

# The Tithe Surveys of the Mid-Nineteenth Century

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THE rural landscape of England and Wales in the 1840's is depicted exactly in the field-by-field surveys carried out by the Tithe Commissioners. Their enquiries covered about three-quarters of the country. The maps drawn for each parish show the boundaries of fields, woods, roads, and streams, and the position of buildings, while the accompanying schedules give the names of their owners and occupiers, their state of cultivation, and their area. The amount of detailed information they provide about land tenure, field systems, and land use is unequalled by any other series of documents. Their accuracy is sufficient to warrant their continued use as evidence in courts of law on matters not directly connected with the payment of tithe. Their uniformity and comprehensiveness are surpassed only by the Land Utilisation Survey of the 1930's. Indeed, they rank as the most complete record of the agrarian landscape at any period.

The objects of the present enquiry are to examine the nature of tithe payments, to describe the purpose for which the surveys were made under the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836, and to discuss their value for reconstructing the agrarian landscape of 1840.

## THE NATURE OF TITHES

Tithes customarily represented a tenth of the annual increase of the produce of the soil and were of three kinds: predial tithes, payable on the fruits of the earth, such as corn, hay, wood, fruit, and other crops; mixed or agistment tithes, payable on animal products, such as colts, lambs, calves, wool, milk, eggs, and honey; and personal tithes, payable on the clear gains of a man's labour and industry, generally levied only on the profits of milling and fishing.<sup>1</sup> By common law, tithes were not payable on minerals or anything that formed part of the freehold. Deer, rabbits, partridges, pheasants, wild-fowl, and fish were titheable by special custom only.

In the first instance, tithes were paid to the rector of a parish, who might be a resident incumbent or a bishop, prior, prioress, monastery, nunnery, or college. An absentee rector normally appointed a vicar to perform his parochial services and allotted to him a portion of the revenues of the benefice,

<sup>1</sup> P. W. Millard, *The Law Relating to Tithes and Payments in Lieu Thereof*, 3rd ed., 1938, contains a concise account of the nature of tithes.

usually the small tithes. These included all tithes except those of grain, hay, and wood, which constituted the great tithes. At the time of the dissolution of the monasteries, rectories and tithes belonging to the dissolved houses were vested in the Crown, and most were subsequently sold to laymen. Lay impropriators still held nearly a quarter of the net annual value of all tithes at the time of commutation.<sup>1</sup>

The payment of tithes in kind was a cause of endless disputes between farmers and tithe-owners. Very costly proceedings were entered upon to determine which courts should hear such suits, who was liable to pay, how payments should be assessed, and how they should be paid.<sup>2</sup> Frequent disputes arose concerning the nature of tithable produce. It was once decided that partridges were *ferae naturae* and therefore exempt from tithe, as were turkeys. On another occasion, wild cherries and fallen apples were adjudged to be subject to tithe. On yet another occasion, wild ducks were declared exempt, but the eggs laid by tame ducks used to decoy them were tithable. But the most difficult cases of all were those involving the produce of woodland. In some areas, all woodlands were exempt; in others, only certain trees; in yet others, the trunks and branches were exempt, but acorns, mast, and even charcoal were tithable. When tithes were allotted to more than one owner further litigation began. It was asked what constituted the vicar's tithe and how much belonged to the rector or lay impropriator. Should the tithe be collected by the owner, and if so, when; or should it be delivered by the farmer, and if so, to what place?

Tithes were an imposition which bore most heavily on progressive farmers whose yields were great but whose expenditure was also large. In areas where the profit to be gained by improvement was likely to be small, potential investors were undoubtedly deterred from venturing their capital because of the incidence of tithes. In Hertfordshire it was reported in 1795 that those parts subject to a reasonable annual money payment in lieu of tithes were generally farmed on improved methods, whereas lands liable to pay tithes in kind were often abandoned to almost total neglect.<sup>3</sup> After the passing

<sup>1</sup> Out of a total of £4,054,405 8s. 7½d. tithe rent-charge, lay impropriators, schools, and colleges held £962,262 13s. 3¼d. according to House of Commons Accounts and Papers (16), Session 1887, Volume 64, Return 214, Return of all Tithes commuted and apportioned under the Acts for the Commutation of Tithes . . . up to 30th June 1887. A comprehensive list of individual lay tithe-owners appears in Henry Grove, *Alienated Tithes*, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> J. A. Venn, *The Foundations of Agricultural Economics*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, 1933, pp. 154-65, traces the history of the collection of tithe in kind during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. R. E. Prothero (Lord Ernle), *English Farming Past and Present*, 1912, devotes Chapter XVI, pp. 332-45, to the history of tithes and their effect on farming practice before and after commutation.

<sup>3</sup> D. Walker, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Hertford*, 1795, pp. 73-82.

of the act for the commutation of tithes, James Caird reported that extensive tracts of Salisbury Plain were reclaimed and brought under the plough for the first time.<sup>1</sup>

The Board of Agriculture reports at the beginning of the nineteenth century unanimously condemned the payment of tithes in kind, but they noted that other forms of payment were common in most counties. Tithes were converted to other forms of payment by two different methods: either by a formal agreement between the tithe-owners and farmers, or alternatively under the terms of a parliamentary enclosure award. The first method often resulted in tithes being converted to a fixed annual money payment known as a *modus* or composition. But a fixed sum of money was not strictly equivalent to a tithe payment which varied from year to year according to the amount and value of farm produce. For this reason some agreements stipulated that a fixed sum be paid for an agreed number of years, some provided for a periodic revision of the payment, while others specified that the sum should fluctuate from year to year with the price of some commodity, usually wheat, sometimes other cereals, in a few cases jointly with wheat. An agreement to alter the method of paying tithes would be accompanied by a full valuation of the tithes, together with a large-scale plan and schedule of the tithable lands. A survey such as that carried out at Hatfield in Hertfordshire in 1824 is as comprehensive and detailed as any of the later tithe commutation surveys.

When tithes were dealt with under a parliamentary enclosure act, they were generally extinguished in exchange for allotments of land. In a study of the results of this procedure, based on an examination of twenty enclosure awards, covering the period from 1793 to 1815, Vladimir Lavrovsky concludes that almost without exception, "tithe commutation led to a diminution in the area owned by the peasantry."<sup>2</sup> Some lost as much as a fifth of their former holdings, and the majority lost more than one-ninth. But as Gonner pointed out there were marked regional as well as social differences in the manner of commuting tithes under parliamentary acts.<sup>3</sup> In some areas they were invariably extinguished; in others, *moduses* and compositions prevailed. About 2,230 such acts passed before 1835 provided for the abolition of the payment of tithe in kind.<sup>4</sup> In 1,510 of these all tithes were extinguished by allotments of land made to the tithe-owners; in 550 tithes were

<sup>1</sup> J. Caird, *English Agriculture in 1850-51*, 1852, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> 'Tithe Commutation as a factor in the gradual decrease of landownership by the English peasantry', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, IV, 1933, p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> E. C. K. Gonner, *Common Land and Inclosure*, 1912, pp. 316-8.

<sup>4</sup> P. W. Millard, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

partly extinguished by allotments of land, and partly converted into annual money payments; in only 170 acts were tithes entirely converted into annual money payments.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE TITHE COMMUTATION ACT OF 1836

In 1836 an act was passed to commute all tithes in kind and substitute a fluctuating money payment known as a corn rent adjusted each year on the basis of the seven-year average price of wheat, barley, and oats.<sup>2</sup> The amount of the corn rent-charge was to be obtained by dividing £100 of tithe into three equal portions of £33 6s. 8d., calculating how much wheat, barley, and oats could be bought with each portion, and multiplying these quantities by the average price in succeeding years. In 1836 the septennial average price of wheat was 7s. 0½d. per bushel, of barley 3s. 11½d. per bushel, of oats 2s. 9d. per bushel. At these prices £33 6s. 8d. bought 94·96 bushels of wheat, or 168·42 bushels of barley, or 242·42 bushels of oats. Each succeeding year the corn rent-charge on £100 of tithe was to be the sum of the septennial average prices of these quantities of grain. In this way the purchasing power of the money payment for which tithes were to be commuted was preserved.

The first task was to establish the boundaries of every district in which tithes were paid separately.<sup>3</sup> This was known as a tithe district to distinguish it from a parish. In the meaning of the act, a parish included every place for which an overseer of the poor was appointed. The Commissioners first enquired into all the places listed as parishes in the census returns, but they could, if necessary, form separate districts. What was frequently disputed, however, was not the existence of a parish, but the exact extent of its boundaries. This was particularly important for some one who was a tithe-owner in one parish and a tithe-payer elsewhere. Again, the tithe payments themselves differed from parish to parish both in their nature and amount, so that a particular piece of land might carry a higher rent-charge if it were included

<sup>1</sup> Millard cites as examples of these: Brinklow Inclosure Act, 1741, 14 Geo. II, Cap. 14; Vicar's Rate in Halifax Act, 1830, 10 Geo. IV, Cap. 14; Kendal Corn Rent Act, 1834, 4 & 5 Will. IV, Cap. 16.

<sup>2</sup> An Act for the Commutation of Tithes in England and Wales, 13th August 1836, 6 & 7 Will. IV, Cap. 71. Its provisions were not to extend except in special circumstances to be decided by the Commissioners to: (1) Easter offerings, mortuaries, or surplice fees; (2) tithes of fish or fishing; (3) personal tithes other than those of milling; (4) mineral tithes; (5) payments in lieu of tithes in the City of London; (6) fixed annual rent-charges in a city or town; (7) lands whose tithes had previously been commuted or extinguished by Act of Parliament.

<sup>3</sup> The best account of the procedure followed by the Commissioners in carrying out their enquiries is to be found in contemporary legal manuals such as Leonard Shelford, *The Acts for the Commutation of Tithes in England and Wales*, 3rd ed., 1842.

in one parish than in another. Land subject to tithe on one side of a boundary might even be exempt on the other.

The next step was to determine the total value of the tithes payable in each parish for the previous seven years from the actual receipts of the tithe-owners. The act enabled the tithe-owners and farmers to agree upon a valuation before 1 October 1838. When such an agreement was drawn up, it was submitted to the patron and the bishop for their approval, and then to the Commissioners for confirmation. If an agreement were not reached, the Commissioners were empowered to hold a local enquiry, to frame a draft award, hear objections, make amendments where necessary, and finally confirm their award, which then became binding on the tithe-owners and tithe-payers.

Once an agreement or award had been confirmed by the Commissioners, the rent-charge had to be apportioned among the lands of the parish. This was done according to principles agreed upon by the landowners, or if no principles were agreed upon, according to the average tithable produce and productive quality of the lands. It was inevitably difficult to apportion the rent-charge equitably among lands of differing quality and differing utilization, not because the actual use of the land was difficult to determine, but because its tithable produce was likely to change from time to time. Previously, it had been possible to reduce the amount of tithes by converting arable or meadow to pasture, thereby substituting a mixed tithe for a predial tithe of corn or hay; or to avoid the payment altogether by fallowing arable land, by allowing it to revert to uncultivated waste, by converting it into park or warren, or by planting it with trees. On the other hand, the tithe-owner was entitled to benefit from an increase in productivity resulting from land reclamation, artificial drainage, or other improvement. In fixing the apportionment of an area of marsh pasture capable of producing normal crops with the aid of artificial drainage, it was decided in an early test case that "regard was to be had to the probability of the lands being converted from one species of culture to another."<sup>1</sup> But in practice there was no way of assessing the probability of lands being converted to other uses, and the only alternative to rating all lands alike at the same value was to differentiate them on the basis of their observed state of cultivation.

Apart from making provision for the change of culture of hop grounds and market gardens, the act did nothing to prevent the temporary value of land being made the basis of a permanent charge.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the method of appor-

<sup>1</sup> Cited by Leonard Shelford, *The Tithe Amendment Acts*, 1848, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> William Eagle, *The Acts for the Commutation of Tithes in England and Wales*, 3rd ed., 1840, p. 58, comments on Sections XL, XLI, XLII of the Act of 1836, which outlines these provisions.

tionment authorized by the act was that based on an accurate field survey. The sternly practical instructions issued to surveyors in November 1836 appear to have been followed closely, except that the estimated costs for carrying out the surveys were not always strictly adhered to.<sup>1</sup> The essential purpose of the survey was to provide an accurate measurement of the acreage of each parcel of land, or tithe area, and to record its observed state of cultivation. For the purpose of valuation, the state of cultivation was entered as 'arable', 'grass', 'meadow' or 'pasture', 'common', 'wood', 'coppice', 'plantation', 'orchard', 'hop ground', or 'market garden'. There were, of course, different interpretations of these categories and additional categories inserted in some localities. In general, the most important distinction was between arable land, regularly ploughed and cropped, whose tithes amounted to about one-fifth of the value of the rent, and permanent grassland, whose tithes represented less than one-eighth of the rent. In the west of England and probably in Wales the arable appears to have included all ley grasses. In many parishes no distinction was drawn between meadow that was mown for hay once a year or more, and pasture that was normally used exclusively for grazing, yet the assessment of an acre of meadowland might be as much as eight times that of pasture. Woods, coppices, and plantations were not always separately distinguished and were omitted in many parishes where they were tithe-free. Lands devoted to orchards, hop grounds, or market gardens were usually classified according to their actual state of cultivation, but they might be rated as arable or grass and charged with a supplementary or extraordinary rent-charge.

A special problem confronted the Commissioners in apportioning the rent-charge of Lammas lands and commons. These were owned in severalty for only a part of the year; from Lammas to Candlemas they lay open to common grazing. At High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire the rent-charge was apportioned among two or more owners of the same plot of land in such circumstances. Similar considerations affected the apportionment on gated or stinted pastures.

A further difficulty arose in apportioning the rent-charge where part of the lands of a parish were exempt from tithe. Apart from lands for which tithes had already been commuted or extinguished by parliamentary enclosure, there were nine categories of land which were exempt from tithe:

<sup>1</sup> "Instructions for the Preparation of the Plans required by the Act 6 & 7 Will. 4, c. 71 for the Commutation of Tithes, approved by the Tithe Commissioners, and adopted by the Poor Law Commissioners for the Plans to be made under the Parochial Assessment Act 6 & 7 Will. 4, c. 96 (a)," 29 November 1836, quoted in full, with comments on its implementation by Shelford (1842), *op. cit.*, p. 482.

- (1) Lands naturally barren;
- (2) Barren heath or waste improved or converted into arable or meadow was exempt for a period of seven years after improvement;
- (3) Forest lands while in the occupation of the Crown or its lessee or tenant, but not if granted by the Crown in fee;
- (4) Glebe lands in the occupation of the parson;
- (5) Lands owned before 1215 by the Cistercians, Templars, or Hospitalers;
- (6) Lands which formerly belonged to one of the greater monasteries, and which had not paid tithes at the time of the dissolution;
- (7) Lands which had paid no tithes from time immemorial;
- (8) Lands in respect of which tithes were barred under the Tithe Act of 1832, which specified some lands which had not paid tithes for a very long time, the original cause of exemption being unknown;
- (9) Lands in respect of which a modus or composition was payable.

Even where an entire parish was exempt from tithes, much of the so-called tithe-free land carried a contingent rent-charge. When forest land passed out of the hands of the Crown, or glebe land out of the possession of the parson, it ceased to be exempt and became subject to a rent-charge. Even lands that were permanently exempt had to be precisely delimited by the surveyor, although it occasionally happened that land previously exempt was apportioned to an area subject to a rent-charge. Thus the rent-charge of the parish of Wye in Kent was apportioned among farms, and parcels of woodland, formerly exempt, came to be charged jointly with other lands in the farms of which they formed parts.

#### THE TITHE MAPS AND APPORTIONMENTS

The Tithe Commissioners succeeded in resolving many of the complex problems which had previously embittered relations between tithe-payers and tithe-owners. In a majority of parishes they were able to secure an agreement; in the remainder they imposed an award. Throughout the country they carried out their task with speed and thoroughness.

Almost all the 11,800 surveys in England and Wales were made before 1851; the majority before 1841.<sup>1</sup> In Norfolk, for example, 497 out of 660 were

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to the Secretary of the Tithe Redemption Commission for permission to make use of his authoritative account of the tithe documents which appears under the title of 'The Records of the Tithe Redemption Commission' in the *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 1, 1957, pp. 132-9. There are different opinions as to the exact number of tithe surveys, Gilbert Slater in *The English Peasantry and the Enclosure of Common Fields*, 1907, p. 188, states that there are 11,783; W. E. Tate in *The Parish Chest*, Cambridge, 1946, p. 139, gives the figure of 11,787.

made before 1841; in Essex 272 out of 389. In spite of the additional work involved in valuation and apportionment, most of the survey was completed in about one-tenth of the time taken by the Ordnance Survey to complete its 25-inch plans. Yet speed was achieved without sacrificing accuracy. The Reports submitted to the Commissioners, the surviving minutes of local enquiries, and the correspondence in the Tithe Files held by the Commission testify to the thoroughness of the surveyors' work as well as to the vigilance of tithe-payers and tithe-owners, each jealously guarding their rights, or pretended rights, against infringement by the other party.

Many counties were almost completely covered by the surveys, the major exceptions, as Gilbert Slater demonstrated, being those which had dealt with their tithes at the time of parliamentary enclosure. The results of Slater's calculations are set out below.<sup>1</sup>

*Counties with a high proportion of tithe surveys:*

	% of area covered by Tithe survey	% of area covered by Enclosure Acts
Cornwall	98·6	nil
Kent	97·8	nil
Devon	97·4	nil
Shropshire	93·4	0·3
Cheshire	91·3	0·5
Monmouth	89·0	0·4

*Counties with a small proportion of tithe surveys:*

Oxford	44·4	45·6
Rutland	39·3	46·5
Huntingdon	36·5	46·5
Bedford	35·4	46·0
East Riding, Yorks	35·1	40·1
Leicester	31·0	38·2
Northampton	23·5	51·8

The details of the survey for most parishes are set down in two documents: a map and an apportionment. The map or plan is usually drawn at a scale of three chains to an inch, approximately 26·7 inches to a mile, or at six chains to an inch, approximately 13·3 inches to a mile. Maps representing large parishes with detached portions and small fields, such as Dagenham or North Ben-

<sup>1</sup> Slater, *op. cit.*, p. 189.



fleet in Essex, may cover as much as a hundred square feet.<sup>1</sup> Many plans are drawn from original surveys, carried out specifically for this purpose by local surveyors, but an earlier map of sufficient accuracy, such as an enclosure map, might be used instead. All maps show the boundaries of the tithe areas within a parish. The tithe areas usually correspond with fields, but in a few instances, such as Rhosbeirio in Anglesey, they constitute whole farms. On most maps the boundaries of enclosed fields are represented by continuous lines and those of unenclosed fields by dotted lines. Occasionally hedges and fences and gates are also represented. The amount of detail shown on the maps varies considerably. Most maps mark the course of streams, canals, ditches, drains, the outlines of fields, lakes, ponds, and the line of roads and footpaths. Many of them use distinctive tree symbols to show coniferous and deciduous woodland. On some, inhabited buildings are tinted red, the remainder shaded in grey. A few maps are rendered in full colour, to distinguish tithe-free land or various properties or farms or occasionally to show the categories of land use.

The apportionment is a roll of parchment sheets,  $21\frac{1}{2}$  by  $18\frac{3}{4}$  inches, consisting of three sections. The first section contains the articles of agreement or statement of award, giving the names of the Commissioners, surveyors, and tithe-owners, and the date of confirmation, and also stating the area of the parish, the area subject to tithes, a summary of the area of arable, grass, and other kinds of land subject to tithe, notes on the lands exempt from tithes, and a list of landowners and occupiers. The second and most important section is the schedule of apportionment in which each tithe area, numbered on the accompanying plan, is listed under the name of both its owner and occupier. In a parish which still lay in open fields, as many as three thousand tithe areas may be enumerated; in the majority there are several hundred; in some the rent-charge is apportioned by farms, occasionally without a survey being made of each field; in a few no apportionment is made, so that the whole of the tithable area of a parish constitutes a single tithe area. Where, as in the majority of cases, a tithe area is a field, the field name is recorded; where it is not a field, it is described, for example, as a "house and garden," a "piece of water," a "chalk pit," or an "ice house." Its state of cultivation is entered for the purpose of valuation according to the local practice. There are a few examples of the actual crops being noted, as at Narford in Norfolk and Erbistock in Denbighshire. The statute acreage and the value of the rent-charge apportioned to it are stated, and a final column is

<sup>1</sup> F. G. Emmison, *Catalogue of Maps in the Essex Record Office 1566-1855*, Chelmsford, 1947, contains a detailed list of Tithe Award Maps, pp. 53-63. Later acquisitions are listed in the *First Supplement*, 1952, pp. 34-5.

left for remarks. The third section contains the altered apportionments made after the original award was confirmed. These record major changes in the shape, size, and status of the original tithe areas resulting from subdivision or severance by public works. The building of railways, the construction of new roads, the re-allocation of land under an enclosure award, all necessitated altered apportionments. When the changes affected a large part of the parish a separate new apportionment might be made.

Three statutory copies of these documents were prepared. The original is now in the custody of the Tithe Redemption Commission in Finsbury Square, London, E.C.2; a second copy was deposited with the incumbent and churchwardens to be kept in the parish chest; a third copy was deposited in the diocesan registry. The second and third copies have sometimes been lost or damaged or transferred to a county record office.

#### THE ACCURACY OF THE TITHE SURVEYS

The accuracy of the surveys may be assessed in three ways: first, by their status as legal documents; secondly, by collating the information shown on the map with that recorded in the apportionment; thirdly, by comparing them with other sources of information.

Tithe maps bearing the seal of the Commissioners may, under certain circumstances, be produced as legal documents in deciding questions of title, general and public rights in a township, rights of way, and the existence of common rights in unenclosed parishes. Although only one-sixth of all the maps are sealed, the others have been considered sufficiently accurate for the purpose of several administrative enquiries. They have been consulted, for instance, by the Ordnance Survey when drawing the parish boundaries on the first 25-inch plans,<sup>1</sup> by the County Councils in preparing a survey of foot-paths in 1949, and by the Royal Commission on Common Lands, 1955-8. In disputes between tithe-owners and tithe-payers the evidence of the map and award is always conclusive.

A few clerical errors might be revealed by checking the original tithe maps and apportionments against the surviving parish and diocesan copies, but as these are certified true copies, the total number of errors and omissions is likely to be very small. On the other hand, the differences between the information shown on the map and that recorded in the apportionment are worth investigating. In a number of parishes the map and apportionment were compiled at different dates, so that some discrepancies are due to changes in the intervening period. Such changes are occasionally noted in the apportion-

<sup>1</sup> *Account of the Field Surveying and the Preparation of the Manuscript Plans of the Ordnance Survey*, Ordnance Survey Office, Southampton, 1873.

ment. References are made, for example, to the felling and grubbing up of tree stumps, to the reclamation of waste and heath, to the enclosure of commons, and to tree planting. In some parishes where the state of cultivation is not recorded or only partly recorded in the apportionment, the map may indicate the extent of certain types of land such as orchards, woods, and commons. In a few parishes, where the valuation was clearly not based on the land use observed on the ground, the state of cultivation entered in the apportionment does not correspond with the actual land use shown on the map. In such parishes, land shown as woodland on the map might be classified as "grass," and marsh or heath might be returned as "arable."

The accuracy of the measurements on the tithe maps can be readily ascertained by comparing them with the large-scale plans of the Ordnance Survey. The site of churches and the course of streams are easily identified, and most other features, including former field boundaries, can be traced with the help of air photographs. The amount of error revealed by such comparisons would almost certainly be negligible. It is more important to know to what extent a tithe district corresponded to a parish, to what extent a tithe area corresponded to a field, and to what extent the state of cultivation corresponded with the actual land use at the time of the survey.

The preamble to a tithe award usually states whether an entire parish is included in the survey or what portions are excluded, but these statements may be verified in a few parishes by reference to contemporary assessments for parish rates or poor rates, or compared with the enumerators' books compiled for the Registrar General, which record house by house the names of every one living in a parish or enumeration district at the time of the census. The names of the householders should appear as occupiers in the tithe apportionment, and the houses should be marked on the accompanying map.

Most tithe maps mark the boundaries of unenclosed parcels of land by dotted lines. Such lines may represent property divisions, separating holdings in an open arable field or common meadow, or they may represent either permanent or temporary divisions between lands of differing utilization in a field belonging to a single farmer. It is generally possible to confirm this distinction by referring to the apportionment, but contemporary private estate maps may be of some help in making a decision. Private estate maps of this period are, however, of only limited value in testing the accuracy of the tithe surveys, because most of them were either consulted by the tithe surveyors or are themselves copied from the tithe maps. Some of them were drawn by the same surveyor. Estate maps and sales catalogues may be of most use in checking the state of cultivation.

A few late altered apportionments may be compared with the Ordnance

Survey 25-inch plans. In a few exceptional instances, the land use information in the area books compiled in connection with the 25-inch plans drawn before 1880, and also the acreages of arable, grass, and orchard in the Agricultural Statistics, may be compared with the tithe surveys. But no valid conclusions as to the accuracy of the original tithe surveys can be drawn from such comparisons because an altered apportionment was only required for a whole parish when the land use and field pattern were completely transformed by an incident such as enclosure. Moreover, some information in the Ordnance Survey area books and the Agricultural Statistics which appears to be equivalent is not strictly comparable with that in the tithe surveys.<sup>1</sup>

THE SURVEYS AS A SOURCE FOR THE GEOGRAPHY  
OF ENGLAND AND WALES

If the geography of England and Wales in 1840 is to be written, full use will have to be made of the tithe surveys. They provide a record of parish boundaries before major changes took place; of estates at a time when many of them had reached their greatest extent; of farms, representing every type of holding from fragmented open-field tenements to compact ring-fence units; of fields, both enclosed and unenclosed, in every variety of shape and size. They provide a record of the use of the land: whether cultivated or uncultivated, arable or grass, orchard or hop ground, heath or marsh, wood or agriculturally unproductive. They also provide a record of the names of landowners and occupiers, and of the fields belonging to them. They can tell us how much tithable land belonged to estates of various sizes, and how much was owned by the Church or the universities or the railway companies. They can tell us how much arable land remained unenclosed in 1840, where it was situated, and who owned it. They can tell us what land was farmed by owner-occupiers or by tenant farmers, how much woodland or cottage property was occupied by owners or by tenants, and how much land was occupied by commons and highways. They can tell us whether farmsteads were situated in the midst of their own fields, or if not, whether they were attached to villages or hamlets. They can tell us what size and shape farms were in different parts of the country, and what proportion of a farm was arable or grass. These are but a few of the many questions that have yet been only partially answered.

The tithe surveys fully exploited, in conjunction with the 1841 census returns and enumerators' books, private estate accounts, surveys, farm leases,

<sup>1</sup> J. T. Coppock, 'The Statistical Assessment of British Agriculture', *Agric. Hist. Rev.*, iv, 1956, pp. 66-79, compares and comments on the data for Edlesborough in Buckinghamshire, p. 78.

and the county reports published in the *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society* between 1845 and 1869, would present a vivid picture of rural England in the mid-nineteenth century.

## Notes and Comments

### THE BRITISH AGRICULTURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

A joint winter conference with the Association of Agriculture was once again held at the University of London Institute of Education; it took place on Saturday 6 December, and was very well attended. The chair was taken by the President, Sir James Scott Watson.

In the morning a paper was read by Dr F. N. L. Poynter of the Wellcome Historical Medical Library on *The Place of Gervase Markham in English Veterinary Literature*. In the afternoon session the conference heard a paper from Dr J. K. S. St Joseph, Curator in Aerial Photography, Cambridge University, on the use of aerial photographs in the interpretation of agricultural history. The conference concluded with the showing of a film illustrating the work of excavation at the deserted village of Wharram Percy in the East Riding of Yorkshire. The film, which was made by Ian and Betty Lauder, was introduced by M. W. Beresford.

### INCOME TAX RELIEF

The secretary has been informed by the Chief Inspector of Taxes that the Commissioners of Inland Revenue have approved the British Agricultural History Society for the purpose of Section 16 of the Finance Act 1958, and that the whole of the annual subscription paid by a member who qualifies for relief under that Section will be allowable as a deduction from his emoluments assessable to income tax under Schedule E. This becomes operative as from the year ending 5 April 1959. It applies only to members whose office or employment is directly related to the subjects with which the Society is concerned.

### EARLY BREEDS OF SHEEP

Captain Sir Hugh Rhys Rankin writes: "There is in Byton church, on the Radnorshire border of Herefordshire, a lamb carved in stone on the wall. In this lamb all the characteristics of the present Border Leicester sheep are quite apparent: a very level back, great depth of body, long legs, narrow neck and long face, and long and erect ears. The carving is dated c. 1350. It seems to me that this suggests the development of the Border Leicester breed of sheep from a medieval native breed of West Herefordshire."

Upon this, Mr R. Trow-Smith comments: "There were in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries two distinct breeds of sheep in Herefordshire. The ordinance of 1342 fixing minimum wool prices lists Hereford wool at £8 and a lower grade from the county at £6 13s. 4d. The minimum prices laid down in 1454 included £13 for Leominster wool and £5 for Herefordshire wool other than Leominster."

Robert Bakewell, in his trials, experimented with rams of "Durham, Wilts, Norfolk, Dishley, Charnwood Forest, and Herefordshire breeds." George Culley, Bakewell's Northumberland disciple, bought rams of Bakewell's New Leicester breed to improve his flock out of which, among others, the Border Leicester breed evolved. Culley was critical of Bakewell's prices, however: "I . . . have little expectation of you as a Customer as . . . others . . . are willing to give more money without thinking they are overcharged," Bakewell wrote to him. Other letters make it clear that Culley had previously (1791) bought rams which were not

(continued on page 37)