

# Accounts of a Sheep and Corn Farm, 1558–60

By MICHAEL ZELL

FEW sixteenth-century accounts of small and medium-sized farms have survived, in contrast to the relative wealth of records produced by the manorial bailiffs and stewards of great lay and ecclesiastical estates. Much of what is known about the practices of the farmers derives from probate inventories and from the leases which they made with their landlords. Printed below are the accounts of the farm of the manor of Exton, Hampshire, along with inventories of chattels and stock. They reflect the methods and economy of a medium-sized sheep-corn estate in the chalk country of the Hampshire downs, a district similar to the Wiltshire downland described fully by Dr Kerridge and others.<sup>1</sup> Such a farm was frequently quite large by Tudor standards, and depended upon having large numbers of livestock—usually sheep—to fertilize the extensive arable. It produced certain crops like wheat and barley for the market, as well as fodder crops for domestic use. The profits of the farm derived both from the sales of livestock and wool, as well as from corn sales. The general pattern of such husbandry is shown in some detail in the documents printed here.

The Exton accounts have survived because of the untimely death of its farmer, Richard Person or Parson, in March 1558. He left his young son John and his widow Margaret as his executors and heirs to his lease and goods. Person had the farm from the Dean and Chapter of Winchester Cathedral, to whom he paid about £15 p.a. for the farm of the demesne, and another £5 p.a. for the water-mill at Exton.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See especially the imaginative reconstruction of farming practices and farmers' wealth by W. G. Hoskins, 'The Leicestershire Farmer in the 16th Century', in *Essays in Leicestershire History*, 1950, based on probate inventories; E. Kerridge in *V.C.H. Wiltshire*, iv, pp. 43 ff.; also Joan Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales: IV, 1500–1640*, Cambridge, 1967, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Exton had long been part of the Winchester Cathedral Priory estates, and was granted to the new Dean

Person's testament, made just before his death, specified that, should his widow remarry within the next eighteen years she must give over the farm to her son John, and accept in return a cash payment of £40, and after that a £10 annuity. As it turned out, Person's widow did not adhere to the testament but, as the sole adult administrator of Person's estate, conveyed the farm over to one James Massam, whom she soon afterwards married. It appears that she wanted both the profits of the farm and a new husband, and until John Person's uncle Thomas sued her and Massam in Chancery she seems to have got away with it. The accounts and inventory of Exton farm survive as an appendix to the decree in Chancery, promulgated 15 June 1560. In the name of the eleven-year-old John Person, his uncle had sued to recover possession of the farm against Massam and John's mother, and claimed that Massam was "a wastefull man and far indebted," who had spoiled and dilapidated the farm and its stock. The court decided that Margaret had not followed the terms of her late husband's will, and that her son John was being defrauded of his inheritance. It ordered Massam and Margaret off the farm, and turned it over to the overseer of Richard Person's testament, Lord Chidioc Paulet. The decree also required that the household stuff be divided equally between Margaret and her son. An inventory of the farm and a view of its accounts had been taken by two local gentlemen, William Uvedall, the sheriff, and Henry Wallop, Esq., on 11 June 1560, just prior to the final decree in Chancery.<sup>3</sup>

and Chapter in 1542. The total income of the manor in 1539 was about £39 p.a. See *V.C.H. Hampshire*, III, p. 320, and Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1846 edn), I, p. 217.

<sup>3</sup> P.R.O.: C 3/145/10 (which includes the bill, answer, replication, and rejoinder) and C 78/17, no. 24 (the decree which includes a summary of the parties' arguments). An almost identical case is *Truslowe v. Holloway* (at C 78/18/34) in which the plaintiff sued the widow and her new husband on behalf of an under-age heir for the

Massam's accounts cover the period between Margaret Person's inheritance of the farm and the accounting ordered by Chancery in 1560. The first is an account of corn and livestock on hand in 1558, and of farm production and utilization between 1558 and 1560. The second account is of money income and cash expenditure during the two-year period. The reader will notice that in all instances the two do not necessarily match. Following these two is the inventory taken by Uvedall and Wallop in 1560, which does not assign money values to the items inventoried. The household chattels *per se* have been excluded from this transcript as they detail nothing out of the ordinary from many other probate inventories. The inventory is useful, however, because it estimates the acreage sown in the several arable crops.

The first set of accounts shows a sizeable, capitalist farming business. Noticeable are the fairly high level of sales of grain as well as wool; and the heavy expenditure of corn and beasts for domestic use, indicating quite a numerous household. The latter is underlined by the considerable wages bill noted in the cash account further on. Unlike many smaller farms, Exton had both kinds of plough beasts, oxen and horses. The method of calculation used in the first set of accounts is intended to show how far the occupant maintained the stock and corn at or below the level it was when he began his occupancy. Thus, taking into consideration the amount of wheat on hand at the beginning of his management and the quantity of wheat grown during the period, the account shows that Massam owed 15 quarters to the farm. His deficit of barley and malt was much greater. The account of sheep is meant not only to show the total number of beasts but also to distinguish the farmer's own stock from the 500-600 animals which were leased to Person with the farm by Winchester Cathedral. For all types of livestock Massam had not maintained the stocking levels of 1558, and thus the accounts lend credence to the complaint

recovery of the deceased man's chattels and lease; as in *Person v. Massam*, the widow had conveyed the dead man's lease to her second husband, thus cutting out her son.

against him in 1560. Massam's alleged expenditures—in the cash account—are somewhat dubious. He and his new wife were not only taking the profits of the farm but crediting themselves with the cash payments which Richard Person's testament had decreed for Margaret, had she given up control of the farm upon her marriage. Equally questionable is Massam's claim to have spent £60 on maintenance and repairs, a figure more than five times as large as the value of the farm equipment. A minor deficiency in the accounts is the absence of information about oats in the first set of figures, although it is clear that oats were cultivated on the farm. From the cash account the price of wool appears stable, as does the average selling price of barley (about 7s. per quarter in both years). In contrast, the average price per quarter of wheat sold in 1559 was more than double that of the preceding year.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever Massam's failings as an accountant or as a farmer, the present accounts show a prosperous agricultural enterprise. The figures in the accounts do not allow an accurate estimate of the net profits of the farm, but in 1558 the grain sales alone were more than twice the rent of the whole farm with its stock. With the west country clothiers near by and a burgeoning demand for food, the income of Exton farm to the farmer must have been far in excess of the rent fixed at least twenty years earlier by the old prior and convent of Winchester Cathedral.

*Note:* The document which follows is an edited transcript of the accounts of Exton farm enrolled in P.R.O. C 78/17/24. All items in the accounts, other than household goods, are included, but in slightly abbreviated form and in modern English. In some cases headings have been added. All numbers and dates have been transcribed as they appear in the MS. In the final inventory I have added totals (in parentheses).

<sup>4</sup> National price series for 1559 based on the 1558 harvest do not explain this extraordinary increase in wheat prices: an indication that one should not over-emphasize national averages and must allow for wide local variations in harvest quality and grain prices. See W. G. Hoskins, 'Harvest Fluctuations and English Economic History, 1480-1619', *Ag. Hist. Rev.*, XII, 1, 1964.

## THE AGRICULTURAL HISTORY REVIEW

## ACCOUNT OF STOCK AND CORN BY JAMES MASSAM FOR APRIL 1558-11 JUNE 1560

*Wheat*

Wheat remaining upon the inventory the said 1 April	15 qrs	
Wheat Grown Anno 1558	90 qrs	1 bus.
Wheat Grown Anno 1559	80 qrs	1 bus.
Sum	185 qrs	2 bus.

*Whereof—*

Wheat spent in the house, 1558	41 qrs	
Wheat spent in the house, 1559	35 qrs	
Wheat spent in the house, 1 April to 11 June 1560	6 qrs	5 bus.
Wheat sown, 1558	22 qrs	
Wheat sown, 1559	25 qrs	
Wheat sold, 1558	22 qrs	
Wheat sold, 1559	34 qrs	6 bus.
Wheat paid in legacies		7 bus.
Sum	185 qrs	2 bus. [sic]

and so lacketh of the inventory 15 qrs

*Barley and Malt*

Barley remaining upon the inventory	15 qrs	
Malt remaining upon the inventory	40 qrs	
Barley grown, 1558	180 qrs	6 bus.
Barley grown, 1559	92 qrs	1 bus.
Sum	327 qrs	7 bus.

*Whereof—*

Malt spent in the house, 1558	42 qrs	
Malt spent in the house, 1559	40 qrs	
Barley sown, 1558	41 qrs	
Barley sown, 1559	52 qrs	
Malt and barley sold, 1558	116 qrs	1 bus.
Malt and barley sold, 1559	15 qrs	
Barley paid for legacies	8 qrs	4 bus.
Barley spent for fattening of hogs	5 qrs	
Malt spent in the house, 1 April to 11 June 1560	5 qrs	2 bus.
Sum	324 qrs	7 bus.

and so remaineth 3 qrs. And so there is lacketh of the  
Inventory 15 qrs of barley, 40 qrs of malt: 52 qrs

*The Account of Sheep*

Sheep of all sorts remaining upon the inventory	160
Lambs remaining upon the inventory	218
Sheep of all sorts, of the lord's stock, according to Massam	536
Lambs increased, 1559	209
Lambs increased, 1560	152
Sum	1,275

Whereof—

Sheep spent in the house, 1558	49
Sheep spent in the house, 1559	62
Sheep spent in the house, 1 April to 11 June 1560	12
Lambs spent in the house, 1558	15
Lambs spent in the house, 1559	10
Sheep dead of the murrain, 1558	13
Sheep dead of the murrain, 1559	54
Lambs dead of the murrain, 1558	40
Lambs dead of the murrain, 1559	39
Sheep stolen out of the pastures, 1558	15
Sheep stolen out of the pastures, 1559	5
Sheep sold, 1558	35
Sheep sold, 1559	38
Lambs sold, 1558	20
Sheep paid in legacies	9
Sheep paid to the shepherd for wages	2
Sum	418

and so remaineth of all sorts: 857

Md. There lacketh of the Inventory and the lord's stock 54

*The Account of Rodder [Horned] Cattle*

Kine remaining upon the inventory	32
Bulls remaining upon the inventory	3
Steers remaining upon the inventory	6
Yearlings upon the inventory	14
Weanling calves upon the inventory	14
Calves increased, 1558	22
Calves increased, 1559	18
Sum	109

Whereof—

Cattle spent, 1558	6
Cattle spent, 1559	7
Calves spent, 1558	6
Calves spent, 1559	5
Kine sold, 1558	2
Kine sold, 1559	3
Steers sold, 1558	1
Calves sold, 1558	2
Calves sold, 1559	1
Bull sold, 1559	1
Yearling calves dead of the murrain, 1558	4
Yearling calves dead of the murrain, 1559	4
Kine dead of the murrain, 1559	4
Kine paid in legacies	1
Sum	47

and so remaineth 62

Md there lacketh of the inventory 8

*The Account of Horse and Beasts*

Cart horses remaining upon the inventory	13
Hackney horses upon the inventory	2

Sum	15
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## Whereof—

Cart horses dead	2
Hackney horses dead	1
Cart horse sold	1

Sum	4
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and so remaineth 11

Md there lacketh of the inventory 4

*The Account of Hogs*

Great hogs remaining upon the inventory	20
Weanlings upon the inventory	15
Hogs increased, 1558 and 1559	34

Sum	69
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## Whereof—

Hogs spent in the house, 1558	14
Hogs spent in the house, 1559	20

Sum	34
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and so remaineth 35

Md there lacketh of the inventory 12

*The Account of Goods of Household*

The whole goods of household, within the house, priced by the inventory	£	s.	d.
	77	9	0

## Whereof—

Remaining at the day of this account, within the house	67	15	2
And so there lacketh	9	13	10

*The Account of Necessaries of Husbandry*

The whole inventory of husbandry	11	16	8
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## Whereof—

Remaining at the day of this account	10	15	0
And so there lacketh	1	1	8

Receipts

For 20 qrs of wheat sold, 1558  
For 40 qrs of malt sold, 1558  
For 40 qrs of barley sold, 1558  
For 76 qrs 1 bus. of barley sold, 1558  
For 2 qrs of oats sold, 1558  
For 32 tods of wool sold, 1558  
For 5 kine, 1 steer, 1 bull sold, 1558  
For 3 calves sold, 1558  
For 35 kebbe [culled] sheep sold, 1558  
For 20 lambs sold, 1558  
For 38 slaughter and murrain fells sold, 1558  
For 15 slaughter and murrain hides sold, 1558  
For 1 horse sold, 1558

£ s. d.  
7 0 0  
13 6 8  
23 14 2  
12 0 0  
22 12 0  
7 10 0  
1 2 4  
6 0 0  
1 3 4  
18 3 8  
2 7 0  
15 0

(1559:)

For 34 qrs, 6 bus. of wheat sold, 1559  
For 3 qrs of malt sold, 1559  
For 3 qrs of barley sold, 1559  
For 12 qrs of wool sold, 1559  
For 32 tods of wool sold, 1559  
For 1 pork hog sold, 1559  
For 38 sheep sold, 1559  
For 16 slaughter and murrain hides sold, 1559  
For 101 slaughter and murrain fells sold, 1559  
For 2 horse hides sold, 1559

28 9 0  
1 5 4  
4 13 4  
25 10 0  
5 0 0  
7 3 4  
1 3 4  
2 10 2  
2 0 0

(1558-60 not dated:)

For 28 qrs of wheat and malt sold of the profits of the mill,  
"for the half year"  
For the rent of the mill for 1 year and 3/4 of a year to the  
Feast of St John the Baptist (24 June) 1560  
For 1 year's fine of the mill  
From tenants' rents due to the lord of the manor at Lady Day,  
1560

7 15 10  
12 16 8  
1 0 0  
1 10 4  
£181 6 8 [sic]

Sum of Receipts

Payments and Expenses

Burial costs of Richard Person; month's mind, year's mind  
Apparel for the children  
Servants' wages for 2 years and 1/2 year, to Midsummer 1560  
For legacies in the will of Richard Person  
For legacies in the will of Margaret Person (later Massam)  
Legacy of £40 to Margaret Person [née Person] specified in will  
Annuity to Margaret Massam [née Person] and fifteenth  
Paid to the Crown in subsidies and fifteenths  
Rent of farm, 1558  
Rent of mill, 1559 [sic]  
Rent of farm and mill, Michaelmas 1559  
Officers' fees and charges of the court, Lady Day 1560  
Officers' fees and charges of the court, Lady Day 1560  
Repairs, maintenance, smith's charges

£ s. d.  
9 16 10  
18 17 8  
53 17 7  
11 9 8  
40 0 0  
10 0 0  
4 0 0  
15 10 0  
5 0 0  
20 10 0  
4 4 10  
2 7 9  
60 0 0  
£258 11 8 [sic]

Sum of expenses

INVENTORY OF CHATTELS, NECESSARIES OF HUSBANDRY AND STOCK AND CORN BY WILLIAM UVEDALL  
AND HENRY WALLOP, ESQS., 11 JUNE 1560 (*at mm. 32-3*)

*The House* (particular items inventoried but not valued)

The Hall	The Chamber over the Parlour
The Buttery within the Hall	The Maidens Chamber
The Horders Loft	The Cheese Loft
The Little Chamber	The Malt House
The Inner Chamber there	The Yielding House
The Outer Parlour	The Kitchen
The Inner Parlour	The Day House

*Necessaries of Husbandry*

1 new iron-bound cart	4 ladders
1 old iron-bound cart	4 wedges
6 harrows and a drag	3 axes
1 roller	2 scythes
2 ploughs with their chains	3 hedging bills
harness for the horses and carts	7 rip hooks
2 wood ropes	

*Stock and Corn on the Farm*

kine	21	heifers	1
bulls	3	ii yearlings	8
steers	2	yearlings	10
oxen	4	weanlings	12
cart horses	10	hackney horses	1
wether sheep in the fold	252	sucking lambs	5
store rams	16	weanling lambs	148
tegs	133	fattening sheep in the pasture	32
ewes	274		
boars	4	hogs of one year's age	2
sows	4	hogs of $\frac{3}{4}$ year's age	5
barrow hogs	1	hogs of $\frac{1}{2}$ year's age	7

*acres*

Wheat in the field, by estimation	75
Barley in the field	93
Oats in the field	12
Vetches in the field	5
Peas in the field	12

(Total 197 acres in crop)

[End of account]