

The Later Parliamentary Enclosures of South Wales

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Abstract

Parliamentary enclosures under the 1845 General Enclosure Act formed a substantial proportion of the total in South Wales. They were overwhelmingly of waste, and thus contributed to a net increase in the size of the existing holdings, in contrast to some early English enclosures. Though the number of allottees per enclosure was normally relatively small, few individuals received very large acreages, and this was reinforced by the pattern of purchases of sale allotments, with little evidence of large-scale buying by large landowners. Much of the newly-enclosed land appears to have undergone little improvement in the formal sense, but, at least in the view of contemporaries, sheep-farming became much more profitable when freed from the problems associated with common usage of the waste.

PARLIAMENTARY enclosures carried out under the auspices of the General Enclosure Act of 1845 have received relatively little attention in the literature, by comparison with those carried out under the individual private acts of the earlier period. Turner includes them in the statistics in his *English Parliamentary Enclosures*, but his detailed analysis ends in 1836, while the concentration on open-field enclosure by classic works such as Slater and more recent ones such as Yelling has tended to greatly underplay the significance of the later nineteenth century.¹ Even at county level, many authors have chosen to focus exclusively on the earlier period, and others have given only fleeting attention to the later phase.² Only Ellis, in his work on Wiltshire, concentrates specifically on this period, and offers a comprehensive picture of the impact of this legislation on a whole county.³

While it might be argued that this neglect

is of little significance in England, where the later enclosures make up only a small percentage of the total, the same is not true of Wales. Almost exactly 50 per cent of all Welsh Parliamentary enclosures were under the authority of this Act and its various amendments, and to exclude them from consideration is to provide a distorted picture of the movement as it affected the Principality.⁴ Bowen's major survey of Welsh Parliamentary enclosures is variable in its treatment, and is not entirely comprehensive, while Dodd's account of North Wales specifically omits those after 1845; Jeffreys Jones provides details of the acts which authorized the process, but not of the outcome in terms of the awards.⁵ It is the aim of this paper to examine this aspect of the enclosure movement, as it affected the historic counties of Brecon, Carmarthen, Glamorgan, Monmouth and Pembroke.

I

The General Enclosure Act of 1845 was specifically devised for the sort of conditions

¹ M E Turner, *English Parliamentary Enclosures*, Folkestone, 1980; G Slater, *The English peasantry and the enclosure of the common fields, 1896*; J A Yelling, *Common Field and Enclosure in England, 1450-1850*, 1977.

² Eg, A E Davies, 'Enclosures in Cardiganshire, 1750-1850', *Ceredigion*, 8, pt 1, 1976, pp 100-140; J M Neeson, 'Common Right and Enclosure in Eighteenth Century Northamptonshire', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1978.

³ J R Ellis, 'Parliamentary enclosure in Wiltshire by Public General Acts', *Wiltshire Archaeological Mag.*, 1980, pp 72-73.

⁴ 113 out of 227 enclosures.

⁵ I Bowen, *The Great Enclosures of Common Lands in Wales*, Chiswick, 1914; A H Dodd, 'The Enclosure Movement in North Wales', *Bulletin Board of Celtic Studies*, 3, 1927, pp 210-238; T I Jeffreys Jones, *Acts of Parliament Concerning Wales, 1714-1901*, Cardiff, 1959.

which occurred in much of Wales. By that time most of the substantial commons with obvious high potential for agricultural improvement had already been enclosed, along with others where there was an urgent need to establish individual ownership, for example to allow the exploitation of minerals; what remained, for the most part, were commons either of very small size or of apparently limited possibilities. Since there were substantial fixed costs involved in obtaining a private act, the charge per acre on a small common was prohibitive, while the improved value of many large upland commons was unlikely to be high enough to justify the sort of outlay involved.⁶ To many contemporaries this situation represented a serious waste of food production capability, and the Act was seen as a means of removing the barriers to improvement by cheapening and simplifying the procedures.⁷ However, the legislation also reflected an increasingly ambivalent attitude towards enclosure, for there was a growing concern over provision for the 'labouring poor' of the rural areas, and an increasingly vociferous demand that land should remain open for recreational purposes, especially in the vicinity of large industrial towns.⁸ Both these concerns have a relevance to the area under consideration, which contained remote rural areas, for example in parts of Breconshire and Carmarthenshire, and also the heavily industrialized and urbanized areas of Glamorgan and adjoining counties.

The calculation of precise figures for the land enclosed under this Act poses some problems of definition, for subsequent legislation allowed the substitution of

schemes to regulate, rather than enclose, commons, and various hybrid schemes exist. As a result, the status of several of the 'enclosures' within the area under study is dubious, and some have been differently regarded by different authorities. Doubts arise particularly in respect of four in Glamorgan (Llangyfelach, two for Coety Wallia, and one for Leckwith Common, Cardiff) plus two in Pembrokeshire (Goodwick and Monachlogddu). The problem in each case arises from the use of the Commons Regulation and Improvement Act of 1876 and its later modifications, rather than the earlier enclosure procedures. In each case, some land was actually enclosed, in the sense that it was removed from communal use, fenced, and applied to some individual purpose; however, in none of these cases was the land divided amongst the commoners. One of the Coety Wallia examples involved land being taken for railway purposes, as did that at Llangyfelach, while the other seems to have been a regulation rather than an enclosure. At Goodwick, land was taken for a replacement church and at Monachlogddu for a quarry.⁹ At Leckwith, part of the common was taken for building purposes, sparking a long wrangle during which accusations of corruption were made against the town clerk, and Cardiff City football ground was alleged to be technically still part of the common.¹⁰ However, the acreage involved in all these examples was tiny, and they have been omitted from the calculations in this paper.

A slightly different problem occurs in the case of the Undy enclosure of 1853, since this was undoubtedly a genuine enclosure, and the order was certainly confirmed.¹¹ However, there appears to be no evidence

⁶ The legislation of 1840, intended to avoid the need for a private act for waste enclosures, had not been very widely adopted.

⁷ See, for example, *Report from the Select Committee on Commons' Inclosure*, 5 Aug, 1844, p iii.

⁸ See, for example, *Report of the Select Committee on (the) Inclosure Act*, 7 July 1869, pp x-xi and pp 20-23, and *Report of the Select Committee on the Report made by the Inclosure Commissioners*, 7 May 1879, Minutes of Evidence, pp 12-13.

⁹ PRO, MAF 2/17 and 2/19; MAF 1/200; MAF 25/41/B1615; MAF 25/41/B3776.

¹⁰ PRO, MAF 25/99/LO/N560.

¹¹ Provisional Order of 13 July 1853, confirmed by 16-17 Vic c20. Under the 1845 Act an 'Order' issued by the Inclosure Commissioners took the place of the earlier individual enclosure act, groups of 'Provisional Orders' being presented for Parliamentary approval at intervals in a single act.

of any award. In these circumstances, this enclosure has been included in the overall calculations, using the acreage given in the order, but has had to be omitted from the more detailed examinations of such matters as ownership and sales due to the absence of data.

Finally, it should be noted that the enclosure of Kidwelly was formally completed under an order of 1848, but has been omitted from consideration since it was begun under a private act of 1830. Had the Inclosure Commission not been drawn in to settle a dispute over the appointment of a replacement commissioner no order would have been necessary, and it is therefore not classified here as being under the General Act.¹²

Within the 5 counties considered here, 51 out of the 84 Parliamentary enclosures fell after 1845, and 23,712 acres, or just over 23 per cent of the land affected, was dealt with after this date.¹³ This last figure gives a rather distorted impression of the relative importance of the later movement, for included in the total for the earlier period is the Brecknock Forest enclosure, the largest single enclosure in either England or Wales, and a highly anomalous one in that it was principally a disafforestation act which left most of the land undivided. If this award is omitted, the later enclosures affected almost 38 per cent of the total, a rather more realistic picture of the significance of the period.

Enclosures under the 1845 legislation have often been characterized as 'small', but this is not necessarily true in Wales. In the counties covered here, 14 enclosures involved less than 100 acres, the smallest being only 20 acres in extent (Cantref, Brecon), but 7 exceeded 1000, rising to 3350 in Aberdare, Glamorgan (see Table 1). Overall, the mean acreage involved was 463, substantially below that for Parliamentary

enclosures as a whole, and less than a quarter of the mean for those of Wales.¹⁴ Nevertheless, it was by no means negligible, especially as much of it represented an addition to the 'improved' area of the parish concerned. At Llanycrwys, for example, the new land formed almost a third (31.48 per cent) of the whole parish.

As has already been indicated, the legislation was primarily intended to facilitate the enclosure of common waste, and the land involved was overwhelmingly of this type. 22,714 acres, or 97.1 per cent of the open land, was waste. However, some 673 acres of open field were also included, together with a tiny acreage of old enclosed land which was redistributed during the enclosure process. Unfortunately some land of this latter type cannot be clearly separated from the waste, since it was a frequent practice to incorporate any such 'old enclosures' which were detached from the rest of the owner's lands and were below a certain size (usually three acres) without specifying their precise extent. All told, less than 5½ acres were actually specified as having been redistributed, plus an additional 320 acres exchanged by private agreement.¹⁵ Even allowing for some understating, this is substantially less than the norm for many areas of England, where old enclosures formed a significant part of the land involved in many enclosures.¹⁶

While the dominance of waste requires little further comment, not all the land concerned fell into the expected poor quality or small acreage categories. Monmouthshire, in particular, was somewhat anomalous in this respect, for its two largest upland enclosures, of Cwmyoy and of Wentwood, had taken place in the early part of the century, and the late enclosures included a substantial amount of marshland

¹² PRO, MAF 25/8.

¹³ 23393 acres excluding the Undy enclosure, for which most information is missing.

¹⁴ The mean from a 10 per cent sample of English awards was 1437 acres; from all Welsh awards, excluding 12 where figures were not available, 2077.

¹⁵ Some additional private exchanges may have been omitted.

¹⁶ J Chapman, 'The Extent and Nature of Parliamentary Enclosure', *Ag Hist Rev* 35, 1987, pp 25-35.

TABLE I
Enclosures under the 1845 General Enclosure Act in Five Welsh Counties*

<i>Parish or Area</i>	<i>Order</i>	<i>Award</i>	<i>Total Area Involved</i>	<i>Area Open</i>	<i>Area Sold</i>	<i>No of Allottees</i>	<i>No of Buyers</i>
BRECONSHIRE							
Battle	1860	1862	406.26	406.26	0	5	0
Bronllys	1860	1863	116.68	105.59	0	11	0
Cantref	1856	1858	20.15	20.15	0	5	0
Cathedine	1859	1861	526.14	526.14	0	23	0
Garthbreny	1861	1865	108.94	108.94	16.49	8	2
Henallt	1855	1857	105.79	105.79	18.69	4	1
Llanddew	1861	1865	73.60	73.60	15.00	9	1
Llanfi. Fechan	1861	1865	720.08	720.08	57.79	9	2
Llyswen com	1856	1858	31.63	31.63	0	6	0
Llyswen Fds	1856	1858	57.66	49.63	0	3	0
Merthyr Cynog	1861	1865	471.54	449.16	49.64	11	3
Myarth	1855	1857	244.13	244.13	0	2	0
Rhydins	1855	1857	26.16	26.16	11.09	2	1
Sarnau	1860	1862	211.54	211.54	20.34	14	1
Talachdu	1861	1865	125.35	125.12	15.88	13	2
Talwen	1861	1865	143.51	143.51	22.38	6	1
Traean Mawr	1849	1857	329.40	315.77	0	3	0
CARMARTHENSHIRE							
Abergwili	1851	1858	42.20	42.20	0	38	0
Abernant	1865	1868	50.66	50.66	0	10	0
Abernant	1860	1862	83.39	83.39	0	5	0
Cilrhedyn	1865	1873	2231.50	2231.50	247.51	89	20
Llandyfaelog	1858	1860	50.79	50.79	0	16	0
Llanfair/Bryn	1859	1867	176.46	176.46	35.64	11	1
Llanfi. ar-Arth	1868	1872	1118.48	1118.48	0	18	0
Llanfi. -ar-Arth	1853	1857	442.06	442.06	2.86	45	1
Llangeler	1852	1855	137.54	137.54	0	5	0
Llangeler	1848	1854	494.43	494.43	0	13	0
Llanybydder	1885	1892	1812.30	1812.30	499.71	74	7
Llanycrwys	1850	1854	1060.09	1060.09	196.58	46	26
Pencarreg	1850	1855	2695.21	2695.21	149.68	92	28
Pendine	1855	1864	97.14	97.14	13.07	12	9
Trelech-ar-Betws	1865	1868	20.72	20.72	0	5	0
GLAMORGANSHIRE							
Aberdare	1857	1869	3350.60	3350.60	24.44	173	132
Colwinston	1868	1871	70.33	70.33	0	20	0
Eglwysilan	1857	1861	136.06	136.06	0	7	0
Llangan	1855	1860	216.15	215.25	80.20	49	8
Newton Nottage	1860	1864	856.41	856.41	190.59	55	17
Pendoylan	1856	1863	753.49	753.49	114.34	61	9
Wenvoe	1857	1861	178.41	178.41	0	10	0
MONMOUTHSHIRE							
Caldicot	1858	1859	243.54	237.70	0	55	0
Llanvih. Rogiet	1851	1855	82.48	82.48	25.00	9	1
Magor Fields	1853	1854	151.49	151.49	9.00	11	1
Magor Moors	1853	1856	747.25	744.11	110.26	114	16
Redwick	1850	1852	329.05	325.62	20.00	43	1
Shirenewton	1850	1853	1302.49	1278.00	611.35	123	36
Undy	1852	1854	128.59	128.59	5.75	17	1
Undy	1853		232.00				
Whitson	1867	1870	44.44	44.44	3.61	15	1
PEMBROKESHIRE							
Letterston	1856	1864	259.71	259.71	21.77	22	5
Llanteague	1856	1868	185.81	185.81	90.81	22	3
St David's	1863	1869	212.39	212.39	0	7	0
TOTALS			23712.22	23387.07	2679.47	1426	337

* All the above figures are from enclosure awards in the PRO MAF/1 collection, except for Undy (1853) where the acreage is from the Act. All areas are in acres. 'Allottees' refers to all those receiving land, including buyers.

grazing, which contemporaries had long regarded as of considerable value.¹⁷ Precisely why this land had not been dealt with earlier is not clear. The numbers of individuals with interests in the Severnside marshes, or Levels as they were locally described, may have been a significant stumbling-block there, especially as the cost of drainage may have made it an unattractive proposition to many of the smaller right-owners, who were numerous enough to obstruct a smooth passage for any enclosure.

It is also somewhat surprising that any open arable survived to be dealt with at this date. The two Breconshire awards involved small isolated areas, but the Monmouthshire cases lay in a region with a long history of commercial farming activity, which should theoretically have encouraged early enclosure, and there is no evidence of any particular complexity in the landownership which might account for the delay.¹⁸ Monmouthshire had had quite extensive areas of open field by Welsh standards, but these had largely disappeared by the end of the eighteenth century, and some piecemeal enclosure had taken place at Caldicot, Magor, and Undy in the early nineteenth century.¹⁹ It is difficult, therefore, to see why the process was not completed then. It may well be that for the large landowners, such as William Adams Williams, the open-field possessions were such a small proportion of their total estates that there was no overwhelming imperative to act, and it was felt more profitable to devote time and money to improving other areas, rather than becoming involved in the costly process of Parliamentary enclosure. In these circumstances, the easier, and theoretically

cheaper, procedures after 1845 may have provided the necessary spur to action.

II

Enclosure was primarily concerned with the creation of new patterns of landownership, either by redistributing existing holdings in open fields or by creating private holdings from the former communal waste. Its effects on landownership have been the subject of considerable academic debate, and widely divergent views have been expressed by, for example, Hunt, Mingay, and Neeson.²⁰ Again, however, much of the discussion has focused on the earlier period, and on the open-field areas of the English Midlands, and the arguments rehearsed are not necessarily of relevance in the present context. With the few exceptions noted above, all the land enclosed represented an addition to the existing holdings, and there was no deduction for tithes, so the features which appear to have produced such a profound effect in Northamptonshire were not present.²¹

Analysis of the data on landowners requires considerable caution, for whilst it is easy to summarize the figures for each individual award, comparisons may be misleading. Even the largest landowners in percentage terms might receive insignificant acreages at some of the smaller awards, while small percentages elsewhere might represent substantial estates. It is also deceptively easy to make the assumption that the amount of land allotted can be related to the wealth and social status of the allottee, and to equate small allotments with small farmers. The mere acre-and-a-half allotted to Sir Joseph Bailey at Trelech-ar-Betws did

¹⁷ J Chapman, 'Agriculture and the 'Waste' in Monmouthshire from 1750 to the Present Day', unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1972; C Hassall, *General View of the Agriculture of Monmouthshire*, 1812.

¹⁸ Chapman, *op cit*, 1972.

¹⁹ R A Worthington, 'The Growth of Rural Settlement in South Eastern Monmouthshire', unpublished MA thesis, University of Wales, 1956; Chapman, *op cit*, 1972, pp 120-121, and map 14.

²⁰ H G Hunt, 'Landowners and Enclosure 1750-1830', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd Ser, 11, 1959, pp 497-505; G E Mingay, *Enclosure and the Small Farmer in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, 1968; J M Neeson, 'Parliamentary Enclosure and the Disappearance of the English Peasantry, Revisited', in 'Agrarian Organization in the Century of Industrialization: Europe, Russia and North America', *Research in Economic History*, Supp. 5, 1989, pp 89-120.

²¹ Neeson, *op cit*, 1989.

not make him a smallholder, nor did the sale of an allotment of similar size by Sir Charles Morgan at Cantref represent a forced sale by an indigent local unable to meet the costs of fencing. As has been pointed out elsewhere, for example by Hunt, the ownership of common rights was often in the hands of men with substantial holdings elsewhere,²² and it would be highly misleading to draw conclusions about social effects from allotment size alone, especially as so many of the awards under consideration here affected a relatively small proportion of the parish area. Unfortunately, in many awards the residence and occupation information is incomplete, so analysis of the social impact cannot be comprehensive.

An initial inspection of the data reveals that the numbers of those receiving land at these late enclosures tended to be relatively low. An average of just under twenty-nine individuals received land at each enclosure, as compared with an average of forty-three for a sample drawn from all English and Welsh awards; three, however, involved over 100.²³ Inevitably many of those concerned received only small areas of land, less than an acre each (by allotment or purchase, or both) in the case of 422 allottees. A further 406 got less than five acres, while at the opposite end of the scale, 54 topped 100 acres. Although some of this last group received very large allotments, the proportion of the total acreage taken by them was relatively small, compared with some earlier enclosures. Just over 11,000 acres, or 46.5 per cent, went in units of over 100 acres, the remainder being divided into units of relatively modest size.

Obviously this conclusion would need to be modified if the same small group of owners was involved in several enclosures, and their total acquisitions had to be amalgamated from allotments in different awards. Such calculations are made more

difficult by the long time span covered by the enclosures, for deaths and the buying and selling of estates over the period obscures the real links. However, it is clear that several individuals were heavily involved in the process. Sir Charles M R Morgan, Baron Tredegar, received land at eight of the seventeen Breconshire awards, selling out at a ninth, and was also involved with five of the eight Monmouthshire ones. The Crown took part in five in Carmarthenshire and two in Monmouthshire, and Sir Joseph Bailey similarly had five in Breconshire and two in Glamorgan. However, the total acreages received were more modest than the numbers of awards might suggest. Baron Tredegar netted only 615 acres from his thirteen, Bailey just under 412 from his seven, and even the Crown managed only 713. The Earl of Cawdor's six awards, all in Carmarthenshire, gave a bigger return of 841.52 acres, but 801.54 came from a single award. There is nothing to suggest that any individual built vast estates by widespread involvement in enclosures throughout the region.

III

The figures quoted above refer to the total amount of land received at enclosure, and as such they reflect not only the amounts allotted in respect of rights, but also land purchased. Private purchases, at least as recorded in the awards, seem to have been relatively limited, but public sales of land to cover the costs of the process were frequent.²⁴ This idea had been used as early as 1765 (Aslackby, Lincolnshire) and 1767 (Castle Sowerby, Cumberland), but its adoption was patchy until the nineteenth century.²⁵ By 1845 it had become common practice, especially where extensive areas of

²² Hunt, *op cit*, 1959.

²³ Including joint owners as a 'single individual', except where the award specifically subdivides the allotment.

²⁴ This ignores possible purchases of rights before the claims stage of the enclosure, which would not be recorded.

²⁵ Enclosure awards for Aslackby and Dowsby, CRO Lincoln, and Castle Sowerby, CRO Carlisle. The adoption of such sales is discussed in M E Turner, 'Cost, Finance and Parliamentary Enclosure', *Econ Hist Rev*, Second Series, 24, 1981, pp 236-248.

upland waste were involved, and it was used in 28 of the 50 south Welsh enclosures under consideration here.

As has been pointed out elsewhere, use of sales, rather than a rate levied on those receiving land in compensation for their rights, almost inevitably implied changes in the land ownership patterns, for it was unlikely that the results of the auction would mirror the proportions of the holdings as allotted. Indeed, evidence from Sussex suggests that in most cases it could not possibly have done so, for the size of the lots offered for auction was usually too large, and the numbers too few. If the smaller owners did buy, they automatically greatly increased their proportionate share in the land, while major landowners had an easy opportunity to extend their relative share if they so wished. An open auction also offered an opportunity for outsiders to buy their way into the local landowning community, both at the level of the landless labourer seeking a small plot of his own and at that of the major investor or speculator seeking to build up a substantial unit.²⁶

The possibilities of such an analysis are restricted by the patchiness of the data. It is obviously possible to determine who, amongst the buyers, had an existing claim on the land being enclosed, and all the awards concerned record the residence of the purchasers, even if not of the remaining owners. Information on status or occupation, on the other hand, is omitted from all the Glamorgan awards, from three in Monmouthshire, and from two in Carmarthen, a total which includes eight of the ten awards with more than ten sale lots. While comments on the spatial distribution of the buyers can therefore be made with some confidence, those on the social patterns can only be tentative.

The twenty-eight enclosures which used public sales of land in this way, disposed of

2679.47 acres all told, or 11.30 per cent of all the land enclosed. The range was considerable, for, apart from the twenty-two where no land was sold, it extended from 2.86 acres at Llanfihangel-ar-Arth (Carmarthenshire) to 611.35 acres at Shirenewton (Monmouthshire). The distinction was not a simple reflection of the wide range of total acreages enclosed; one of the smallest, Whitson (Monmouthshire), and the largest, Aberdare (Glamorgan), both used sales, whereas substantial enclosures such as Newton Nottage (Glamorgan) did not. In percentage terms, the amount of land potentially lost to the original right-owners ranged from a mere 0.65 at Llanfihangel-ar-Arth (Carmarthenshire) to 48.87 at Llanteague (Pembrokeshire).

The Welsh examples show a sharp contrast in approach between those enclosures where, regardless of acreage, the land for sale was offered in a very limited number of lots, a single one in seven parishes, and those where large numbers were on offer. The precise process which led to this distinction cannot now be determined, but the correct policy in this respect had been a matter for comment and debate for a long period. In South Wales, Walter Davies had contrasted the minute lots at the Catheiniog enclosure with the large ones at Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn (both Carmarthenshire) as early as 1815, and had criticized the latter on the grounds that the number of bidders, and hence the prices received, had been reduced.²⁷ In practice, there is a noticeable tendency for urbanized areas to have a multitude of small lots and remote rural areas one or two relatively large ones. The logic of this is clear: substantial funds could be raised from relatively small plots where these could be sold for housing construction, whereas in the remoter areas the simplest way of raising the necessary amounts was to offer blocks large enough to attract wealthy buyers. Clearly such a procedure

²⁶ J Chapman, 'Land Purchasers at Enclosure: evidence from West Sussex', *Local Historian*, 12, 1977, pp 337-341.

²⁷ W Davies, *A General View of the Agriculture of South Wales*, 1815.

would exclude the smallholders and agricultural labourers, who certainly occasionally used the opportunity of such sales to acquire land in other regions.²⁸ On the other hand, it did present a chance for some of the less wealthy town populations to become property owners, either of housing sites or of allotments.

The mean size of the sale lots was 4.74 acres, but this figure is distorted by a small number of large allotments; they were, in fact, overwhelmingly small, with 243 less than an acre in size, and a further 174 between one and five acres.²⁹ Lots as small as 18 square yards were offered at Aberdare (Glamorgan). Many were therefore within the range of relatively small buyers, and 27 individuals paid £5 or less for their purchases. One lot, at Pencarreg (Carmarthenshire), went for a mere 1s 10½d. Again, however, it must not be assumed that these small, cheap allotments were necessarily bought by purchasers from the lower social ranks: an 'esquire' paid 15s 7½d for 25 perches at Pencarreg, for example. The cost per acre averaged out at £13.72, but, not surprisingly, variations were wide and sometimes erratic.

IV

The raw figures of the sales may easily be misinterpreted, for when totalled for all the enclosures they show that the great majority of the buyers did not have a stake in the land before enclosure. Of the 337 recorded buyers, 273 had no other apparent involvement in the enclosure concerned. Although a high proportion of the buyers is provided by a single award, that for Aberdare, and these were all 'outsiders', the general pattern seems consistent; except where only one or two buyers were involved, the majority were not amongst the original right or land owners. In terms of acreage, however, the

position is rather different, for though outsiders still took the majority, it was only by 56 per cent to 44. The outsiders, in other words, though numerous, tended to buy relatively small amounts.

It is also worthy of note that in all cases where individuals bought land at several awards, they invariably held land there already. Two of the four major landowners mentioned above bought land, at three awards in the case of Baron Tredegar and at two in the case of Bailey. In Tredegar's case the amount was significant, 160 acres, and made up 26 per cent of his total, but Bailey bought less than 30 acres, or approximately 7¼ per cent. The Reverend Thomas Watkins of Skethrog was also an active buyer, but again only in parishes where he was already a landowner, and his total haul was just over 60 acres. There is thus nothing to suggest widespread buying by a small group of wealthy individuals.

Investigation of the 'outside' buyers reveals that most were in fact local to the parish or its immediate environs, and that they took the greatest share of the land. Almost 48 per cent of the land lost to those originally involved went to other locals, and a further 35 per cent to buyers from within the county, most of them from no great distance away. Only eight buyers came from outside the relevant county, and only one bought any significant amount of land. It is clear that outside speculators played no significant part in the process: the land went overwhelmingly to existing owners or to others resident in the neighbourhood.

Information on the status of the buyers is, as has already been indicated, too limited to sustain detailed analysis, but what is available appears to support the comments already made: there is nothing to suggest large-scale buying by major landowners or speculators. The majority of those involved appear to have been local farmers, traders and craftsmen, with a scattering of labourers. There are occasional exceptions, such

²⁸ Chapman, *op cit*, 1977.

²⁹ The number of small lots is understated as some awards give only a gross total where an individual bought several lots.

as David Long Price, a Llandeilo solicitor, who bought over 200 acres at Llanybydder (Carmarthenshire), and Thomas Cummins, who not only purchased sale lots at Llanddew (Breconshire) but also acquired some of the original allotments by private deals. Cummins, however, appears to have been a local publican, and those who sold to him are both recorded as 'esquire', which hardly indicates a buying out of small farmers by large landowners.

Reactions to Parliament's intention that the poor and the public interest should be considered varied greatly. In Breconshire, this was totally ignored, for neither allotments for the poor nor for recreation were ever given. At the other extreme, in Glamorgan only one of the awards, Pendoylan, failed to provide an allotment for the poor, and only one, Newton Nottage, a recreation lot. In Carmarthen and Monmouthshire just under half the awards provided a poor allotment, and a quarter one for recreation, while in Pembrokeshire two out of three provided for the poor and all had a recreation allotment. Altogether, eighteen of the fifty awards allocated poor allotments, and fourteen ones for recreation, setting aside 167¼ and 161¼ acres respectively. These together represent 1.4 per cent of the area enclosed, which compares favourably both with Ellis's Wiltshire figures and also with the national ones under this legislation.³⁰

The regional variations are capable of logical explanation, and were doubtless susceptible to reasoned defence at the time, had they been challenged by Parliamentary critics. It was generally accepted, reasonably enough in the context of the mid-nineteenth century, that recreation space at any distance from a major population centre was of little value.³¹ Similar arguments were also used

in the case of allotments for the poor: they were of little use at any distance from a village, especially if the total labouring population was small and cottage gardens were the norm. However, the existence of a much larger, more organized, and more vocal population in Glamorgan and the relevant areas of Monmouthshire and Carmarthen may have helped to ensure that these provisions were not ignored in these cases. It is noticeable that the most urbanized of all the enclosed areas, Aberdare, received by far the greatest provision in this respect.

V

A number of points emerge from this analysis. Firstly, it may be argued that the act of 1845 was successful in its aims in these South Welsh counties. In an area where upland enclosures had often been discussed without any progress being made,³² it stimulated the most rapid burst of enclosure of the Parliamentary period, and brought about a third of the total within a fifteen-year period. Though it swept away a few remnants of the open field system, most of the land concerned was 'new' land, absorbed into the farming system from the uncultivated wastes. Precisely how effective this 'absorption' was is difficult to say, for land enclosed from the uplands often underwent a series of complex changes as the limits of cultivation fluctuated violently in response to economic and social changes.³³ Edwards has argued for Denbighshire that much of the enclosed waste, whether early or late in date, never became more than sheepwalk, though Williams appears to suggest that nationally the upland enclosure movement as a whole produced a great deal of

³⁰ Excluding Undy. Ellis, *op cit*, p 160; *Report of the Select Committee on (the) Inclosure Act*, 7 July 1869, p iii.

³¹ See, for example, Nathn Wetherell's evidence to the Select Committee on the Inclosure Act, 1869. *British Parliamentary Papers*, Irish Universities Press edition, vol 14, p 38.

³² Hassall, *op cit*.

³³ J Chapman, 'Changing Agriculture and the Moorland Edge in the North York Moors, 1750-1960', unpublished MA thesis, University of London, 1961.

improvement.³⁴ The evidence from this South Wales area suggests that a substantial proportion of the land enclosed after 1845 became, at worst, upgraded pasture during the latter part of the nineteenth century, and has been similarly used during the twentieth, at least during farming's more prosperous periods. Furthermore, even without any physical improvement to the pasture, enclosure was held by contemporaries to improve the profitability of upland farming by allowing the maintenance of separate sheep flocks and by eliminating the pernicious practices of maiming and 'dogging' (driving a rival commoner's sheep from the common) of stock.³⁵

Secondly, the social clauses enshrined in the Act, and reiterated with increasing force in later amendments, were notably more successful in South Wales than in some other areas. Though only one award, Llanybydder, was begun after the report of the Select Committee on the Enclosure Law Amendment Bill of 1871, which stressed the need to consider public interest, a significant number of the awards made provision for recreation and poor allotments, and these were not always the rather

derisory gestures described for parts of England in evidence to the committee.³⁶

Finally, there is nothing to suggest, in these late enclosures, large-scale attempts by large landowners to extend their estates at the expense of a small peasantry, such as has been postulated elsewhere and for other periods. Whether this is a reflection of the late date or of the relatively poor quality land, either of which might have inclined wealthy landowners to take a rather pessimistic view of the prospects for agriculture, is not clear. Certainly it was not lack of opportunity, for there were still small men willing to sell at most of the enclosures. Large landowners, however, took no particularly prominent part as buyers.

Whilst it would be unwise to project the results from these Welsh examples to all late Parliamentary enclosures, there is equally no reason to suppose that they are unique to this region. Though Cornwall, for example, would appear to conform to the conventional picture of small and relatively insignificant late enclosures, parts of Yorkshire and Northumberland seem more akin to the Welsh examples analysed above. It may well be that these results could be replicated from a number of other northern and western regions for the late nineteenth century.

³⁴ J W Edwards, 'Enclosure and agricultural improvement in the Vale of Clwyd 1750-1875', unpublished MA thesis, University of London, 1963; M Williams, 'The enclosure and reclamation of waste land in England and Wales in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', *Trans Inst Brit Geog*, 51, 1970, pp 55-69.

³⁵ See, for example, *Second Report of the Select Committee on Commons*, 27 May 1878, pp 25-26, and *Select Committee, op cit*, 1844, pp 137-141.

³⁶ *Sessional Papers 1871*, vol vii, *Report of Select Committee on the Enclosure Law Amendment Bill*, pp 2-3.