from a plurality of angles. In addition, their study has to be based on the hypothesis of their mutability, irrespective of legal principles and institutional frameworks. Before undertaking this type of analysis, historians must free themselves from nominal conceptions of property which are either too abstract or too rigid. Above all, they should examine, with as open a mind as possible, the real conditions determining, in each society, the conformation and materialization of property rights. Moreover, a comparative perspective is indispensable to such as approach. In Congost's opinion, the expression 'property rights' is always preferable to the term 'property'. The question 'who has the property rights?' offers a far wider perspective and allows us to convey much

more complex realities than the simple question 'who is the owner?'.

Rosa Congost's book is divided into three parts. While part one tackles the subject of property rights from a theoretical viewpoint, in parts two and three she aims to back up her arguments by focusing on a number of concrete problems. In so doing, she is able to draw on a lifetime's experience of archival research on the agrarian history of Girona in the north-eastern corner of Spain, which she describes as 'a rich laboratory that allows us to go from case study to theory' and vice-versa. One aspect of working on this Catalan province (in contrast to England or France) is that it does not fit neatly into models of historical development that have dominated historiography north of the Pyrenees. She is critical of the contribution of Douglass North and the New Institutional Economics school which turned England into a paradise of 'secure property rights'. Nor does she display a high regard for interpretations based on the idea of property 'engraved in the Napoleonic code' or which assert that the key historical process was the French Revolution of 1789. On the one hand, Catalonia did not enjoy the same level of economic growth as England. On the other, unlike in France, Spain's nineteenth-century liberal revolution did not suppress seigniorial rights. In a nutshell, Catalonia exemplifies 'the slow agony of seigniorial rights both *before* and *after* the liberal revolution'.

Spanish historiography, Congost tells us, was inspired by ideal models of development constructed from the historical realities of France and England. France was seen as the perfect model, liberated from the burden of feudal dues. For its part, the English model embodied the triumph of 'individual' property and the economic superiority of large estates. In general, Spain's liberal revolution was conceived of as a juridical-legal revolution, based more or less on the French model. Meanwhile, its success or failure has usually been measured in terms of the development of agrarian capitalism *a la inglesa*. Even so, Spanish liberal laws were very different to their French counterparts. Not least, they did not completely suppress seigniorial rights. In regions like Catalonia and Galicia, divided property existed in the eighteenth century, as did the predominance of peasant exploitation, while large estates were a feature of southern Spain since the Reconquest. Yet few scholars contend that Andalusia or Extremadura were model regions. In Congost's opinion, the function of the liberal state – in both France and Spain – was essentially the same, viz. to ensure and protect property rights. The principal difference between the two countries was that the French revolution led to the suppression (without indemnity) of a class of rights which Spanish liberal governments dedicated themselves to defend. Indeed, the aim of Spain's liberal revolution was to put an end to the revolutionary process *a la francesa*.

Rosa Congost's mature reflections on property and property rights in contemporary Europe, especially in Spain and Catalonia, are the product of meticulous archival research, a fertile imagination, and a clear and concise writing style. A particular virtue of her path-breaking new book is how her detailed knowledge of the Spanish case is used to expose theoretical weaknesses in more general interpretations of the development of agrarian capitalism.

JOSEPH HARRISON
University of Manchester

JORDI PLANAS I MARESMA, *Els propietaris i l'associacionisme agrari a Catalunya, 1890–1936* (Girona: Universitat de Girona, Documenta Universitaria, 2006). 322 pp. No price given.

The nineteenth century was a time of great prosperity for Catalan agriculture. This region of north-eastern Spain witnessed not only a significant increase in the total surface area under the plough, following the disentailing of church and common lands, but also a much more intensive use of the soil. Farmers tended to specialize in the most profitable crops, partly directed towards lucrative export markets, prominent among them the vine. Along with many other regions of western Europe, the good times came to a dramatic halt in the last two decades of the century when the ubiquitous 'agricultural depression' made its appearance. Fortunately for Catalonia, thanks to its growing specialization in viticulture, the initial impact of the crisis there was felt later than elsewhere in Spain. Significantly, the destruction of French vineyards following the outbreak of the phylloxera virus heralded a boom in wine sales to the neighbouring country. By the late 1880s, however, the disease had spread across the Pyrenees frontier, whilst in the 1890s the French authorities imposed a ban on imports of foreign wine.

As Jordi Planas recounts in this revised version of his doctoral thesis, the first reaction of Catalan farmers to their own variant of the agricultural depression was mainly defensive. Spanish governments were urged to introduce higher tariff barriers, whilst farmers also protested against the level of taxation. Even so, in recognition that such measures could at best provide only temporary relief for the long-term structural problems of regional agriculture, farming organizations throughout Catalonia played an active role in lobbying the politicians in Madrid for the establishment of agronomical stations and agricultural colleges, together with the promotion of cooperatives and rural credit. At the forefront of the campaign to encourage improved techniques and

increase productivity on the land was the venerable Institut Agrícola Catalá de Sant Isidre (IACSI), the most important association of landowners in late-nineteenth-century Spain. This elitist body had been founded in Barcelona in 1851. Although IACSI clearly lacked the organizational capacities of its north European counterparts, such as the Belgian Broerbond or the Bund der Landwirte in Germany, it endeavoured to mobilize rural society, at both local and national levels, against a general background of mounting social conflict in the countryside, the diffusion of revolutionary ideas, and the rise of class-based peasant unions. In Planas's opinion, one of the main reasons why the ruling classes of rural Catalonia embarked on this high-risk attempt to strengthen vertical solidarity was to stave off their own economic and social decline. Indeed, such an argument fits in nicely with the doomed inter-class strategy adopted by the right-wing nationalists of the Catalanist Lliga Regionalista – with whom many (although not all) of IACSI's leadership were connected – over the same period. Before long, however, in the face of peasant violence during the so-called Bolshevik triennium of 1918–20, and again during the ill-fated Second Republic (1931–36), Catalonia's large landowners abandoned any idea of class collaboration, redirecting their efforts instead towards a backs-to-the-wall defence of private property.

Planas's well written and detailed study builds on earlier accounts on the problems of the Catalan countryside in the early twentieth century by, among others, Emili Giralt, Albert Balcells, Ramon Garrabou and, more recently, Montserrat Caminal and Klaus-Jürgen Nagel. With its excellent appendices, it will be an important source of reference for both political and agricultural historians.

JOSEPH HARRISON
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OSVALDO FAILLA and GIANPIERO FUMI (eds), *Gli agronomi in Lombardia: dalle cattedre ambulanti ad oggi* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2006). 431 pp. €38.

Itinerant instructors (literally 'itinerant chairs') of agriculture began their activities in 1895 in Lombardy and provided practical and theoretical instruction to farmers directly in their farmyards. This turned out to be the most effective approach to the modernization of north Italian agriculture during the period from the late nineteenth-century agrarian crisis up to and beyond the First World War. This volume collects papers on the subject given at two conferences held in November 2003 at the Museo Lombardo di Storia dell'agricoltura at San Angelo Lodigiano and at the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Milan. Although agricultural institutes were established in the 1830s and 1840s in Tuscany, Lombardy and Piedmont (see G. Biagioli and R. Pazzagli (eds), *Agricoltura come manifattura. Istruzione agraria, professionalizzazione e sviluppo agricolo nell'ottocento* (2 vols, Florence: Olschki, 2004), the vast majority of farmers did not receive formal instruction, nor had the farming community access to up-to-date technical information. Modern innovations, such as chemicals and implements, were not available to most. The *Comizi agrari*, agricultural meetings established in 1866 to provide provincial centres of innovation throughout Italy, proved to lack direct communication with farmers. But the itinerant chairs in agriculture were more successful.

Between 1895 and 1927 thirteen teaching posts were established in the Lombard provinces. At first they were privately sponsored and locally funded, but in 1901 and 1902 a number of public institutions – the Ministry of Agriculture, the Chambers of Commerce of the major cities, the Farmers' Association of Lombardy and others – came together to organize a communication network with local farmers and provide the chairs with regular funds.

Agriculture in Lombardy was varied. In the Alps, cattle prevailed, partly fed on locally-grown maize, while in the hill region maize fed the labouring classes, and wheat, vines and silk were cash crops. On the plain, wheat and water meadows were the major sources of income. The insects *Phylloxera vastatrix* and *Diaspis pentagona* had had devastating effects in the vineyards and mulberry groves respectively, and the teachings of the itinerant instructors pointed to alternative sources of income. Close personal contact between agricultural experts and farmers provided a direct channel of communication that enabled diffusion of technical improvements. In the Alpine valleys and the hills of Lombardy, areas under maize were reduced and substituted with such fodder crops as clover and lucerne, which supported cattle in larger numbers and those better fed. Although clover and lucerne cultivation had been practised in the same region since the 1550s, it had had a limited diffusion because of institutional barriers (see M. Ambrosoli, *The wild and the sown. Botany and agriculture in western Europe, 1350–1850*, 1997). Old ploughs were replaced by modern ones, while selected wheat, rice and maize seeds increased crop yields per hectare. Larger areas under forage crops and the use of silage, linseed and oilcakes raised the number of horses and cattle in the region. Improved stallions and bulls were imported from Belgium, England and Switzerland and breeding stations were established.

Then, experts turned their attention to milk production. Hygiene was poor in the dairies although cleanliness had been advocated since the early 1800s. Meadow acreages increased as the crisis of the silk industry

proved irreversible and mulberry trees were uprooted. Milk production rose everywhere, with the provinces of Lodi, Cremona and Mantua increasingly favouring a Parmesan type of cheese as the main product of their dairies. It appears that the many authors have forgotten that the *grana* cheese known throughout the world as 'Parmesan' was once more justly called 'Lodigiano' (cheese from Lodi). The wholesalers of Lodi used to collect, store and market the cheeses produced from a large region of pastures and meadows along both sides of the Po. Particularly relevant is the contribution by Arrigo Caleffi on the province of Mantua (pp. 169–240). Here, the itinerant chair operated between 1895 and 1935 before these duties were subsumed by the provincial agricultural authority. In 1896 the members of Mantua's association organised a programme of rural conferences covering manuring of arable and meadows, mulberry cultivation and silkworms, viticulture, the conduct of field trials of crops, and co-operation. Although between 1886 and 1887 phosphates had been distributed to local farmers and in 1902 the local production of nitrates began, the major source of progress came from lucerne cultivation. *Luzernières* sustained agricultural growth in every sector, and along with beet provided fodder for cattle that more than doubled in number between 1881 and 1914. The growing national and international market for Parmesan cheese allowed local dairies to pay farmers a fair price for their milk, while US legislation on food purity in 1909 stimulated improvements in *grana* cheese processing. This upward trend was sustained between the two wars. A similar story is told by Gianpiero Fumi on the province of Cremona (pp. 87–128).

It is impossible to do justice to the many contributions, all rich in data and local information about crops and individuals (e.g. pp. 294–304 on Bergamo, and Gaetano Forni on the history of the agronomist as a professional). The contribution by Osvaldo Failla on fruit tree cultivation as contributor to the modernization of Lombard agriculture (pp. 365–83) is also noteworthy.

MAURO AMBROSOLI
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K. LYNGGAARD, *The Common Agricultural Policy and organic farming: an institutional perspective on continuity and change* (CABI Publishing, 2006). 224 pp. 12 tables. £49.95

The central problem in writing the history of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union (EU) is to explain change: how can one simultaneously account for the absence of significant change over many years and its presence in the long run? Numerous reasons have been suggested for both. Resistance to change has been explained by the political power of the farm lobby at a national and EU level, the particular national policies of France and Germany, the difficulty faced by non-specialists in understanding technically-complex policy mechanisms, and the perception of agriculture as something special. Conversely, budget crises, international trade negotiations, EU enlargement and the increasing ability of outsiders to penetrate the formerly closed circuit of agricultural policy negotiators have all been advanced as reasons for change. Political scientists as well as those whose incomes depend on it have therefore both been interested in finding some unified theory to account for the evolution of the CAP in the past and to predict what might occur in the future, and it is with this research that this book is concerned.

Lynggaard argues that all CAP change is determined by what happens in the relevant institutions of the EU, such as the Directorate-General for Agriculture, the European Commission as a whole, the various European pressure groups, the Special Committee for Agriculture, the Agriculture Council, and the European Parliament. He identifies three strands – rational choice, historical, and sociological – in previous attempts to explain changes in CAP institutions, and claims that they all have limitations of one kind or another, often being better at explaining the lack of change than its occurrence. Therefore, he suggests, a new approach is required: the discursive institutional approach. Institutions are 'bits of discourse, which have obtained some degree of authority and been linked to sanctions' (p. 59). In turn, discourses are based on ideas. Meanings, and conflicts over meanings, appear when ideas are articulated into discourse, so change occurs when new ideas are turned into discourse and discourses attain some degree of authority within institutions. The discursive institutional approach thus suggests that ideas only attain meaning within an institutional and discursive context, and both institutions and discourses can change over time (p. 58). This implies an analytical strategy based on the study of texts. Institutional change can be identified by tracing the progress of ideas from less authoritative to more authoritative texts, with EU Regulations being the most authoritative texts of all.

Having set out this methodology in the first three chapters, Lyngaard then applies it to a case study: the incorporation of a policy on organic farming into the CAP. He points out that initial attempts at CAP reform took no account of environmental issues. It was the development of alternative ideas between 1978 and 1985, together with the existence of a CAP funding crisis in the early 1980s, that produced the Environmentally Sensitive Areas policy, which Lynggaard identifies as the first CAP policy involving environmental concern. It was from this point that organic farming began to be seen as

a potential solution to CAP problems, or, at least, some of them, and he then goes on to trace the development of organic farming policy in the EU and various member states up to 2005.

This is not a book on organic farming. The term does not appear in the index, and the first significant discussion of organic farming does not appear until page 99. Nor is it intended to be. Organic farming is simply used as a case study to explore the virtues and limitations of a different way of explaining change in the CAP. Lynggaard himself concludes that his study creates more questions than answers. One simple – perhaps over simple – way of describing the discursive institutional approach is that it involves thinking in detail about the meaning and purpose of what individuals and institutions say and do. If this is the case, it is surely no more than the approach always used by historians. On the other hand, it may be argued that model-building economists and political scientists have tended to simplify away some of the detail that Lynggaard argues is important. Equally, his conclusions on what produces CAP change are a mixture of the traditional (change follows crisis) and the less expected (the European Parliament Environment Committee was influential in getting organic farming incorporated into the CAP).

This is not a book to be read for pleasure, because the style, especially in the theoretical chapters, is convoluted to the verges of incomprehensibility. But it asks some interesting questions about the boundaries between political analysis and history, and the methodologies it discusses are by no means irrelevant to changes in other circumstances and periods. Hitherto the history of the CAP has been largely neglected by agricultural (although not political) historians. As they begin to consider it, they will find much in this book to make them think about the various ways of approaching their work.

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