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Supply Responsiveness in Dairy Farming: Some Regional Considerations*

By CHRISTINE HALLAS

Abstract

The structural changes taking place in dairying during the nineteenth century are examined in the context of the supply responsiveness of farmers. The paper both responds to a call for this issue to be researched in specific localities and seeks to place the debate in a wider context by taking a long chronological view. This study suggests that milk as opposed to cheese or butter production was embarked upon not as a straightforward response to market forces but as a result of the coalescence of many factors. It is noted that the specific factors may vary over time as might the level of their influence over the farmers' decision taking. The conclusion is that while there were some laggardly farmers, there was, taking all factors into consideration, a fairly prompt response. The research reveals the diversity of practice in the locality and cautions against generalization on the subject.

Although both the supply responsiveness of farmers and the level of dairy output in the nineteenth century have been the subject of much attention by agricultural historians, study of the first has tended to concentrate upon the early nineteenth century and has analysed responsiveness primarily in terms of meat and grain whilst research into the second has generally examined the dairy industry in the latter part of the nineteenth century, usually in relation to urban markets.¹

The extent to which farmers adjusted their production to market demands has been debated since at least the mid-nineteenth century. Farmers have been accused of being stubborn or laggardly, or at least, slow in responding to change.² More recently the emphasis of the debate has shifted and, although some historians have continued to support the idea of farmer insensitivity to market forces, others, such as Glenn Hueckel and Cormac Ó Gráda, have presented evidence which suggests the opposite.³

The recent studies of dairy output by historians such as Edith Whetham, Peter Atkins and David Taylor, have tended to concentrate either on the London milk trade or on structural changes in the industry in the latter part of the nineteenth century. David Taylor, in a series of articles, examines the dairy industry between 1860 and 1930 using the county as the unit of analysis.⁴


³ For discussion of the debate see Hueckel, 1976, op cit, pp 401-14; idem, 1981, op cit, pp 185-6; Ó Gráda, loc cit., pp 179-82.

⁴ See footnote 1.

¹ I am indebted to Dr John Chartres and two anonymous referees for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Responsibility for any shortcomings, however, remains my own.


⁴ See footnote 1.
Taylor's conclusions accord with T W Fie, chef's earlier findings in respect of farming in Lancashire during the Great Depression. Fletcher noted a willingness 'to farm according to the dictates of the market'. Taylor also agrees with some of the findings of Hueckel and O Gráda. He notes that where there was resistance to change there were often good reasons such as 'favourable geographical factors and inherited skills'. However, he does observe that, on occasions, there was a strong resistance to change for less than sound reasons.

The present paper has essentially three objectives. It responds to Taylor's plea and closely examines the dairy industry at sub-county level in a specific locality – Wensleydale and Swaledale; it seeks to demonstrate the importance of taking a longer view (from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries) in order that change may be seen in a wider context; and, finally, it identifies the extent to which dairy farmers in the two dales were supply responsive. In addition, the paper shows that considerable differences in the type of dairy output could occur within a small area and that the differences, while partly due to opportunism by some farmers, were dictated also by factors exogenous to dairy production and demand, such as transport and marketing. While it may be unwise to draw firm conclusions from the particular, this case study enables some tentative conclusions to be reached about dairy production and supply responsiveness nationally for the whole of the nineteenth century, and will provide a useful basis against which to test research in other regions.

The development of the dairy industry nationally in the nineteenth century was a direct response to the growing population and rising per capita income, and in the early years of the century the production of cheese, butter, and liquid milk all increased. Important structural changes in the output of dairy products occurred, however, in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Although total production of milk hardly changed in the last quarter of the century, the proportion which was converted into cheese and butter fell to 45 per cent in 1870, to 30 per cent in 1894–8 and to 23 per cent in 1907. The reasons for these changes become apparent when the different elements of the industry are examined. Cheese was the least perishable of the dairy products and during the first half of the nineteenth century was produced in increasing quantities for the expanding home market. However, from the 1860s good quality imports were causing problems for home producers and there were steep falls in prices, particularly in 1879, 1885 and 1895. Farmers moved out of cheese-making, and home production declined by about two-thirds between the 1860s and the First World War. Butter output followed a similar trend to that of cheese. In the 1850s and 1860s output was high but from the 1860s prices fell, and between the 1860s and 1900s the volume of milk used in butter-making halved from 150 million gallons to 75 million gallons. The decline in the quantity of milk used in the production of cheese and butter was mirrored by a growth in liquid milk production. With the development of the railway in the 1840s liquid milk was increasingly transferred

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6 Fletcher, op cit, p 102.
8 Ibid, p 52.
10 Fletcher, op cit, p 104; Taylor, 1976, op cit, p 585.
11 National production of cheese is estimated to have been between 1.5 and 1.75 million hundredweight by the 1860s, ibid, p 390.
12 Ibid, p 591.
13 Ibid, p 590.
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direct from the farm to the town. This traffic developed and grew rapidly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The rapid expansion of milk rail traffic does not signify that there was no liquid milk market prior to the mid-nineteenth century. As will be seen, where local conditions were conducive, liquid milk formed a substantial element of dairy output in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A major factor in the growth of liquid milk output in the late nineteenth century was the relative profitability of that commodity, in the context of falling prices of other dairy produce and meat. This encouraged some farmers to expand their dairy herds and reduce output of meat, cheese and butter in order to concentrate on the production of liquid milk. The question which arises is, at what point did traditionally conservative farmers take the decision to effect fundamental changes in their dairy output and what persuaded them to follow this course? Was it only a question of price, or were other issues involved? By examining the timing of structural changes in dairy production in Wensleydale and Swaledale during the nineteenth century, the factors which gave rise to those changes can be precisely identified and the extent to which farming was supply-responsive can be assessed.

II
The terrain of Wensleydale and Swaledale, which comprises a mixture of fertile valleys, sloping hillsides and high moorlands, is well suited to dairy farming (see Map 1). There had been a strong tradition of cheese- and butter-making in the area prior to the nineteenth century, particularly in Wensleydale. Arthur Young in 1771 noted that in Swaledale milk was sold mainly in liquid form to meet the demands of the large lead-mining workforce whereas in Wensleydale it was mostly converted into cheese and butter. During the nineteenth century the production of cheese and butter became firmly established in Wensleydale, with the main emphasis on the less-perishable cheese. This was due to the fact that prior to the arrival of the railway the only market for liquid milk was the local population and as there was a relatively large dairy herd in Wensleydale, a high proportion of the milk produced had to be converted into cheese and butter.

The efficient marketing of the dairy produce was vitally important for the success of the local industry. Initially cheese and butter were collected from the farms by local factors and transported out of the area to produce fairs (of which Yarm was the most important for Wensleydale cheese) or sold direct to city retailers. As the nineteenth century progressed the farm-collection method of marketing was criticized as being unsatisfactory because factors did not discriminate between the quality of produce on the different farms. Cheese and butter markets and annual fairs were established at the market towns of Hawes and Leyburn in Wensleydale from as early as the 1840s so that the produce was sold in open competition and the prices reflected differences in quality. The markets and

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Ibid, pp 12-4, Wensleydale Advertiser, 22 October 1844.

Ibid, 27 February and 22 October 1844.

Ibid, 9 April 1844; W Livesey, ‘Wensleydale and its Dairy Farming’, Journal of the British Dairy Farmers Association, 2, 1879, p 46; Bedale and Northallerton Times, 30 June 1888. During the 1840s the local price of cheese fluctuated between 51 and 65 shillings per cwt. The price of cheese sold at Hawes market on any day in the 1840s varied by about three shillings per cwt reflecting the different quality, Wens Adv, 1844-48, passim.
fairs were attended by city cheese factors from as far afield as Tyneside, Teesside and the West Riding.\textsuperscript{21}

The variable quality of farm-produced cheese and butter in the two dales indirectly contributed to a further change in dairy production. While output was largely for local and regional consumption and there was little competition the variable quality was evidently not a major retarding factor to sales. However, output grew as the nineteenth century progressed, local cheese was sold to urban markets further afield and fierce competition with both home and foreign producers developed. As a result increasing emphasis was placed on improvement of technique and quality.\textsuperscript{22} This eventually forced structural changes in production and by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in order to standardize production and respond positively to competition particularly from the earlier establishment of cheese factories in other areas, several commercial cheese and butter dairies were established in Wensleydale.\textsuperscript{23} This movement was not

\textsuperscript{21} Wens Adv, 8 and 22 October 1844.

\textsuperscript{22} T C Calvert, \textit{Wensleydale Cheese}, Clapham, 1946, 2nd edn, 1977, pp 12-3; J H Dugdale, 'Select Farms in the Darlington District', \textit{JRASE}, VI, 1895, p 326. In 1888 the Earl of Wharncliffe established a dairy school for the benefit of tenants on his estate near Hawes, \textit{Bed North Times}, 26 June 1888. Wharncliffe may have been responding to a government scheme offering a grant to aid dairy schools which were already in existence or which were established before the end of 1888, W E Bear, \textit{op cit}, p 161.

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repeated in Swaledale where even in the late nineteenth century cheese and butter production remained less important than in Wensleydale.\textsuperscript{24} By the early twentieth century, although cheese and butter continued to be produced on the farm, most of the dales' output came from commercial dairies.\textsuperscript{25}

Before the era of the railway, the butter and cheese which were exported from the dales to the West Riding followed the drove roads southwards through Wharfedale and on to Bradford, Halifax and other West Riding towns and to Lancashire.\textsuperscript{26} The arrival of the railway brought about major changes in marketing strategy, and from the 1850s and 1860s cheese and butter were transported from upper Wensleydale by cart to the nearest station.\textsuperscript{27} This rail traffic was substantial. For example, it has been calculated that over 12,000 pounds of butter were forwarded by rail from Aysgarth to Bradford in early 1877.\textsuperscript{28} Large quantities of butter, sometimes in excess of 7000 pounds but usually in the region of 3000 pounds, were also sold at Hawes market for export by rail.\textsuperscript{29} The establishment of cheese and butter fairs within Wensleydale in the nineteenth century and the opening of the full length of the Wensleydale railway in 1878 led to the West Riding supplanting Yarm and the north-east as the main destination for dales' produce.\textsuperscript{30} By 1907 the Yarm Cheese Fair was virtually defunct.\textsuperscript{31}

From the 1850s, therefore, Wensleydale farmers were responding to demand and competition partly by utilizing a new resource (the railway) to export their dairy produce, and partly by modifying their farming practice and sending whole milk to local commercial dairies. However, this level of response was not radically different from former times, in that Wensleydale was still primarily a cheese- and butter-producing area and many farms continued to make their own dairy products. Significant structural changes in the local dairy industry occurred only when farmers commenced exporting milk.

III

The prices that dairy farmers obtained for their produce was a major consideration in determining the emphasis of their production. Some cheese and butter prices are available for Wensleydale and Swaledale at different dates throughout the period under study. Indices for butter and cheese have been calculated from extant data and are presented in Figure 1. These prices show that, in line with national trends, the price of dairy products generally moved upwards during the nineteenth century. There had been a rapid increase at the end of the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{32} Cheese, 2\textdollar per pound in 1771, had risen to 8\textdollar per pound in 1810.\textsuperscript{33} There was a slight decline in the difficult years of the 1820s and again in the 1840s. By the 1860s, however, the price had recovered to 7\textdollar a pound and by 1873 reached

\textsuperscript{24} Swaledale cheese and butter continued to be marketed, usually via factors or special fairs, direct from farmer to city buyer.
\textsuperscript{25} Calvert, \textit{op cit}, pp 13, 44.
\textsuperscript{26} HLRO, Minutes of Evidence, HC, 1865, Vol 57, Skipton, Wharfedale and Leyburn Railway Company, evidence of T Airey, P 13.
\textsuperscript{27} HLRO, Minutes of Evidence, HC, 1866, Vol 30, Midland (Settle–Carlisle) Railway Company, evidence of the Earl of Wharncliffe and C Other, pp 10, 21.
\textsuperscript{28} Bell MSS, North Eastern Railway Company (NER), Aysgarth Invoices, April, 1877, additional information supplied by the late R Hagill, former manager of Askrigg Dairy.
\textsuperscript{29} Livesey, \textit{op cit}, p 46; J Murray, \textit{Handbook for Travellers in Yorkshire}, 1882, p 319. The afternoon train which departed from Hawes on Tuesdays was instructed to wait until the market-day butter was ready to be transported, \textit{NER Traffic Details}, 1905, document in the possession of P Moore.
\textsuperscript{30} Calvert, \textit{op cit}, pp 13, 44.
\textsuperscript{32} Calvert, \textit{op cit}, pp 13, 44.
\textsuperscript{33} Darlington and Stockton Times, 26 October 1907.
\textsuperscript{35} All prices used in this paper are current prices. The fourfold increase in the price of cheese between 1771 and 1810 did not necessarily result in a similar increase in profit for the farmer as costs (eg labour) were also rising rapidly at this time.
Average of 1845–48 = 6d = 100

Average of 1845–48 = 1od = 100

FIGURE 1
Indices of current prices for Wensleydale and Swaledale cheese (1771–1915) and butter (1771–1907)
Source: See text and Hallas, op cit, pp 615–7
a peak of 83/4d per pound. The price fell to a
low point in the mid-1890s when a local
newspaper reported 'a sudden and tremen-
dous depression' in the price of cheese. This
fall in price acted as a spur to farmers
to become more responsive to demand and
radically to alter the emphasis of their dairy
production. There was a recovery in the
price of cheese at the turn of the century
and in 1907 the wholesale price rose to 7d a
pound. This was followed by a further fall
and immediately prior to the First World
War the price was 6½d.
Butter sold locally at 5½d a pound in 1771
and by 1804 had risen to 1s. During the
1840s the price was lower than that of 1804
but the price advanced in the 1850s and
1860s and reached a peak of 1s 6d in 1874.
The price declined in the 1890s and, as in
the case of cheese, a low point was reached
in 1895 when the price had fallen to 8d. This
was followed by a recovery in the early
twentieth century and the price rose to an
estimated 1s 4d in 1913-4.
In order to ascertain the responsiveness of
dales' farmers to both the price of and
demand for dairy produce, the numbers of
dairy cattle and the output of milk in
Wensleydale and Swaledale have been calcu-
lated. It is not easy to quantify the average
annual yield of the nineteenth-century
Wensleydale and Swaledale shorthorn or to
measure the different end products of
that yield. However, assuming an annual
average yield per head of dairy cattle of 300
gallons, total milk output of the Wensleydale
and Swaledale for specific years between
1795-1839 has been estimated (Table 1).
Even if the less reliable 1795 figure is
discharded, milk output rose over the period
as a whole. During the early part of the
nineteenth century the only milk kept as
liquid milk was that intended for consump-
tion by the local population. Liquid milk
consumed in the two dales between 1795
and 1839 has been estimated and is shown
in Table 2.
The basis of the calculation employed
means, necessarily, that the peak of milk
consumption in the two dales reflects the
population peak.
Milk remaining after requirements for
liquid milk had been satisfied was converted
into cheese and butter. In Wensleydale,
which had a much higher production of
milk relative to its population than
Swaledale, proportionately less of the total
milk output was consumed in liquid form
and more was available for conversion into
cheese and butter. In order to calculate
cheese and butter output, it has been
assumed that 70 per cent of the remaining
proportion of total milk went into cheese

34 Darl Stock Times, 21 September 1895.
35 For most years it is not possible to determine accurately the average
price of cheese and butter. The price data, particularly in the early
century, are sparse and prices varied at different times of the
year. Further, in the case of cheese, prices varied according to
age and quality. The prices presented here, therefore, are a 'rule of
thumb' guide only. Full details of the methods and sources used in
ascertaining the annual price of cheese and butter are discussed in
Hallas, op cit, pp 615-7.
36 The estimates concerning the dairy industry have been derived for
the early part of the century (1795-1839) from an analysis of
previously unexploited tithe collection material and for the latter
part of the century (1860s-1917) from Census and MAFF returns
and from the detailed returns of local railway traffic. These two
periods were examined separately as the source material is very
different and while the later returns are reasonably accurate no
similar assumption can be made for the earlier tithe returns.
37 The estimates used here are based on contemporary and recent
calculations and have taken account of 'unproductive' milk. For a
detailed discussion of yields see Hallas, op cit, pp 618-20. In order
to construct as full a picture as possible, extant data for Swaledale
for 1795, 1823, 1833, 1839 have been applied to Wensleydale and
extant data for Wensleydale for 1803, 1811, 1819 have been
employed to generate Swaledale estimates (for further details see
Hallas, op cit, pp 611-2). The trend information in respect of total
milk output simply reflects changes in the size of the dairy herd
over the period.
38 The Swaledale tithe collection returns for 1823-39 are all of the
same type as are the Wensleydale tithe collection returns for
1803-19. However, while the 1795 tithe return follows the same
format as the later returns, the difference in the number of stock
etc recorded in that return, as compared with the later returns,
suggests that the data may be deficient and should, therefore, be
treated with caution.
39 The local consumption of milk is extremely difficult to estimate
with any accuracy. The consumption figures used here are based on
both contemporary and present-day estimates, see Hallas, op cit, pp 621-2.
TABLE 1
Total milk output in Wensleydale and Swaledale, 1795-1839

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wensleydale</th>
<th>Swaledale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1795</td>
<td>1285</td>
<td>385,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>2870</td>
<td>861,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>2797</td>
<td>839,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>2821</td>
<td>846,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td>3363</td>
<td>1,009,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>3270</td>
<td>981,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>3402</td>
<td>1,030,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In gallons estimated at a net annual average output of 300 gallons per head of cow and heifer in milk or in calf (ie after allowance has been made for calf milk and wastage).
† Cows and heifers in milk or in calf.

Source: Barker MSS, 7/3, 6, 10, 12, Grinton Parish Tithe Collection Records, 1823, 1833, 1839; Calvert MSS, Tithing Books for the Constabulary of Bainbridge, upper Wensleydale, 1803, 1811, 1819.

TABLE 2
Liquid milk consumption in Wensleydale and Swaledale, 1795-1839

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wensleydale</th>
<th>Swaledale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1795</td>
<td>7156</td>
<td>81,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>7156</td>
<td>81,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>7478</td>
<td>85,206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>8322</td>
<td>94,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td>8322</td>
<td>94,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>8614</td>
<td>98,253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>8188</td>
<td>93,394</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Population at the nearest decennial census.
† Estimated at a consumption of 0.25 pints per person per day.


Source: North Yorkshire County Record Office (NYCRO), PP/1,5,8,10, Census Enumeration Abstract for the County of York, 1801-41, and see Table 1.

and 30 per cent went into butter as is shown in Table 3.40

From the foregoing tables and the extant price data it is possible to estimate the total receipts from liquid milk, cheese and butter for the period 1795-1839 and from these derive the value of the product per cow (see Table 4). In addition to a considerable rise in the output of liquid milk, cheese, and butter between 1795 and 1803, the price of all three commodities rose sharply. As a consequence, receipts from dairy products rose steeply, increasing almost fourfold in Wensleydale and more than fourfold in Swaledale. There was a further rise both in output and prices up to 1811, when receipts from dairy produce in Wensleydale and Swaledale peaked at £24,415 and £16,503 respectively.

Subsequent variations in output and prices were reflected in fluctuations in receipts which ended this period, in 1839, slightly down on the 1811 peak. In terms of the value of dairy produce per cow, Swaledale consistently achieved a higher return than Wensleydale. The substantial non-farming population in Swaledale created a higher demand for liquid milk which, consequently, was more remunerative than cheese or butter.41 This emphasis on liquid milk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wensleydale</th>
<th>Swaledale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1795</td>
<td>212,714</td>
<td>129,947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>545,564</td>
<td>348,977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>527,664</td>
<td>328,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>525,964</td>
<td>328,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td>639,784</td>
<td>400,387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>617,923</td>
<td>391,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>649,044</td>
<td>411,402</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on a local conversion factor of one gallon of milk to one pound of cheese.
† Based on a local conversion factor of three gallons of milk to one pound of butter.

Source: based on an estimate of the proportion of total milk used in cheese and butter output.

There is also a strong tradition, particularly in Swaledale, of miners keeping a cow for family use. Over 63 per cent of all people in Swaledale paying agricultural tithes in the early nineteenth century were paying tithes on milk only and most had only one or two cows. Barker MSS, 7/6, 10, 12, Grinton Parish Tithe Collection Records, 1823, 1833, 1839. However, these people constituted only a small proportion of the local non-farming population and the average size of dairy herd on the Swaledale farms visited by Young in 1771 was six cows, Young, op cit, p 192.
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benefited the Swaledale farmer both in terms of higher prices and lower labour input. It would appear that little had changed between 1771 when Arthur Young reported the product of Swaledale and Wensleydale cows as £5 10s and £4 12s 6d respectively, and 1795 when the product per cow was £5 and £4 6s respectively.\(^4\) The highest return of dairy product per cow for both Wensleydale and Swaledale in this period was in 1811 when agricultural prices nationally were near their peak.\(^4\) Thereafter the product per cow fell to a low point in 1833 before recovering to 1839 as the two dales emerged from the effects of the 1830s depression.\(^4\)

For the later nineteenth century, estimates of milk output can be based on the more reliable MAFF returns (see Table 5).\(^4\) As

\(^{4}\) Ibid, pp 189, 424; Barker MSS, 7/3, Account of Grinton Tithes, 1792-6.

\(^{4}\) The national peak in agricultural prices has been identified as occurring in 1812-3, Hueckel, 1981, op cit, p 182.

\(^{4}\) The depression appears to have been quite harsh in the two dales forcing many people to leave the area, Barker MSS, 5/2/2, Garth Day Book, passim.

\(^{4}\) For the later part of the century the study area (which comprises twenty-five townships) is divided into upper and lower Wensleydale and Swaledale. Although some farm units extended across township boundaries, they were normally contained wholly within one of the three sub-divisions.

An average of four years in each decade has been used where possible for the MAFF returns in order to even out fluctuations. The years 1874-7 have been used as the returns from 1866 to the early 1870s are less reliable than the later returns, J T Coppock, 'The Agricultural Returns as a source for Local History', Amateur Historian, 4, 1958/9, p 55. The gap in the data between 1839 and the mid-1870s is unfortunate. The few narrative sources which exist point to a period of prosperity and increased output. The earlier less reliable MAFF returns also indicate that the 1860s was a period of high output as the following Table shows:

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Year} & \textbf{Upper W/d} & \textbf{Lower W/d} & \textbf{Swaledale} & \textbf{Total} \\
\hline
1860 & 3114 & 678 & 1672 & \textbf{5464} \\
1865-70 & 3705 & 700 & 1935 & \textbf{6340} \\
1874-7 & 3157 & 703 & \textbf{1893} & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Cows and heifers in milk or in calf in upper and lower Wensleydale and Swaledale, 1860 to 1874-7}
\end{table}

\(^{4}\) Source: PRO, MAFF Parish Summary of June Returns, upper and lower Wensleydale and Swaledale, 1866, 1869-70, 1874-7.

From these figures it would appear that a nineteenth-century peak occurred for dairy cattle in upper Wensleydale and Swaledale in the late 1860s and early 1870s.

with the earlier period, changes in milk output mirror the size of the dairy herd. The reasons for the changes become apparent when the outputs of the different dairy products are examined in detail.

Local milk consumption for the period 1874-7 to 1914-17 has been estimated on the basis of demand in an area of potentially high supply and is shown in Table 6.\(^4\) In Wensleydale the moderate fall in population

\(^{4}\) BPP, 1843, XII, Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, evidence of W Balderston, Hawes. Balderston notes that the 'poorer class subsist chiefly on oat-bread and milk' which they buy of the neighbouring farms.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Year} & \textbf{Wensleydale} & \textbf{Swaledale} & \textbf{Total} & \textbf{Product} \\
\hline
1874 & 1637 & 1,895 & 638 & 4,170 \\
1880 & 1848 & 2,285 & 13,918 & 7.4 \\
1885 & 2061 & 2,542 & 16,503 & 9.0 \\
1890 & 2284 & 2,345 & 14,766 & 8.0 \\
1895 & 2666 & 2,622 & 16,132 & 7.4 \\
1899 & 2335 & 2,562 & 14,678 & 6.9 \\
1903 & 2248 & 2,571 & 15,961 & 7.2 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Value of liquid milk, cheese and butter produced in Wensleydale and Swaledale, 1795-1839}
\end{table}

\(^{4}\) Source: see Table 1 and Hallas, op cit, Appendices VI-VII, pp 615-625.
TABLE 5
Total milk output (in gallons) in Wensleydale and Swaledale, 1874-7 to 1914-7*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wensleydale</th>
<th>Swaledale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C&amp;H</td>
<td>Total milk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874-7</td>
<td>4330</td>
<td>1,732,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884-7</td>
<td>4653</td>
<td>1,861,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894-7</td>
<td>4410</td>
<td>1,764,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904-7</td>
<td>4575</td>
<td>1,830,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914-7</td>
<td>5120</td>
<td>2,048,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Average of four years in each decade.
† Cows and heifers in milk or in calf.
‡ Total milk produced. Based on a net average yield of 400 gallons per cow or heifer in milk or in calf (ie after allowance has been made for calf milk and wastage). For a discussion of this yield, see Hallas, op cit, Appendix VII, pp 618-20.
Source: PRO MAF 68/382 . . . 2833, MAFF Parish Summaries of June Returns, Wensleydale and Swaledale, 1874-7 to 1914-7.

TABLE 6
Liquid milk consumption (in gallons) in Wensleydale and Swaledale, 1874-7 to 1914-7*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wensleydale</th>
<th>Swaledale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pop</td>
<td>Consump</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874-7</td>
<td>8176</td>
<td>186,515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884-7</td>
<td>8204</td>
<td>224,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894-7</td>
<td>7079</td>
<td>206,937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904-7</td>
<td>6306</td>
<td>207,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914-7</td>
<td>6320</td>
<td>216,263</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Average of four years in each decade.
‡ Population at the decennial censuses, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911.
‡ Total annual consumption in Wensleydale and Swaledale. Allowance has been made for changing per capita consumption and for adulteration. For details of calculation see Hallas, op cit, Appendix VIII, pp 621-2.

The availability of detailed local railway data has enabled milk exports from Wensleydale to be calculated for the period 1894-7 to 1914-7. These exports have been added to local milk consumption in order to calculate total liquid milk output (see Table 7). The growth of liquid milk exports at the end of the nineteenth and the

was offset by a rise in per capita consumption resulting in an overall increase in liquid milk consumption of 15.9 per cent. In Swaledale the steep fall in population far outweighed increased consumption per person and liquid milk consumption fell by 33.1 per cent.

The Wensleydale railway was opened in 1878 but it appears that little whole milk was exported prior to the 1890s and even during that decade export was limited. In the 1870s and early 1880s local farmers were still receiving high receipts for their traditional dairy output and although the liquid milk trade was expanding rapidly elsewhere, the dales' farmers saw no immediate need to take advantage of that trade. The benefit to be gained by releasing workers from onerous tasks and the slightly better price for liquid milk did not, at this time, outweigh the local farmer's natural resistance to change. However, the situation altered radically during the 1890s.
beginning of the twentieth centuries resulted in an increasingly large proportion of the total milk production of Wensleydale being kept as liquid milk. By 1914–7 over 55 per cent of milk produced in Wensleydale was marketed in its liquid form.

All milk surplus to local consumption in Swaledale and to local consumption and export in Wensleydale was made into butter and cheese. The estimated quantities of cheese and butter produced from the available milk are shown in Table 8. Predictably, as liquid milk output increased in Wensleydale, cheese and butter production fell. Cheese and butter production reached a peak in Wensleydale in 1884–7 and then declined steadily for the rest of the period as farmers transferred into liquid milk sales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8</th>
<th>Quantities of cheese* and butter† (in pounds) produced in Wensleydale and Swaledale, 1874–7 to 1914–7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wensleydale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874–7</td>
<td>1,081,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884–7</td>
<td>1,145,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894–7</td>
<td>1,070,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904–7</td>
<td>756,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914–7</td>
<td>638,216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One gallon of milk to one pound of cheese.
† Three gallons of milk to one pound of butter.
Source: based on an estimate of the proportion of milk used in butter and cheese output, see Hallas, 1987, op cit, pp 623–5.

Nevertheless, even in the 1890s, before the export market for liquid milk had fully developed, the market for ‘tip-top Wensleydale’ cheese was reported to be flourishing. In Swaledale there was a decline in both products to a low point in 1884–7 but thereafter there was a steady recovery until by 1914–7 output had almost returned to its 1874–7 level. This suggests that although national cheese and butter output declined steeply in the last quarter of the nineteenth century the decline was most apparent in those areas where there was another outlet for the milk produced. Farmers in Swaledale suffered on two counts. They lost their important local market with the decline of the lead industry and they did not have the benefit of a local railway by which to export liquid milk. If they were to keep their dairy herds, most of the milk had to be converted into cheese and butter. The prospect of taking this apparently retrograde step persuaded many Swaledale farmers to move more fully into breeding and rearing cattle in the latter years of the nineteenth century.

The value of receipts from dairy products and the value of the product per cow for the period 1874–7 to 1914–7 has been estimated and the results presented in Table 9. Based on the earlier assumptions, it is argued that these estimates provide a reasonably close indication of the magnitude of the returns obtained by dales’ farmers from dairy produce. The Table shows a considerable fall in income in both dales in the depression of the 1890s. This was due to the fact that, despite increased liquid milk output in Wensleydale, there was an overall fall in dairy production in both dales. Also, although the price of liquid milk was slightly higher in the mid-1890s than in the mid-1880s, the price of butter and cheese had fallen substantially. Whereas in Swaledale receipts from dairy produce recovered only slightly after the 1890s, in Wensleydale, due to the rapid growth in liquid milk sales, receipts recovered completely and by 1914–7

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* In 1895 it was also reported that a first class cow whose milk was converted into the best Wensleydale cheese ‘should be worth £30 to £36 from cheese alone‘, BPP, 1895, XVI, RC on the Agricultural Depression, Report of R H Pringle on South Durham and Selected Districts of the North and East Ridings, p 546.


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TABLE 9
Value of liquid milk, cheese and butter in Wensleydale and Swaledale, 1874-7 to 1914-7*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1874-7</th>
<th>1884-7</th>
<th>1894-7</th>
<th>1904-7</th>
<th>1914-7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wensleydale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk†</td>
<td>6,217</td>
<td>7,018</td>
<td>7,831</td>
<td>22,102</td>
<td>35,508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>39,442</td>
<td>38,188</td>
<td>28,988</td>
<td>21,891</td>
<td>17,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>10,625</td>
<td>9,547</td>
<td>6,371</td>
<td>4,914</td>
<td>4,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value‡</td>
<td>56,284</td>
<td>54,753</td>
<td>43,190</td>
<td>48,907</td>
<td>57,352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product§</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaledale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk†</td>
<td>4,083</td>
<td>4,035</td>
<td>3,180</td>
<td>2,347</td>
<td>2,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>16,198</td>
<td>13,731</td>
<td>11,166</td>
<td>12,016</td>
<td>11,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>4,364</td>
<td>3,433</td>
<td>2,434</td>
<td>2,832</td>
<td>3,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value‡</td>
<td>24,645</td>
<td>21,199</td>
<td>16,800</td>
<td>17,795</td>
<td>17,666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product§</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Average of four years in each decade, value to nearest £.
† Liquid milk.
‡ Total value.
§ Product per cow and heifer in milk or in calf.

Note: the value is calculated on the wholesale price from farmers as follows: liquid milk, 1874-7 = 8d per gallon, 1884-7 = 7½d, 1894-7 = 8d, 1904-7 = 7½d, 1914-7 = 8d; cheese, 1874-7 = 8¾d per pound, 1884-7 = 8d, 1894-7 = 6½d, 1904-7 = 7d, 1914-7 = 6½d; butter, 1874-7 = 10½d per pound, 1884-7 = 14d, 1894-7 = 10d, 1904-7 = 11d, 1914-7 = 12d.

Source: For prices see Hallas, 1987, op cit, pp 615-7.

exceeded their 1874-7 level. The trend in the total value of the product per cow is comparable to the trend in the value of dairy products. A positive response to changing circumstances in Wensleydale led to an expansion of the dairy herd by 15.6 per cent in the upper dale and 30.5 per cent in the lower dale between 1874-7 and 1914-7. The converse was true in Swaledale where the dairy herd declined by 5.9 per cent over the same period. The data available for the early and later parts of the period allow some conclusions to be drawn about dairy output in the mid-nineteenth century. Figure 2 suggests that milk production in Wensleydale rose steeply, although not always smoothly, throughout the period. In Swaledale, however, it would appear that a peak in milk production occurred between 1839 and 1874-7.

Narrative sources and the earlier, less reliable, MAFF returns point to a probable nineteenth-century peak occurring for both Wensleydale and Swaledale in the late 1860s or early 1870s. After a fall in output Wensleydale recovered to reach a peak for the whole period in the early twentieth century while Swaledale never fully recovered from the late nineteenth-century fall.

† PRO, MAF 68/382... 2833, op cit, and Hallas, 1987, op cit, p 194, Table 9.5.
‡ See note 45 concerning evidence from the earlier MAFF returns which suggests that milk output may have been high in the 1860s.
The production of liquid milk (see Figure 3) in Wensleydale and Swaledale was almost identical in the early part of the century. In Swaledale production may have reached a peak during the mid-nineteenth century. However, it is equally possible that the peak occurred in the 1880s, coincident with a rise in living standards and immediately prior to the final demise of the local lead industry and the deepening depression in the 1890s. The impact which the export of milk from Wensleydale had on the output of liquid milk in that dale is abundantly demonstrated by the way in which liquid milk production soared at the end of the century.

The production of butter and cheese in the two dales in the period 1795 to 1914 is shown in Figure 4. Cheese and butter output in Wensleydale rose over the mid-century period reaching a peak in the 1880s. Then, as the railway enabled them to increase liquid milk exports Wensleydale farmers moved out of cheese and butter production. As with milk production, the output of cheese and butter in Swaledale probably reached a peak in the mid-nineteenth century, declining to a lower but relatively stable level in the latter part of the period. In the absence of a railway west of Richmond, Swaledale was less able to take advantage of the liquid milk trade. Nevertheless, dairy farmers in both dales were relatively more prosperous at this time and as Assistant Commissioner Hunter Pringle noted in 1895: 'Dairy farmers, expert and progressive cheese makers, . . . have

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For a discussion on the provision by Railway Companies for the transport of milk, see Hallas, 1986, op cit, pp 38-41.
done best, and among them depression, if it exists at all, is of a very mild type. The fortunes of the dairy industry in Wensleydale and Swaledale support the revisionist view that the late nineteenth-century depression was not uniformly severe. It affected both different regions and different sectors of livestock farming to different degrees.

Dairy produce receipts for Wensleydale and Swaledale in the nineteenth century are presented in Figure 5. The fact that dairy produce receipts are a function of two factors, output and price, is clearly shown in the way receipts for the different products follow markedly different paths. The pattern is similar in both dales in the early part of the century and there are indications that total receipts from all dairy produce in the two dales, with the exception of liquid milk in Wensleydale, may have reached a peak during the mid-nineteenth century. In the latter part of the period the positive move into liquid milk output in Wensleydale caused the pattern of receipts in Wensleydale and Swaledale to diverge sharply.

As noted earlier, between the 1860s and 1914 national production of cheese and butter declined by 40 per cent while liquid milk production quadrupled over the same period. Wensleydale output followed the national pattern and the production of cheese and butter each suffered a decline of about 41 per cent between 1874-7 and 1914-7 while liquid milk output increased sixfold over the same period. In Swaledale, which did not have access to an urban market, liquid milk output declined by a third while cheese and butter output fell by less than 1 per cent over the same period.

The full significance of the buoyant returns for dairying can be appreciated when the total product per cow for Wensleydale and Swaledale is examined for the whole period 1795 to 1914-7 (see Figure 6). The peak of produce per cow achieved in both dales in 1811 during the French wars was not sustained, at least prior to 1839, and output slumped to a low point in the mid-1830s. It is possible, however, that produce per cow reached a peak in the unrecorded years of the 1860s when, in line with the rest of the country, prices were high. The impact of the depression is graphically demonstrated with a decline in the value of produce per cow to a late nineteenth-century low point in the 1890s. It is only from this period that Wensleydale farmers suffered a substantial fall in the return from cheese and butter. After being relatively unresponsive to the growing demand for liquid milk prior to the 1890s they were belatedly pushed into utilizing the fifteen-year-old railway to

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45 BPP, 1805, op cit, p 567.
46 Ibid.
export milk from the dale. In addition, once they had started to export milk from the farms, the dairy farmers quickly recognized the advantages of communal marketing and organized themselves into co-operatives for the sale and distribution of dairy produce. The wisdom of this response is demonstrated in the results shown in Figure 6.

V
Liquid milk production was clearly an important element of the dairy economies of Wensleydale and Swaledale at different periods from the late eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. Analysis of dairying in Swaledale demonstrates that there could be a substantial liquid milk market even in rural areas in the early nineteenth century and that, as was the case later in the century, liquid milk was the most profitable form of dairy output. In Wensleydale, milk which was not converted into farm cheese or butter was marketed in several ways. In the early part of the nineteenth century the requirements of the small, non-farming local population for liquid milk constituted the only market for milk. In the later years of the century, however, milk could also be sold as whole milk to local cheese and butter dairies and as liquid milk for rail-borne export from the dale.

The long-term view which is presented in this study has enabled the type and level of response throughout the nineteenth century to be identified and has demonstrated the complexity of the situation in terms of both cause and effect. The conclusion of this paper, albeit tentative due to the paucity of data and the use of estimates, is that throughout the nineteenth century a degree of supply responsiveness was to be found among Wensleydale and Swaledale dairy producers. This generally accords with the comments of Hueckel, Ó Gráda and Taylor. However, it is clear that the decisions of farmers in both dales were influenced by factors in addition to a straightforward response to demand and prices; there is evidence that resistance to change was not always based on sound business reasons. Where change did take place it was in response to two different types of stimuli. It is probable that the responsiveness of Swaledale farmers in the early part of the century was encouraged, or 'pulled', by the ease with which the switch from making dairy products to supplying liquid milk locally could be undertaken. When, from 1878, Wensleydale farmers were also presented with a market for liquid milk, although one that involved exporting, they were not so immediately
responsive. The indications are that they could have moved into the more profitable liquid milk market relatively easily and with minimal cost any time after the opening of the railway but it required the rapidly falling prices of cheese and butter in the 1890s to 'push' them into changing their practice. Swaledale's ability to respond to the growth in per capita liquid milk consumption later in the century was severely constrained by the sharp reduction in its non-farming population. Moreover, exogenous factors, particularly the absence of a railway, meant that the Swaledale farmer, however progressive, was unable to respond to demand in regional and national markets. Faced with this disadvantage many Swaledale farmers responded by moving from dairying to breeding and rearing.

It is apparent that caution needs to be exercised in making broad generalizations about the dairy industry and about the level of farmer responsiveness to changes in demand. This paper demonstrates clearly how the experience of dairy farmers and their response to change could be markedly different even within a relatively small geographical area. There is no question that farmers who survived in agriculture in the nineteenth century did respond to market forces but there is no simple answer as to when, how quickly, and why at that chosen time? Research into other regions is likely to confirm that the complexity of the situation which existed in Wensleydale and Swaledale is repeated in other localities throughout the country.

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**Notes on Contributors**

**DR CHRISTINE HALLAS** is Head of Studies in History at Trinity and All Saints' College, Leeds. Her primary research subject is the dynamics of change in Victorian agriculture, industry and population in a specific area, the north Yorkshire dales. She has presented papers and published works on lead mining, textiles, agriculture, railways, craft occupation, and migration.

**DR MICHAEL WINTLE** is a Senior Lecturer in European Studies and Dutch Studies at the University of Hull, where he has taught since 1980. He studied history at Cambridge, Ghent, and Hull Universities, and has also held guest or exchange posts at the Universities of Utrecht and Victoria (Canada). His research centres on the Low Countries since 1750, in a European context, and has concentrated on social and economic history. He has published on the history of Dutch agriculture, migration, religion, and economic growth, and is presently engaged in setting up a comparative European project on social reactions to technological innovation in medical science in the nineteenth century.

**GRAHAM COX** is a Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Bath. His interests lie in the fields of environmental and agricultural politics and sociology. He is currently working on a study of Pollution and Agricultural Technology Change funded by the ESRC. His most recent book, jointly written with Michael Winter and Philip Lowe, is *The Voluntary Principle in Conservation: The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group* (Chichester, 1990).

**PHILIP LOWE** is Reader in Environmental Planning at University College, London, where he is co-Director of the Rural Studies Research Centre. His main research interests are at the intersection between environmental politics and rural sociology, with a focus on countryside change in the twentieth century in Britain and Europe. Recent books he has co-authored or co-edited include *Countryside Conflicts: The Politics of Farming, Forestry and Conservation* (Aldershot, 1986; with Graham Cox and Michael Winter), *Campagne Française, Campagne Britannique* (Paris, 1989), and *Technological Change and the Rural Environment* (1990).

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(continued on page 29)
Modest Growth and Capital Drain in an Advanced Economy: the Case of Dutch Agriculture in the Nineteenth Century*

By MICHAEL WINTLE

Abstract
First a survey is provided of the main characteristics of Dutch agriculture in the nineteenth century, covering geographical and soil conditions, regional differences, price developments, and the periodicity of economic growth in agriculture. Agriculture's contribution to the economy as a whole is examined, as well as government policy, and the onset and reactions to the major crisis of the late 1870s and 1880s. Attention then concentrates on Zeeland, a rich agricultural province which suffered relative stagnation in the nineteenth century. Cyclical fluctuations in the percentage of owner-occupancy amongst farmers are identified; their effect was such that the constantly changing ownership of the land channelled agricultural profits out of the province and sometimes even out of the country.

The Netherlands is by no means unknown to agricultural historians in Britain and the English-speaking world. During the early modern period The Netherlands and Flanders were the source of many of the agricultural innovations and improvements adopted elsewhere in Europe, not least in Britain. In the present century, and particularly since the Second World War, we are constantly made aware of the advanced and intensive nature of Dutch horticulture and livestock farming: the public-relations machine of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture is most effective. But if the early modern period and the twentieth century are no secret to the outside world, the problems arise in the intervening century or so, between the French Revolution and World War I. Very little about Dutch farming in the nineteenth century is known outside The Netherlands, and as a result it is difficult, for a historian of modern Dutch agriculture, to know which point of departure to adopt when addressing a British readership. I am uncertain whether to deal only in general terms with the Dutch agricultural economy, assuming that very little is known about it, or whether to take more or less for granted that agricultural history, if not universal, has many common features the world over, and thence to launch into a detailed exposition of the minutiae of current research. The last article on Dutch agriculture to be published in the Agricultural History Review was by Jan Bieleman in 1985, who had addressed the British Agricultural History Society Conference in 1983; he chose to assume that the general national background to his detailed local study of the province of Drenthe was not of primary concern to British readers. He preferred instead to focus on an aspect of his doctoral research, which has subsequently been published to some acclaim in The Netherlands (in Dutch) as Farmers on the sands of Drenthe. It is a fine example of a distinguished tradition of detailed research work on agricultural history in The Netherlands, but for those who

* This article is a revised version of a paper delivered to the 1989 Spring Conference of the British Agricultural History Society, held in Bristol 3-5 April 1989.

1 J Bieleman, 'Rural Change in the Dutch Province of Drenthe in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', Ag Hist Rev, 33, 1985, 105-17.
do not read Dutch, there is very little background survey material available within which to place this more specialized work.

For those who can read the Dutch literature, there is no shortage of excellent material on the agricultural history of the modern period. Authors of competent surveys of Dutch agriculture in the nineteenth century have provided a succession of standard works of high quality for the last eighty years and more: Blink’s 1904 study of Dutch farmers, the Agriculture Ministry’s 1914 survey of the previous century’s achievements, Sneller’s edited collection of survey articles covering the period from 1795 to 1940, and I J Brugmans’ 1969 standard work on the economic history of The Netherlands in the nineteenth century: these and others have provided the groundwork for a thorough understanding of the period. Excellent provincial studies have appeared, of which the best known outside The Netherlands have come from the members of the famous Wageningen School, like B H Slicher van Bath, J A Faber, A M van der Woude, and now of course Jan Bieleman. The economic aspects of all these publications concerning the nineteenth century were synthesized in 1985 in the doctoral thesis of Jan Luiten van Zanden, presently at the Free University in Amsterdam. This brilliant study is a first-class work by any standards, and demands an early translation into English. But until that is done, the only information available to those who do not read Dutch is the odd incidental and seldom informative paragraph in the textbook general economic histories of Europe.

As a result of this status quo, and as a complement to Bieleman and others who have published some of their detailed research findings in English, it is appropriate to lay out some of the general contours of the agricultural history of The Netherlands in the last century. This article will therefore begin with a wide-ranging account of agriculture across the whole nation and throughout most of the nineteenth century.

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1 H Blink, Geschiedenis van den boerenstand en landbouw in Nederland [History of farmers and farming in The Netherlands], 2 vols, Groningen, 1902-04.
2 De Nederlandschen landbouw in het tijdvak 1813-1913 [Dutch agriculture in the period 1813-1913], The Hague, 1914.
3 Z W Sneller, ed, Geschiedenis van den Nederlandschen landbouw 1795-1940 [History of Dutch agriculture 1795-1940], Groningen, 1943.
5 B H Slicher van Bath, Een samenleving onder spanning: geschiedenis van het platteland in Overijssel, Assen, 1957; J A Faber, Drie eeuwen Friesland: economische en sociale ontwikkelingen van 1500 tot 1800, 2 vols, AAG Bijdragen, XVII, 1972; A M van der Woude, Het Noorderkwartier, 3 vols, Wageningen, 1972; and Bieleman, Boeren, op cit.
The latter part of the paper, with the benefit of the preceding general outline, will move to a much more detailed matter, namely, the draining away of the capital accumulated in the agricultural sector to other economic sectors, and from the area in which it was earned to other geographical areas in the country, and indeed out of the country.

I

The Netherlands was not entirely remote in the last century. Visitors from Great Britain often travelled to and through The Netherlands, and occasionally they went there specifically in order to observe the agriculture. On the whole, these tourist-observers were impressed with what they saw. Especially in the coastal areas, travellers were agreeably surprised at the prosperity of the farmers, the efficiency and diversity of their operation, and the integration of agriculture into the local, national and international market economy. Just after the Napoleonic Wars, the Revd Thomas Radcliffe went to visit Belgian Flanders, which was at that time actually part of the Kingdom of The Netherlands, and paid a brief visit to The Netherlands proper to look at some farms in the area of Cadzand, right at the south-western tip of the present-day country. In his report to the Farming Society of Ireland, published in London in 1819, he expressed himself favourably impressed with the large and well-found farms he saw on the fertile sea-clay there, run by substantial farmers with sufficient capital to do the job properly, producing goods for markets the world over.9 In the late 1840s, H Colman from Britain published his account of the agriculture of several countries in northern Europe, and was in raptures about the farming he saw in the Low Countries, especially in The Netherlands:

I entered these beautiful countries [he wrote in 1848], beautiful in the eye of an agriculturalist from the

richness of their crops, and the perfection of their cultivation, in the month of June; and I confess that my expectations, excited as they were, were more than answered. . . . I begin by saying that the agriculture . . . [here] is superior to that of any country which I have visited.10

These remarks were made, significantly, immediately after several years of crop failure in the 1840s. Twenty years later, at the height of the agricultural golden age in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the Belgian Émile de la Laveleye published in 1865 a study of the Dutch rural economy entitled La Néerlande. He too was delighted with what he saw, especially (once more) in the coastal provinces, and decided that The Netherlands was 'one of the most agriculturally advanced nations of Europe'.11 Later on in the century, during the great agricultural crisis, the outlook was less promising. H M Jenkins, who reported to British parliamentary officials in 1881 on the state of Dutch agriculture, as a contribution to the widespread debate in Britain on agricultural distress, noted that the crisis was biting hard across the North Sea as well. Tenants were badly behind with their payments, the effects of over-inflated pre-crisis land prices were now being felt, and the labouring classes were suffering badly.12 However, after the nineties, recovery set in, and in the years immediately preceding the First World War, the British observer J W Robertson Scott published a substantial survey of the politics and economy of agriculture in The Netherlands, called A Free Farmer in a Free State; and the title says it all. He was very enthusiastic about what he found, though he did express minor concern about the effects on farming

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9 T Radcliff, Report on the Agriculture of Eastern and Western Flanders; drawn up at the desire of the Farming Society of Ireland, 1819, pp 182-206.

10 H Colman, The Agriculture and Rural Economy of France, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland: from personal observation, 1848, pp 200 and 206.

11 É de la Laveleye, La Néerlande: études d'économie rurale, Paris, 1865, p 256.

12 H M Jenkins, 'Report on the Agriculture of the Kingdom of The Netherlands', Parliamentary Papers, Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors, and Others, 1881, XVI, pp 638-713.
of an absence of primogeniture in Dutch law. In general, then, according to the accounts of the foreigners, Dutch farming was seen to be advanced and prosperous, especially in the west.

There are certain distinctive primary features of Dutch agriculture. The country is almost entirely flat, so there is no division between fertile lowlands and rugged uplands. The regional differences are rather determined by the soil, and there are four principal soil types: marine clay along the coasts, river-clay along the main river-bed systems running through the country, sandy soils inland, and a limited amount of fertile loamy soil in the extreme south. (There are also substantial peat deposits.) These four types really simplify into two: clay and sand. In an age before the introduction and, more importantly, widespread acceptance of artificial fertilizers, which did not occur in The Netherlands before the 1880s, this division between clay and sand amounted to the crucial difference between fertile and infertile farmland. That difference meant that, for centuries, the coastal provinces had been able to produce surpluses for market, and had gradually specialized so that part of their land was permanently given over to cash crops. Because of their coastal location in one of the most urbanized and internationalized areas of the world, the agriculture on these coastal clays was fully integrated into the market economy long before the nineteenth century. The inland sandy soils were another matter. They were relatively infertile, which made it difficult for farmers to produce surpluses, and their location away from the trading centres in the coastal towns meant that agriculture there was much more isolated and less integrated with the marketplace. Money was relatively scarce in this kind of economy. This, then, is a fundamental feature of the nineteenth century which governed Dutch agriculture before the advent of artificial fertilizers, say in about 1880, and it is a feature which had been characteristic of Dutch agriculture since the seventeenth century. Farming was thus much less productive inland on the sand than on the coastal clays. At the start of the nineteenth century, crop yields were much lower there — in many cases only half — and labour productivity was similarly low on the sand, with the coastal provinces producing about twice as much per man-year as the sandy soil. Similarly, agricultural wages differed by about the same factor. Indeed, the case has been made that high productivity in agriculture was directly responsible for high wages throughout the regional economy. But it is crucial to make the point that the sand was not particularly backward, or low,
in its rates: rather it is the case that the
clay enjoyed remarkably high levels of
productivity and wages, compared to other
European countries. At the very beginning
of the nineteenth century, in 1807 for
example, the yields in the coastal provinces
were almost as high as they were to be at
the start of this century: average milk yields
per cow of 2,400 litres, seed-to-harvest ratios
of about 1:10, and large areas already in use
for cash crops and horticulture. 16

![Graph of Wheat prices at Arnhem in the nineteenth century](image)

As for the general fortunes of agriculture
in the nineteenth century, they followed a
similar pattern to most other European
countries. The graph of Dutch grain prices
in Figure 3 shows the general pattern of
change throughout the century, and the
presence of the long-term or Kondratieff
fifty-year business or trade cycle is evident.
Record prices in the French wars were
followed by a slump in price as the sea
trade opened up once more and Europe's
traditional food sources were tapped again
via the Baltic and, increasingly, the Black
Sea. A structural depression in agriculture
lasted through the 1820s and 1830s, with
slow improvements in the forties being
thwarted by crop failure, particularly the
potato blight. The 1850s and 1860s were
the golden age of agriculture, with prices
taking a definitive dive only at the end of
the seventies, after the world financial crash
of 1873. The price of agricultural products
continued to decline in The Netherlands
beyond the turn of the century, but
recovered well in time for the First World
War. This price-cycle is common to agricul-
ture in other European countries in broad
terms, and indeed to other forms of eco-
nomic activity like trading and manufactur-
Ing.

Before 1850 Dutch agriculture, sophisti-
cated though it was in the coastal provinces,
barely advanced. Production hardly grew,
and, while exports expanded slightly, con-
sumption per head at home probably
decreased. After 1850 production growth-
rates stepped up considerably, only partly
caused by export growth. Labour pro-
ductivity was also increasing. After 1880,
when (ironically) the crisis was in full swing,
production growth accelerated due to
increased demand both at home and abroad,
and the large-scale input of new technology
into agriculture accounted for a considerable
growth in productivity. 17

![Graph of Wheat prices at Arnhem in the nineteenth century](image)

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16 Van Zanden, op cit, p 42.

17 Van Zanden, op cit, pp 141, 350–1.
Taking the percentage of the working population engaged in agriculture as an indicator, in 1859 some 37.5 per cent of workers were active in farming. This figure was less than most other European countries in the 1850s, such as Belgium and France with 47 and 52 per cent, though of course it was far higher than Britain with only 22 per cent. So if The Netherlands was by no means an underdeveloped economy in terms of the percentage swing of her labour force into the secondary sector, then agriculture was still a vital component of her economy: the largest sector, in fact. If auxiliaries like blacksmiths, millers, and others directly dependent on agriculture are added on, then we are speaking of roughly half the population at the mid-century.

So agriculture's place in the Dutch economy, which did not undergo a conventional 'Industrial Revolution' at all in the nineteenth century, was a significant one. It was an important exporter of primary goods to England, but also to the surrounding continental industrializing nations as well, like France, Belgium and Germany. Agricultural exports accounted for 7 to 8 per cent of national income in 1850. Meanwhile The Netherlands was an importer of manufactured goods, and thus was in a classic peripheral economic situation. Agriculture was a major stimulant to the development of the transport infrastructure, and provided the basic materials for many domestic industries, like potato flour, cardboard, sugar-refining, linen and the dairy industry. One industrial crop less familiar in British agriculture, though heavily used in the British textile industry as a dyestuff, was madder. Madder was a Dutch speciality, grown mainly in the south-western seaways, for it was a rootcrop demanding very fertile soils, high levels of fertilizer, and, because it was left in the soil for two or often three years, it tied up capital for long periods. When synthetic chemical dyes were developed in Germany on a commercial basis in the 1870s, madder was almost entirely eclipsed, and it is now used only for certain obscure medicines, and for pigment in artist's oil-paint.

The ratio between grass and ploughed field was about 1.33:1, there being about a million hectares of grass to about three-quarters of a million arable. In the mid-nineteenth century, however, all that grass did not necessarily mean dairy and beef farming: most of the cattle were kept for their manure. In actual terms of arable to

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dairy, the ratio around 1850 was probably more like 2.5 hectares arable to 1 hectare dairy. On that arable land the main product was grain, and most of it was consumed domestically.20

Government policy towards agriculture was minimalist. The ruling class of The Netherlands, the class which dominated the government and parliament, was almost entirely detached from the land. There were a handful of aristocrats with modest estates in the east and south, but by the nineteenth century the vast majority of the members of the Protestant élite were not landed aristocrats or gentry, but a mercantile and financial élite, who were more or less indifferent to the land. It is true that there was a traditional and romantic interest amongst the bourgeoisie in retiring from the Exchange to a house in the country along the Vecht, but it was only an hour or two away from town, and no estates were involved, only houses and gardens. The commercial élite was little interested in agriculture and its problems. There was no landed gentry, or very little of it; indeed, the term ‘gentry’ is generally misleading when applied to The Netherlands.21 So unlike Britain with its Tory squirearchy, and most of the other nations of Europe with their land-based aristocracies and élites, the Dutch ruling class generally ignored farmers’ interests, and always subjected them to those of trade and finance. There were no Dutch corn laws in the post-Napoleonic period, despite Dutch grain exports being excluded from certain European markets. In the 1820s, while The Netherlands was joined to the traditionally protectionist southern (Belgian) provinces in the United Kingdom of The Netherlands (1815–30), there was some small measure of protection, which was immediately abolished after the Belgian Revolution and secession in 1830.22 Although a low sliding-scale tariff on grains was introduced in 1835 to help destitute farmers, it was adjusted wrongly and did not have the desired effect.23 Those tariffs were abolished in the late 1840s because of food shortages and the consequent need to import cheap grains to feed the populace; after 1850 there was no protection whatsoever for agriculture, and, once converted to free trade, the Dutch clung to it tenaciously and indeed dogmatically until well into the twentieth century.

However, there were certain forms of help forthcoming from the state for agriculture. It ran a land registration programme or kadaster which was completed in 1832 for everywhere except Limburg; it was intended to increase land-based tax revenue but the information which was gathered in the surveys was of great help to the farming lobby. The various district authorities and polder boards were built up into a Department of Public Works, which was important to Dutch farmers because of the drainage problems with the very low-lying land. Lakes were drained and heaths were cleared with central government legal and sometimes financial assistance. Attempts were made to remove the last vestiges of feudalism by abolishing hunting rights, archaic forms of tenancy like sharecropping, and common land. Tithing was a serious disincentive to agricultural investment in The Netherlands, and the government did pass a law permitting redemption by fixed money rents in 1872. But the Act had no teeth, for vested interest was too strong (the tithe-owners were usually from the financial and commercial élite), and so meaningful reform had to wait for 1907, after the demise of the liberal

21 In the early modern period some scholars use the term ‘gentry’ to signify the lesser nobility. E.g S D Marshall, The Dutch Gentry, 1500–1650: family, faith and fortune, New York, 1987.
era of laissez-faire. Before the great crisis of the last quarter of the nineteenth century there was no Ministry of Agriculture, and the government took little part in promoting agricultural education.

The evidence for widespread technological progress in the nineteenth century, before the crisis struck in the 1870s, is very limited. Coastal farming was, as we have seen, already highly advanced at the start of the century, but further change was not forthcoming on any popular basis between 1800 and 1880. One can read the farming societies’ publications, and find evidence of the circulation of new ideas: British, French, and German agricultural treatises were certainly read, but probably only by the tiny numbers of the bourgeoisie who had taken an amateur interest in farming. In 1815 all theology students at Dutch universities were obliged by King William I to follow courses in agricultural techniques, on the grounds that, when they got their first postings in the ordained ministry to obscure rural parishes, they could take the latest white-heat of agricultural technology with them and introduce it all to the simple peasants. The scheme was, however, a failure, and was cancelled in 1840. There were no widespread changes in manuring techniques, and further mechanization was minimal. Only after 1895 was there, for example, any substantial demand provided for the engineering industry from the agricultural sector in The Netherlands in the form of farmers buying agricultural machinery.

The pattern of size and price of farm very much followed the division between clay and sandy soils: the areas where high levels of tenancy were normal were the good, productive clay soils, where the urban bourgeoisie was prepared to invest in land in times of rising prices. This investment was not primarily to gain social status for the investors, as one might expect, but simply as a lucrative investment for resale. Similarly, the farms were much larger on the clay soils: the heavy soil required expensive capital equipment to work it properly. Between four and eight draught horses were used for ploughing on these soils, with the accompanying ploughmen, harness, tackle and implements, and in order to maintain that level of investment it was necessary to have a certain minimum size of farm. The sandy soils, however, could be worked far more easily, with less expensive equipment, and therefore the size of holding could be reduced. So from these indicators is is apparent that, on the sand, the small family-owned and family-run peasant-type farm was more common.

The situation in Dutch agriculture from 1800 to 1880 was never static, and it changed continually. The structural recession of the 1830s, the shortage-induced crisis of the 1840s, and the great boom of the third quarter of the century all bear witness to the fact that this period was one of dynamism and constant flux. Nevertheless, compared to the period after 1880, the situation was relatively stable. Then in the late seventies came the great crisis. The main problem – universal in European agriculture – was that of cheap grain from the world’s wide open spaces, such as India, South America, and the mid-west of North America, opened up by railway and steamship, flooding the European markets and undercutting the European producers. But it did not rest there. The new margarine threatened Dutch butter; Sumatran mineral oil and tropical plantation oil threatened oil-bearing seeds like rape, cole and linseed; quarantine regulations affected Dutch cattle; and chemical aniline eclipsed Dutch madder.

\[25\text{ De Jonge, op cit, p 181.}\]
\[26\text{ M J Wintle, "Dearly won and Cheaply sold";}\text{ the sale and purchase of agricultural land in the province of Zeeland in the nineteenth century}, \text{ Economisch- en sociaal-historisch jaargbok, XLV, 1986, pp 44-99.}\]
Dutch government refused to protect agriculture with tariffs for fear of retaliation which would injure their other trading interests, and meanwhile the price of nearly all agricultural products continued to fall.

III

Despite this situation it was in the period after 1880 that production and productivity began to rise at unprecedented rates in Dutch agriculture. By 1900 the crisis had abated, in that prices had begun to climb again. Now it is not the case that nothing happened before the 1870s, or that in some perverse way the crisis was needed in order to force change in the last two decades of the century. The changes had begun before 1880, in the period of rising prices in the third quarter of the century. But after the 1880s the innovations pioneered before the crisis became universally accepted, and the structure of agriculture in The Netherlands changed fundamentally. What was the nature of the fin de siècle changes?

First it should be noted that, as elsewhere, the crisis was relative. Grain-farming was under major attack, but in dairying the effect was less devastating, while horticulture was hardly affected. After all, cheap grain had considerable advantages for proto-intensive livestock farmers looking for cut-price feed. The rises in productivity were achieved mainly by specialization, and involved a strong swing away from grains to dairying, to industrial crops and to horticulture. Productivity was also boosted by the massive introduction of artificial fertilizers, especially on the sandy soils, and by the factorization of the dairy industry. These momentous changes were achieved with the assistance of the state, but in the main by the farmers themselves.

The government refused to introduce protective tariffs, but it did set up a major commission of enquiry, which reported in 1890. The government more or less legislated its recommendations, which were that there should be better agricultural education, and that there should be legal controls to maintain the quality and reputation of Dutch agricultural products, especially dairy products. The commission also recommended that co-operatives should be more widespread (the government duly provided the legal framework for this), and that the dairy industry should be factorized and centralized. So the government was prepared to provide a legal framework, but the initiative was left to the farmers themselves.

And respond they did. It was essentially in this period that the Dutch began to take on the characteristics of the kind of farming nation that they now form: many of the sand farms went over to dairying or to intensive livestock rearing — particularly pigs and poultry — and large parts of the clay areas went over to horticulture, much of it increasingly under glass. The production of vegetables, fruit, flowers and bulbs for the urban markets of Europe began to be a special feature. Elsewhere, on the clay, the grains, seeds and madder were replaced in large part by sugarbeet. Amsterdam had always had an important sugar industry based on colonial imports of cane sugar, but it now became the sugar-refining capital of Europe. Co-operatives were introduced, and were widespread and even universal after 1890, initially for purchasing, and then later for marketing, credit, and processing, most noticeably in the dairy industry and the beet-factories. Through the co-operative movement, which was run on denominational lines in The Netherlands, each and every farmer, however isolated and insignificant, was brought out of his proud isolation and independence and integrated into the world of changing

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27 Van Zanden, , p 246.
28 Van Zanden, op cit, pp 247–52.
technology and the international market. This accounts, crucially, for the ‘social modernization’ which took place in agriculture in these years. As a result, new technology was introduced on a wide scale to virtually all farms. The size of farms was small, so mechanization itself in the sense of ‘engines’ made no great strides, but field drainage, polder draining, deep ploughing, cultivation in rows, and livestock breeding all made substantial progress. The price of artificial fertilizers came down fast, and by the end of the century the Dutch were second only to the Flemings in Europe for the amount of chemicals they put on their fields. Ennobled seed-strains were produced in foreign and domestic laboratories, rotation patterns became increasingly sophisticated, and the fallow virtually disappeared.

Thus the crisis came to an end in the first decade of the twentieth century, in the sense that prices were on the rise again. This was probably related to international factors concerned with the long-term business cycle and — as far as the Dutch were concerned — the rise of Germany as an industrial power with an insatiable demand for food of all types. That being said, the changes wrought by the Dutch farmers themselves had altered agriculture in The Netherlands for good.

It is apparent from this outline of the general history of Dutch agriculture in the last century that it does not differ completely from other national agricultural chronicles; nevertheless it was in certain ways relatively more important. Although the percentage of the working population involved in agriculture was not particularly high, the Dutch arguably did not undergo an industrial revolution until after the Second World War. There was industrialization, to be sure: Dutch industry was not sick or weak, but it was modest, and never dominated the economy as it did in the nineteenth century in Britain, Germany, and especially in neighbouring Belgium. This meant that the Dutch were more than usually reliant upon their agriculture. It should be borne in mind that according to the best comparative figures we have, the Dutch, in terms of GNP per capita, were the richest nation in the world in 1830, and were still in fourth place in 1900: and all this without industrialization! The service sector was obviously important here, but the role played by Dutch agriculture was vital as well. The admiration of the foreign commentators which was cited at the start of this article was not altogether misplaced!

IV

The final part of this paper will concentrate on a more specific area of Dutch agricultural history, more specific both in subject matter and geographical focus. The region in question is the province of Zeeland, a rural economy on a group of islands in the extreme south-west of the country, lying in the estuaries of the Scheldt, the Zwin, the Rhine and the Meuse (see Fig 1).

Agriculture was vital to Zeeland’s economy in the last century. Partly because of the nature of the soil, which was almost exclusively the heavy but fertile marine clay, but also because of generations of tradition, nearly all the province’s farming was of one basic type, known as ‘Zeeland wheat cultivation’. Less than a quarter of the farmland was under pasture in 1899. Only on the island of Walcheren, around the provincial capital, was dairy farming to be found on any scale. There were few cattle (in 1883 the fewest of all provinces except Drenthe), and her dairy produce did not enjoy a good reputation. The cultivation was centred on wheat, and indeed Zeeland was the principal producer of that crop in The Netherlands. Relatively few farmers

32 23.67 per cent.
were owners of the land they cultivated, and tenancy dominated in Zeeland more than in any other province. Tenancies in the province were by tradition short, at seven years, and nearly all farmland was subject to tithing. These factors exercised a braking effect on technological improvements such as field drainage and the like, for the capital expended on such projects was difficult to recoup in increased yields and profits in the short time upon which tenants could rely, especially under a restrictive tithing system. Much of the produce, especially the wheat, and the cash-crops like madder and beets, was exported from the province to the rest of The Netherlands and abroad, for the most part (and increasingly) via Rotterdam.

Agriculture in Zeeland, then, had its own special character, and indeed had its problems, but by the start of the nineteenth century it was already very advanced indeed, and as the main pillar of the provincial economy it was reasonably well ordered, and fully integrated into the market economy of northern Europe. The sector in Zeeland was financially successful for most of the nineteenth century, and the capital accumulated must have been, or should have been, considerable. But the economy of Zeeland as a whole, which, during the heyday of the Dutch Republic, had been on a par with the commercial grandeur of the province of Holland to the north, was characterized in the nineteenth century by most of the hallmarks of the periphery within the regional economy. Beyond farming it had virtually nothing: its fishing and trade were in decline, its manufacturing amounted to very little. My interest is to explore ways in which the capital, which was undoubtedly accumulated in the agricultural sector in the local economy, was prevented from being invested in other local sectors. Some of those means are obvious: two prime candidates are rents (it was an area of high tenancy) and taxes (although the bulk of taxation in the nineteenth century was indirect, and did not affect the land). But less familiar among the ways in which capital was being siphoned out of the province was by means of farmers losing large sums of money on land transactions. To put it more plainly, farmers were squandering their profits by entering into injudicious property deals. When this conclusion first suggested itself, it came as something of a surprise, for the thought of farmers being hoodwinked into major losses in property speculation seemed dubious, and especially so in Zeeland, where the tillers of the land have a particular reputation for shrewd parsimony. But this concept does not really concern individuals at any particular moment: it is more a question of the effects of patterns of land ownership juxtaposed with movements in the prices of land over a very long period: of a whole century or more.

The land-hunger of peasants and farmers is well documented. Certainly there were few farmers in Zeeland who would not have liked to own the land they farmed in the nineteenth century, despite the fact that the province had one of the highest rates of tenancy in the country. The funds for the purchase of land by farmers were only available, even with the assistance of heavy mortgaging, at times of agricultural prosperity. When prices had been good or rising for a number of years, farmers could get their heads above water, reschedule their finances and make investments - often buying the land they farmed. Conversely, they were often obliged to sell off land in times of crisis, in order to make working capital available, and when high mortgage payments were impossible to maintain. However, there was a complicating factor. The profitability of farming at any one moment was directly linked to the level and direction of agricultural prices. And the price of land was also linked to the price of agricultural products. Farmers were only in

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This thesis, outlined in the following paragraphs, is fully developed in Wintle, 'Dearly won', op cit, where full references are to be found.
a position to buy land when the price was high, and they were forced to sell when the prices were falling. In other words, they were buying dear and selling cheap. It is my contention that, in the long term, this was one of the mechanisms, and probably a major one, by means of which Zeeland’s agricultural economy was relieved of its accumulated capital. The hypothesis is, then, that as soon as land prices dropped below what was considered to be an average or reasonable level, non-farming investors would commence buying, and continue to do so in increasing numbers until prices passed their nadir and had reached an above-average level once more. At that point they would start selling to farmers, who, because of rising prices and profits, were in a position to buy once again. In order to test this hypothesis it was necessary to construct several time-series of land ownership, land prices and land rents, and this I did.34

It appeared that there were in Zeeland in the nineteenth century cyclical movements in land prices and rents which corresponded almost exactly to the long-term cycle in the price of agricultural products represented in the graph of wheat prices in Fig 3: high prices in the Napoleonic wars, low ones in the 1820s and 1830s, slowly rising through the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s, reaching a zenith in the 1880s. They then plummeted until the 1890s, when a recovery set in. This cycle in land prices and the fact that it followed the cycle in product prices was not surprising, but it needed to be documented. More unexpected was the discovery that there was also a cyclical character to the changes in the ownership of the land. The object of the investigation into the ownership of the land was to distinguish between owner-occupiers and owner-investors. Charting percentages of owner-occupancy over the course of the century, the same cycle was found to exist: increases in owner-occupancy as prices rose, and increases in tenancy as prices fell. There was, however, a ‘lag’ between the two cycles, of between ten and twenty years, which was necessary on the one hand for the farmers to save up enough to make their purchases, and on the other for the non-farming investors to make a profit. Zeeland was worse hit by this mechanism than were other provinces because of its high level of tenancy, and because of its over-concentration on arable farming.

Finally, the question begs: where did this accumulated agricultural capital go to? The ‘investor-purchasers’ came from several groups. In a province where tenancy was high, the state was a major landowner, through means of the Crown and state domains. The state sold land in small quantities to farmers when the price was high, but unlike private investors did not buy it back again when the price dropped. Most landlords were absentee, in that they did not live on their estates: we have seen that the ethic of the country gentleman meant little in The Netherlands, as a thoroughly bourgeois and urbanized civilization. Many lived in Zeeland’s towns, many lived in The Hague, Rotterdam or Amsterdam in the central province of Holland, and many lived abroad – particularly in Belgium. There were even some British investors in Zeeland soil.35 In this way these profits from land transactions often found their way quite rapidly out of the province. An unconfirmed suspicion is that the bulk of land transactions were conducted on the side of the non-owner-occupiers by the nineteenth-century prototypes of investment fund managers: at the lower end, these would be local town and village lawyers, investing their clients’ savings and making a modest profit for themselves on the side, while at the upper end the merchant banks and investment


35 In the 1830s a British land reclamation and exploitation company called The Netherlands Land Enclosure Company began a project in the Rilland-Bath area of Zeeland. See P J Aarsen, Rilland, Bath en Maire in de loop der eeuwen, Kruiningen, 1977, pp 113-19.
MODEST GROWTH AND CAPITAL DRAIN IN AN ADVANCED ECONOMY:

brokers of Amsterdam and other major money markets were also active in this field. My study of the sources is as yet far from complete, but on the basis of pilot studies into the archives of prominent lawyers in Zeeland in the nineteenth century, this seems to be the emerging pattern. That the farmers lost money is already certain: the exact proportionate make-up of the group to which they lost it remains a matter for continuing research.

It is not the intention to apportion blame here. The farmers certainly did not realize the effects of their land-hunger; it is doubtful whether the non-farming investors were aware that they were systematically asset-stripping the local agricultural economy. I have never found any indication that a broker recorded with satisfaction that agricultural prices were falling, with a view to future land purchases. But the causality between the two cycles of land ownership and land prices is not necessary to prove the point, that in a situation when price movements are cyclical, farmers as a group are likely to lose from purchasing land when profits are rising. They are likely to suffer because they are buying dear, and are at some time in the future probably going to have to sell cheap when the bubble has burst, and the cycle of prices has turned.

The local situation concerning the market in agricultural land in the province of Zeeland is unlikely to have been unique in The Netherlands: other rural provinces may have suffered in the same way, though the prevalence of tenancy in Zeeland probably exacerbated the situation. At a national level, changes in demand patterns were probably the chief determinants of the fortunes of the primary sector, but here is a supply-side factor which may help to account for the relatively slow advancement of Dutch agriculture in the nineteenth century up to the 1880s, despite its already sophisticated nature by 1800. The Dutch capital markets were very efficient in their operation, and The Netherlands has been a significant net exporter of capital at least since the eighteenth century. There is no doubt that other factors were involved, but the land market mechanism deserves more attention than it has previously received.

Notes on Contributors
(continued from page 16)

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The Origins and Early Development of the National Farmers' Union

By GRAHAM COX, PHILIP LOWE, and MICHAEL WINTER

Abstract
The early history of the National Farmers' Union (NFU) has hitherto been comparatively neglected. The associations of agricultural interest which preceded it and the circumstances of its formation in 1908 are outlined. Whereas agricultural interests had often been divided and weak, the union, particularly under Colin Campbell's leadership, established both its credibility and a sound organizational structure. The period of the Great War consolidated and extended its ability to speak authoritatively for the needs of agriculture and the significance of the War Agricultural Executive Committees is considered. Emerging NFU positions on the issue of protection and its moves towards a more positive and constructive role in policy formulation are examined. Circumstances at the outset of the Second World War forced a recognition of the need for a working partnership between farmers and the state: a development of corporatist relations made possible by the prior emergence of a representative farmers' organization with the necessary organizational capability and political acumen. This paper shows how those competences were acquired.

The National Farmers' Union of England and Wales was formed in 1908 and rapidly rose to prominence as the major representative organization for farmers. By the 1920s its membership had reached more than 100,000. It peaked at 210,000 in 1953 and is currently around 120,000. Remarkably, there is no readily available published account of the origins of the National Farmers' Union (NFU), although it would be hard to underestimate its importance to the twentieth-century development of agricultural policy in England and Wales. Its role in the immediate post Second World War period did, of course, receive scholarly attention in the seminal study by Self and Storing, but that work provides only a brief outline of the origins of the Union.1 This paper seeks to go some way towards remedying this deficiency in our understanding of twentieth-century agricultural politics.

In accounting for the Union's rapid success, Self and Storing emphasize its partisan dedication to the needs of tenant farmers in contrast to earlier and unsuccessful agricultural organizations which had attempted to represent all three branches of agriculture—workers, farmers and landowners. Newby claims, rather more explicitly, that the Union was formed in direct response to growing trade union activity among farm workers and the undue political influence of landlords, especially in Lincolnshire where the first Union branch was formed.2 He cites as evidence the high incidence of union activity in that county and the formation of the Central Land Association (the forerunner of the County Landowners' Association) in Lincoln in 1907. However, his claim that the NFU was a direct response to the landowners' organization is somewhat misplaced, since the Lincolnshire branch was formed in 1904 and not 1908 as he claims. 1908 was the year in which the national union was formed, and by that time other factors had come strongly into play.

This paper examines the formation of the Union and argues that whilst it did indeed

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CHAMPION THE INTERESTS OF TENANT FARMERS IN THEIR RELATIONS WITH WORKERS AND LANDLORDS, ITS IMPETUS AND SUCCESS WAS EVEN MORE DEPENDENT UPON THE ASSERTION OF FARMERS' INTERESTS IN THE MARKET-PLACE AND TO GOVERNMENT. CONFLICT BETWEEN FARMERS AND WORKERS, AND FARMERS AND LANDOWNERS WAS, AFTER ALL, A LONG ESTABLISHED FEATURE OF AGRARIAN POLITICS. BUT HENCEFORTH ITS IMPORTANCE WAS TO BE INCREASINGLY OVERSHADOWED BY THE GROWING SALIENCE OF RELATIONS BETWEEN FARMERS AND THE GOVERNMENT, FOOD PROCESSORS, AND SUPPLIERS. THIS ADDED DIMENSION, WHICH HAS YET TO FIND A PLACE IN STANDARD ACCOUNTS OF THE ORIGINS OF THE NFU, EMERGES CLEARLY FROM THE DETAILED EXAMINATION OF THE FORMATION OF THE UNION. INDEED WE WOULD ARGUE THAT THE UNION EFFECTIVELY TURNED ITS BACK ON THE PREOCCUPATION WITH TENURAL ISSUES WHICH HAD CHARACTERIZED EARLIER ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTEAD FOCUSED ON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AT A TIME WHEN SUCH ISSUES WERE ASSUMING NATIONAL POLITICAL PRIORITY IN DEBATES ON TARIFF REFORM AND PROTECTIONISM.

I

IT IS IMPORTANT, THEREFORE, TO PAY SOME ATTENTION TO THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ILL-FATED ORGANIZATIONS WHICH PRECEDED THE NFU. ALTHOUGH THE AGRICULTURAL DEPRESSION OF THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY GAVE RISE, IN THE CREATION OF THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE IN 1889, TO A SEPARATE, IF RUDIMENTARY, CENTRAL ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE RESPONSIBLE FOR AGRICULTURAL QUESTIONS, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ESCHEWED PROTECTIONISM. THIS WAS IN SHARP CONTRAST TO OTHER WEST EUROPEAN NATIONS. MOREOVER, ITS RELUCTANCE TO INTERVENE IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR OR EVEN TO DEVELOP A COHERENT POLICY WAS REFLECTED IN THE CONFUSIONS AND UNCERTAINTIES WHICH BESET THE VARIOUS FARMING ORGANIZATIONS. NOT ONLY WERE THERE POLITICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TENANT FARMERS, FARM WORKERS AND LANDLORDS, BUT EVEN WITHIN THESE GROUPINGS THERE WAS LITTLE LASTING AGREEMENT ON THE CAUSES OF, OR SOLUTIONS TO, THE PROBLEMS BESETTING AGRICULTURE. THE PERIOD WAS THUS CHARACTERIZED BY A NUMBER OF POLITICAL INITIATIVES, MOSTLY SHORT-LIVED AND INCAPABLE OF PROVING THE BASIS FOR SUSTAINED POLICY DEVELOPMENTS. SUCH ILL-FATED EFFORTS DID, HOWEVER, MARK A CHANGE IN THAT THEIR AIDS AND OBJECTIVES WERE OVERLY POLITICAL. PREVIOUSLY NATIONAL AND REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETIES AND LOCAL FARMERS' CLUBS, WHICH HAD EXISTED FROM THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, HAD DEVOTED THEMSELVES PRIMARILY TO THE PROMOTION OF TECHNICAL ADVANCEMENT.

FOR EXAMPLE THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY OF ENGLAND (RASE), LAUNCHED IN 1839 AT A TIME OF GREAT CONTROVERSY OVER THE CORN LAWS, RESOLUTELY AVOIDED INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICAL DEBATE DESPITE PRESSURE FROM SOME FARMERS THAT IT SHOULD BE USED TO DEFEND THE CORN LAWS. THE FARMERS' CENTRAL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND, A RIVAL ORGANIZATION FOUNDED IN THE SAME YEAR, WAS OVERLY POLITICAL BUT IT LAPSED WITH THE REPEAL OF THE CORN LAWS.

THE NEXT SERIOUS ATTEMPT TO UNITE AGRICULTURE POLITICALLY WAS MADE THROUGH THE FORMATION IN 1865 OF THE CENTRAL CHAMBER OF AGRICULTURE (CCA). INITIALLY TENANT FARMERS USED THE CHAMBER AND ITS AFFILIATED COUNTY CHAMBERS TO FURTHER THE ARGUMENT FOR GREATER TENANT RIGHTS, PARTICULARLY A LEGAL RIGHT TO REIMBURSEMENT FOR THE PERMANENT IMPROVEMENTS, SUCH AS BUILDINGS, FENCING AND DRAINAGE, CARRIED OUT ON FARMS BY TENANTS. BUT LANDLORD OPPOSITION WITHIN THE CHAMBERS PROVED STRONG AND ULTIMATELY THEY BECAME THE PRESERVE OF LANDLORDS, WITH FEW FARMERS OR WORKERS REMAINING AS MEMBERS.


About 60 per cent of the CCA’s chairmen between 1865 and 1915 held titles and over half were MPs. As Brooking argues, the National Farmers’ Union, formed in 1908, was not so much an organization based on the experience of the Chamber as one which actually emerged in opposition to it.

In 1879 a separate tenants’ group, the Farmers’ Alliance, was formed. But after much vaunted initial success around the time of the Liberal election victory of 1880 it slumped in the mid-1880s and was disbanded in 1888. The problems faced by the Alliance are instructive, even if at first glance somewhat contradictory. On the one hand its claim to represent all tenant farmers was compromised by too close an identification with the Liberal Party, particularly its radical wing, and the claim that the Alliance had links with Irish tenant-farmers’ organizations. On the other, its aims were rather modest. It distanced itself from criticisms of the landlord-tenant system as such, and its views on the need for rent as an incentive for good agricultural practice put it at odds with emergent radical thinking on the benefits of peasant proprietorship. In short, its pragmatic and capitalistic outlook limited the breadth of its appeal both within farming circles and amongst radicals who were increasingly concerned with the plight of farm workers and the limited opportunities for small farmers.

In 1892 a National Federation of Tenant Farmers’ Clubs was formed, based in Lancashire, Cheshire, Cumberland and North Wales. As with the Farmers’ Alliance, the Federation concentrated its activities on establishing security of tenure and tenant rights. One other political initiative which deserves mention was the formation, also in 1892, of the National Agricultural Union (NAU) which was instigated at a conference organized by the CCA and the Lancashire Federation of Farmers’ Associations. Largely inspired by one man, Lord Winchelsea, it aimed, like the CCA, to represent landowners, farmers, and workers. But whilst its insistence on equal representation of the three groups on its executive clearly implied criticism of the landlord domination of the CCA, the two organizations essentially worked in tandem, with the NAU committed to a greater emphasis on local activity. It did not improve tripartite relations, however. Indeed, Brooking suggests that it prompted more distrust. Nonetheless the union grew rapidly to 50,000 members by 1895, the majority being farm workers, although after the death of Lord Winchelsea in 1898 it languished as a national agricultural pressure group and was taken over by propagandists for agricultural co-operation, becoming in 1901 the Agricultural Organisation Society.

The emphasis of groups other than the CCA and NAU on tenurial matters served to divert attention from other likely subjects for would-be agricultural reformers. In particular the cause of protectionism was slow to attract support. Tracy adduces seven main reasons why the UK, alone among the major European powers, failed to adopt protectionist policies for agriculture during the late nineteenth century:

1. Britain’s lead in industrial production favoured free trade;
2. The influence of economic theorists such as Ricardo and Adam Smith;
3. The political legacy of the anti Corn Laws agitation;
4. Britain’s lead in industrial production favoured free trade;
5. The influence of economic theorists such as Ricardo and Adam Smith;
6. The political legacy of the anti Corn Laws agitation;
4 The strength of the British navy;
5 The food production of British colonies;
6 The relative political weakness of the landowners as a result of democratic reforms;
7 The absence of a coherent and united agricultural pressure group as a result of divisions between landlord and tenant and between arable and livestock farmers.

Tariff reform did become a major issue at the turn of the century and for a while, after pressures for tenurial reform had been appeased by the 1906 Agricultural Holdings Act, it was the dominant topic of agricultural politics and, indeed, national politics. The division and weakness of the agricultural interests is nowhere more apparent than in their limited and contradictory contribution to this wider debate which was fuelled mainly by resentment towards the foreign tariffs erected against British manufactures and a concern to preserve the unity of the Empire. In 1881 the Farmers' Alliance had denounced protectionism in The Times as a 'delusion and a snare'. By the end of the century support for protectionism was, nevertheless, gathering amongst farmers. But few either saw agricultural tariffs as politically feasible or engaged in political activity to secure protectionist policies. Moreover there were still opposing voices. Increasingly, many livestock farmers were becoming dependent upon cheap imported corn and other fodder crops as a feeding-stuff. Opposition to protectionism from other farmers, moreover, arose from fears that proposals for imperial preference would be likely to increase rather than decrease the volume of food imports.

The Liberals' electoral triumph of 1906, on a free trade ticket, forced an intense debate within the Unionist party on the nature of the protectionist policies which might be pursued. But its increasing complexity did little to win the support of organized opinion within agriculture. Thus, when the Unionist Party dropped the policy of taxes on food imports in 1913 it feared local opposition from farmers far more than any concerted national opposition from the newly formed National Farmers' Union. H W Palmer, the secretary of the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union, immediately informed Bonar Law of his opposition. The NFU, meanwhile, must have been well aware by this stage that tariff reform promised little for the farmers. In its attempts to prevent a re-run of the electoral débâcle of 1906, Unionist tariff reformers had strenuously repudiated any notion that increased food prices would result from a policy of imperial preference:

Tariff reform in fact, far from being expected to raise food prices in the eyes of its advocates, was expected to reduce them by stimulating the production of food in the colonies. The thinking behind this was urban, to proclaim that tariff reform would 'enable our working classes to obtain the necessaries of life at their lowest prices', but it left the farmers high and dry.

This change of emphasis may not have been fully appreciated by traditional Conservative voters in the shire counties, who still felt betrayed by the volte-face of 1913. The importance of such local feeling cannot be entirely discounted. It clearly caused much concern to Unionist party organizers. Marrison, for instance, suggests that Tracy overlooks the divergence between local and national agricultural opinion and as a result makes too much of the landlord/tenant and livestock/arable divisions in explaining the lack of a consistently articulated protectionism from Britain's farming leaders. He

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14 Ibid., passim.
16 Tracy, op cit., passim.
18 Sykes, op cit.
19 Ibid p 273.
emphasizes instead the wider political constraints facing the national farming organizations. In particular, and notwithstanding the existence of keen Unionist advocates of agricultural protection, such as Viscount Alfred Milner and Henry Chaplin, Marrison points to the continuing disregard for protectionist arguments by many politicians and senior civil servants:

Tariff reform was a difficult debate, a chaos of complex and often baffling economic arguments in which it was easy to be made a fool of. Furthermore, the sixty years since 1846 had led to an ethos in which the Cobden Club and Free Trade League did not hesitate to question the morality, even the sanity, of the protectionist. Given that the poor spent a high proportion of their income on food, agricultural protectionists were particularly vulnerable to such propaganda. Agricultural protectionism flourished more easily in the 'Farmers' Parliaments', the innkeepers' rooms of Hodge's masters, than it did in the lofty debating halls and electrically-lit committee rooms of Westminster.10

Tracy also fails to give sufficient attention to the extraordinary state of party politics during the twenty years up to the Liberal landslide victory of 1906. It was not only farmers who were unable to find a means of establishing new policies. The question of Irish home rule effectively divided British politics in a manner which transcended other political cleavages, of which agriculture was only one. Social reformers influenced by collectivist thinking found themselves as significant groupings within both main parties. Leaders of both parties during this period found difficulties in devising programmes sufficient to command party loyalty or even, on occasion, to form a government. It is scarcely surprising that a subject as inherently complex as agricultural protection failed to find its way into party programmes, even though many members in both Houses of Parliament had some agricultural interests. In the light of this party political confusion the lobbying by farming organizations which did take place was designed to influence politicians in both main parties. The NAU attempted to canvass prospective parliamentary candidates to urge them to support an agricultural programme, a policy that was later taken up by the NFU. Frustration with the ineffectiveness of the CCA's parliamentary activities led a number of its local associations to promote the idea of a separate agricultural party. The initiative ultimately failed to win full CCA support, however, in spite of the enthusiasm of its secretary A H H Matthews. Indeed, given the lack of success of various attempts to forge a new Centre Party around this time the failure of the CCA is hardly surprising. The incident provided one more opportunity which the emergent NFU could exploit, as well as a lesson regarding its own parliamentary tactics.21

II

In developing an account of the origins of the NFU we have drawn upon some little known local studies as well as unpublished and archival sources.22 The Union has its roots in the failure of the various tenant farming organizations of the latter years of the nineteenth century and in the conservatism of the only organization which did survive, the CCA. It would be unfair to suggest that the CCA devoted itself entirely to the preservation of landlord privileges. Indeed, it even endorsed modest policy changes in favour of tenant rights. Nonetheless its political initiatives over a fifty-year period were somewhat limited. It could have been otherwise...
claim some credit for the passage of a number of Diseases of Animals Acts which helped to advance disease eradication. It campaigned on local taxation and freight charges on the railways, and it played a part in the establishment of the Board of Agriculture. Beyond that it acted mainly as a forum for the discussion of agricultural matters, more often than not with a bias towards the concerns of landowners.

A number of Farmers' Protection Associations whose insistence on farmer-only membership and concern with the provision of legal assistance anticipated the NFU were established around 1900. In 1905 several of these local organizations united to form the North Eastern Agricultural Federation. Other regional groupings in the Midlands, Lancashire and Worcester followed. But attempts to amalgamate into a national body were resisted by the North Eastern Federation. In contrast, the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union (LFU) founded in 1904, the immediate forerunner to the NFU, was quite prepared to lead moves towards national organization. Its first chairman and instigator was Edward W Howard, who first floated the idea in 1900. A number of issues prompted his actions. He was particularly angry that farmers should have to pay taxes for the upkeep of roads 'that were carrying an increasing burden of farm produce from abroad'. Howard was soon eclipsed by Colin Campbell who became Chairman of the Lincolnshire Union six months later and was subsequently President of the NFU from its formation in 1908 until 1918. In 1906 Campbell addressed a meeting to launch the second county farmers' union in the country in Cornwall. Ironically Cornwall subsequently delayed affiliating to the NFU until 1918. Two other county branches successfully launched prior to 1908 were Devon and Kent.

The spur to the formation of a national group came in August 1908 when a number of farmers in Shropshire opposed a move by the National Federation of Meat Traders' Associations requiring a warranty of health with all cattle sold. A vigorous 'no warranty' campaign was set in motion, culminating in two simultaneous meetings on 3 November. In London the CCA met with the National Federation of Meat Traders' Associations to seek a settlement. While addressing a packed inaugural meeting of the Shropshire Farmers' Union in Shrewsbury, Colin Campbell was interrupted to receive a telegram from London announcing the capitulation of the meat traders. The success of the CCA was seen not as a reason to re-think the notion of forming a new organization but rather as proof of the effectiveness of resolute campaigning. Indeed the chairman of the Shropshire branch claimed that success lay with the new organization which rapidly merged with the Lincolnshire union, and in December 1908, in London, took a formal decision to establish a national union.

A further boost to the union occurred at its first general meeting in the following June at the Gloucester show, when five hundred new members were added to the 10,000 who had already joined. By the summer of 1910 the figure had risen to 15,000; it reached 22,000 by early 1916; and by 1918 the figure at around 60,000 was nearly one third of the eligible membership. The spread of geographical coverage

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13 Ibid Chapter 4, passim.
14 Ibid, p 121.
15 Ibid, p 122.
16 Ibid, p 124.
17 Brooking dismisses a claim that the Yorkshire Agricultural Union, founded in 1891, was the first county branch of the Union on the grounds that it permitted non-farmer members, p 126.
18 Ibid, p 127.
19 Notebooks of E W Howard in the possession of Mr C Howard, Lincolnshire.
20 L B Powell, Full Harvest: The Story of the National Farmers' Union of England and Wales, unpublished ms held at the NFU Library in Knightsbridge, p 69.
21 Brooking, op cit, passim.
was rapid: by 1918 only Cornwall, Caernarfonshire, Merioneth, Cumberland, Westmorland and Durham lacked affiliated groups. Membership reached 100,000 in the early 1920s, but declined for a period during the 1920s. Self and Storing suggest that membership began to climb again at the end of the 1920s. Walters, looking at the Cheshire county branch, places the revival somewhat later. He suggests that in a county dominated by dairying, the failures in dairy policy in the late 1920s prompted a fall in membership so that the county had only 2500 members in 1932, fewer than in 1918. But after the formation of the Milk Marketing Board, membership increased rapidly, reaching 4500 in 1937, 5000 in 1940 and 5700 in 1945.

Campbell, more than any other person, established the direction of the early NFU. With other leaders he turned his back on any suggestion that the union might include representatives of workers and landowners. It saw itself primarily as a tenant farmers' organization, though not clearly enough for some counties, which prompted the Devon Farmers' Union (DFU) to resolve in 1918 that the NFU Executive Committee should contain at least five tenant members. In its early days, also, it avoided alliances which might prejudice its objective solely to represent farmers. The union was aware that the power of landlords was on the wane and that public sympathies, not to mention those of the Liberal Party, were very much with the farmers and workers. Subsequently, once it had become well established, the union did seek to establish collaborative relations with landowner and worker organizations, under pressure from its county branches where cordial working relations with workers and landowners were seen as a practical necessity.

Thus in 1918 the Parliamentary Committee of the DFU held a series of meetings with the Agricultural Workers Union (AWU), from which arose a resolution to form 'a National Agricultural Association to link farmers, landlords, workers and trades, to give legislative effect to the urgent requirements of agriculture'. The NFU launched a series of initiatives, although they did not go quite so far as the DFU proposal. For example in 1922 the executive agreed to hold meetings with the Central Landowners Association and the AWU to make recommendations for a Joint National Programme. Moreover the union was brought into close contact with other agricultural interests in its participation between 1919 and 1924 in the statutorily established Council of Agriculture for England.

Campbell strongly resisted the notion of an agricultural party. Above all, his vision was of a united farmers' body, and he bitterly opposed any factionalism that might diminish the influence of the Union. Moreover, he was one of the first agricultural leaders to recognize that, in an increasingly managed economy, agri-politics had to be fought, not only by seeking to convince politicians of 'moral' or 'national' arguments, but also by offering them the prospect of a unified body of agriculturalists committed to progressive policies. Thus in developing policy he directed his energies towards government as well as towards the membership, thereby ensuring that the Union avoided the error of single-issue politics to which the earlier tenant farmer organizations had succumbed. He attempted, additionally, to build support for a package of measures and avoided those which discriminated in favour of, or against, particular sections of the farming industry.

Thus at a time when the plight of small farmers excited much public comment he resisted any notion of special policies which might alienate larger farmers, on whom the Union's financial strength ultimately
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depended, as in this letter to the Board of Agriculture, written in 1912:

I am all against small men being singled out for help, there is too much spoon feeding already. Land has been taken compulsorily for smallholders whose success even under normal conditions was open to grave doubt... Even if it could be done I doubt the wisdom of bolstering up insolvent farmers, whether large or small, and merely postponing the evil day.37

The LFU had already effectively discouraged the smallest farmers from membership by setting a membership fee of half a penny per acre with a minimum of one shilling subscription.38 It should, perhaps be remembered that Campbell himself was a substantial farmer.39 Other policies, however, were designed either to attract the smaller farmers or, as has consistently happened since, to make political capital from sympathy for small farmers. It is often difficult to discriminate between the two sets of motives: they may not, indeed, be separable. For example, the Union presented its case concerning trading standards for fertilizer and animal foodstuffs as ‘especially for the protection of the small farmer against fraud’.40

In nurturing the support of the smaller farmers the adoption of specific reform policies was of far lesser importance than the manner in which the Union organized its own affairs. The significance of this factor has been neglected by most commentators who have tended to concentrate on the national political role of the Union in assessing the reasons for its successes. For Self and Storing, concentrating on state-industry relations, the Union’s fortunes were set by the responsibilities thrust upon it during the First World War:

Almost accidentally, the Union found itself a major force in agricultural politics as it was called upon to play an important role in policy formulation and execution.41

There can be little doubt that the food production campaign of the 1914–18 war greatly boosted the NFU’s position, but it was not quite so ‘accidentally’ contrived as they suggest. The union was drawn into policy discussions at a national level and Walters highlights how at the local level the new responsibilities contributed to the strengthening of the union’s branch structure.42

The emphasis on the war period should not, therefore, detract attention from the progress the union had made prior to the war. It could only enter into new relations with central government and the county councils in wartime because it had already established both its credentials and a sound organizational structure. Highlighting the contacts the union had made with both Liberal and Unionist parties and with Whitehall, Brooking concludes that by 1914 ‘the NFU seemed to have won a place in the political scene as one of the more authoritative spokesmen on the needs of agriculture’.43 The war consolidated and extended this position.

Its pre-war growth had been effectively organized. Colin Campbell was deeply aware of the need to build up a committed membership and to retain the loyalty and unity of the different sectors of a highly diverse industry. The message had been brought home to him early on through his experiences with the Cornish Farmers’ Union, over whose inauguration he had presided but which had then persistently refused to affiliate to the national union until 1918. In his attention to organizational questions Campbell was ably assisted by the first national secretary, H W Palmer, and by the treasurer, W A May. The latter was a publisher and allowed the already well-known agricultural weekly, the Mark Lane Express, to carry the official imprimatur of the Union and to report on all Union

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37 Quoted in Powell, op cit, p 31.
38 Brooking, op cit, passim.
39 There is a discrepancy between Powell and Brooking with regard to the exact size of Campbell’s farm. Powell gives a figure of 2,000 acres and Brooking 600 acres.
40 NFU General Council, 1909, Institute of Agricultural History, University of Reading.
41 Self and Storing, op cit, p 39.
42 Walters, op cit, passim.
43 Brooking, op cit, p 2.
activities. Such publicity was invaluable. Palmer, who had previously worked in insurance, encouraged a professional approach and the provision of services for individual members. He was largely responsible for the idea of using attractive insurance premiums to entice members. The NFU Mutual Insurance Society was formed in 1921 but most county branches had adopted local schemes much earlier than that. Not only did the premiums provide the finance for salaried officers, but they also bound the members more strongly to the Union, thus countering the risks of fluctuations in membership as its involvement in different issues changed and of competing organizations emerging to poach members. During the inter-war years insurance and legal advice provided the most important day-to-day activity in the county branches, except perhaps, for those involved in the milk question.

It was also, perhaps, Campbell’s Cornish experience that convinced him that the Union should not seek too great a degree of centralism or unanimity which might strain its internal unity. On a number of issues the union avoided taking a definitive stance. This was especially the case in the early years, for example, over tariff reform. In 1910 the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

That the Executive Committee of the NFU makes no pronouncement on the merits or demerits of tariff reform, but strongly urges the members and farmers generally to make their combination so powerful that if a definite scheme of tariff reform is promulgated, the industry of agriculture in all its branches shall receive an equal share of any benefits that may accrue to other industries.

The establishment of a strong county branch structure with close links with headquarters ultimately reaped tremendous advantages in forging a loyalty to the national organization which could transcend strong regional and sectional divergences. Such a strategy was not without its problems for the national union however. Thus, in the case of milk marketing, Cheshire NFU was at the forefront of the campaign for a national scheme, but the Union was faced with considerable disquiet from non-milk producing counties.

Campbell also recognized the need for caution in party politics. When the Unionists dropped tariff reform in 1913, not only did NFU leaders learn something of the fickleness of party commitments, but also something of the reasoning behind policy reversals. In this case the lesson was indeed salutary, for Bonar Law’s thinking was partly based on electoral considerations. In his view, a reversal of tariff reform policies would not deprive the Unionists of many farming votes because the farmers were, by now, even more hostile to the Liberal Party’s proposals to establish an agricultural minimum wage.

The Union made no formal links with political parties, although it sought to develop influence within them. It encouraged county branches to promote farmer involvement at all levels: with the judiciary, local government, and in parliament. Its success in this should not be underestimated. Thus Hallam notes a significant increase in the proportion of farmers on Somerset County Council, from 15 per cent of the Council in 1912 to 25 per cent in 1930. In Cheshire, NFU branch leaders ran candidates in the 1919 County Council elections and in the early 1920s the Union was instrumental in the formation of an Independent Party on the Council.

Powell, op cit, passim.


1922 general election saw four NFU-sponsored candidates elected and 74 MPs giving their complete support to the NFU programme. Direct sponsorship of MPs had been abandoned by the 1931 election in favour of close attention to lobbying and the cultivation of support from particular MPs. This shift was not appreciated by all farmers and the Union lost members in the 1930s partly as a result of the brief rise of the ‘Agricultural Party’.

NFU scruples regarding any form of explicit allegiance to a particular political party did not extend to abstinence from some lobbying, especially at a local level, on issues which tended to place the Union on the right of the political spectrum. In particular it objected to the increased public expenditure associated with the rise of the modern state and of local government, and found sympathy among both old-fashioned laissez-faire Liberals and some Conservatives. Expenditure on roads was a common cause of complaint:

Farmers on horseback or in pony traps grudged their money being spent on tarred surfaces which they did not need and which were so slippery that they caused accidents to their horses.

Even publicly funded projects of benefit to agriculture were treated with deep suspicion. In education, for example, the Somerset Farmers’ Union initially opposed the County Council’s plans to found a farm institute. In the light of such opinions it is not surprising that the national union felt the need to proceed cautiously on such issues as tariff reform and price support. Indeed, it is important to look in greater detail at the emerging NFU view on the issue of protection, especially in the light of the agricultural crisis of 1920–21.

As already indicated the food production campaign of the last years of the war brought the NFU into new relations with government. Much has been written on the production campaign itself and there is little need to dwell here on the main features of the changes in production and organization which occurred.

The findings and recommendations of two government committees, the Milner Committee and the Selborne Committee, are of particular importance. The Milner Committee was set up by the new Coalition government’s President of the Board of Agriculture, Lord Selborne, in 1915. Significantly, Selborne was a Unionist sympathetic to tariff reform and agricultural support. The Unionist Party itself made a manifesto pledge in 1912 to introduce a guaranteed price for wheat in the event of war. Both the appointment of Selborne, and his choice of Viscount Alfred Milner as committee chairman, ensured that interventionist proposals would now be put. However, not all the cabinet were of like mind, for Asquith sought a balance between proponents of laissez-faire and state intervention. Milner was a leading proponent of tariff reform, not merely as a fiscal policy but as part of a much wider programme of reconstruction which included agricultural support:

He wanted a wider programme of domestic and imperial reorganization, ‘a policy of constructive

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Brooking, op cit, p 199.

Hallam, op cit, p 23.

Imperialism, and of steady, consistent, unhasting and unresting Social Reform', and stressed more than anyone, including even Joseph Chamberlain in his first tariff reform campaign of 1903, the connection between the Empire and social reform in the interests of efficiency. 64

In a speech in Guildford as early as 1907 Milner spoke of the need for 'the resuscitation of agriculture', without specifying the means. Another tariff reformer, Theodore Angier, had proposed guaranteed prices for agriculture as early as 1903. 57 In 1914 a guaranteed price for wheat was recommended by an internal Agricultural Consultative Committee, which had been strongly influenced by reformers, and allies of Milner, Charles Bathurst and Christopher Turnor. 58 Bathurst revealed in parliament the failure of government to act on the committee's recommendations. But his hopes that this might prompt pressure from the country were dashed when a motion censuring the government was lost at the 1915 Annual General Meeting of the NFU. However, it would be a mistake to assume from this that the Union was not in favour of price support. Two members of the Agricultural Consultative Committee were appointees of the NFU, and the Union was clearly disappointed at the government's response to the committee's recommendations. However, as one delegate observed in the debate, during war it was 'their duty to be patriotic and not bother the Government'. Moreover the Union had welcomed Selborne's appointment and had no wish to harm his position.

In July 1915 the Milner Committee too recommended both a guaranteed price for wheat and that county councils should be invited to set up agricultural sub-committees to assist in increasing food production. 59 Although the pricing proposals were again rejected by government — Selborne did not even receive the support of senior cabinet colleagues such as Bonar Law and Balfour — the Board of Agriculture was given leave to pursue the formation of county committees. The Board secured the agreement of the County Councils Association and in the autumn of 1915 the first County War Agricultural Committees were formed.

Many county councils had agricultural or agricultural education sub-committees which had been in existence for a number of years and it was these which invariably provided the nucleus of membership for the new committees. Thus nine of the twenty-six members of the Lancashire War Agricultural Committee had been members of the county council's agricultural education sub-committee. 60 In Devon, the County Council's Agricultural Committee provided twenty-five of the thirty-eight members of the new committee. The Board of Agriculture called for broad representation on the committees in the guidance it offered to the county councils:

Whatever be the method of formation adopted, the Committee should be fully representative of all the agricultural interests of the County, whether land-owners, farmers, labourers, and others... it is important that the Committee should include representatives of the Chamber of Agriculture, the Farmers' Union, and other Agricultural Societies or Institutions in the County. 61

The committees were also instructed to form representative district committees, the details of the representation being left to the discretion of each county committee. In Devon the following composition was adopted:

1. The County Aldermen and County Councillors resident in the district.
2. The Chairman of the Rural District Council.
3. One representative of the Farmers' Union.
4. One representative of a local Agricultural Society.
5. Any member of the County Committee resident in the area and not included in the foregoing.

64 Sykes, op cit, pp 137.
57 Barnett, op cit, p 7
58 Ibid, p 24
59 Board of Agriculture and Fisheries Departmental Committee on the Home Production of Food (England and Wales), Interim Report, Cmnd 8048, Final Report, Cmnd 8095, 1915.
60 Brooking, op cit.
61 Devon Branch NFU Archive.
Power to co-opt five additional members, recommending that three should be women.

It was these committees which surveyed all farms during the autumn of 1915, primarily to assess labour needs as part of discharging their chief function which was to promote increased food production through education and advisory work. Two points of political importance emerge from the experience of the new committees. First, they provided an opportunity for NFU activists, many of whom were already county councillors in any case, further to extend their local political expertise. Secondly, those involved soon discovered the difficulty of performing a task of political control without formal regulatory powers. It was, therefore, pressure from the farmer dominated committees, rather than from government, which led to the demand for powers of compulsion. The call was taken up by Edward Strutt and Daniel Hall, who persuaded the President of the Board of Agriculture, R E Prothero, to secure the introduction, under the 1914 Defence of the Realm Act, of a new regulation which empowered the Board of Agriculture to make orders for the improvement of cultivation.

Thus in January 1917 new County War Agricultural Executive Committees (CWAECs) were appointed jointly by the Board and the County Councils, which were granted executive powers to make orders on behalf of the Board. These executive committees were smaller – a maximum of seven members – than the rather unwieldy county council committees, from which their membership was drawn. The larger committees were not disbanded. But, deprived of executive powers, they soon sank into obscurity. The district committees remained in being and exercised a crucial role in advising the CWAECs and carrying out their instructions and in this way the NFU found itself involved in an interventionist policy initiative for the first time.

Relations between the CWAECs and the county NFU branches varied. In Cheshire, for example, the majority of CWAEC members were landowners and only a minority were working farmers. But in Devon the chairman of the county council’s agricultural committee from 1907 until 1919 was William Tremlett, a leading executive member of the DFU, who chaired the county branch from 1913 to 1918, as well as sitting on the national executive. The Union advised, and on occasions supported, individual members in dispute with committees.

The Union also pressed for guaranteed prices as a corollary to the stocking and cropping controls now vested in the Board of Agriculture and county committees and the Corn Production Act of 1917 was greeted as something of a triumph by the Union. As the NFU’s journal, the Mark Lane Express, put it:

the Corn Production Act was a tardy recognition of the fact that farmers were entitled to some security, and that they ought not to be asked to undertake work of the highest national importance without some guarantee against loss.

However, the role of the Union in influencing the passage of legislation at this time should not be overestimated. It had little direct influence on its drafting, and in the case of state support for agriculture, pressure from Unionist Party activists was far more important. In 1916 Milner, Selborne, Prothero (who had replaced Selborne at the Board of Agriculture), Turnor, and Bathurst formed the British Agricultural Section of the British Empire Producers’ Organisation, to which the NFU subsequently affiliated, to campaign for minimum guaranteed prices for grain and

6a Powell, op cit, passim.
64 Mark Lane Express, 31 Dec, 1917; quoted in Barnett, op cit, p 196.
potatoes. The disastrous harvest of 1916 and the renewed threat of a German submarine campaign prompted even free-traders such as Runciman at the Board of Trade to contemplate state intervention in agriculture. Unionists long wedded to protection used this change of opinion to press for commitments for the post-war period.

The Selborne Committee, of 1916–17, was the main such initiative. The committee was set up to consider methods of "increasing home-grown food supplies in the interest of national security." It was concerned primarily with the need to expand arable production, which it proposed to achieve through guaranteeing farmers minimum prices for the chief arable crops. As a response to such guarantees farmers were expected to provide a higher output of grain, this output to be regulated by assessors empowered not only to inspect and report on farming practice, but also ultimately to terminate tenancies and manage estates in the national interest. The committee had an added concern to establish minimum agricultural wage rates and hours of work.

The recommendations of the Committee have been seen as an attempt to forge an active 'partnership' in agriculture, between the state and the farmers. However it has to be said that the principle of 'partnership' was more implicit than explicit, with more emphasis being placed on the needs of the state and the nation rather than on the needs of agriculture as such. Civic duty was what was expected of farmers rather than the fulfilment -- as equal partners -- of a bargain with the state, as the Committee itself explained:

"The State must adopt such a policy and formulate it publically as the future basis of British agriculture, and explain to the nation that it is founded on the highest consideration of the common weal. It must be explained to landowners, farmers and agricultural labourers alike that the experience of this War has shown that the methods and result of land management and of farming are matters involving the safety of the State, and are not of concern only to the interests of individuals . . . The history of our country shows that, when once the path of duty has been pointed out to them and they understand how grave is the responsibility put upon them, neither landowners, nor farmers, nor agricultural labourers will fail to rise to the emergency . . . The Government has no fairy touch which will enable it to produce instantaneous results. It must work through, and by means of, the men who are now holding and cultivating the land."

The mechanism advocated by the Selborne Committee for the realization of these aims was a continuation of the system of County Agricultural Committees. These committees, with County Council members and others 'with practical knowledge of agriculture or some other branch of rural economy, or representative of some special rural interest' were to perform duties delegated by the Board of Agriculture and Parliament. In addition, it was recommended that representatives from the county committees should serve on an English National Agricultural Council, composed of county members and nominees of the President of the Board of Agriculture.

The NFU's role in the deliberations of the Selborne Committee was extremely modest. They continued to lobby and to produce policy statements but they were not formally consulted. When Lord Selborne addressed the Union Executive in July 1917, four months after the publication of the Selborne Report, the NFU Executive Minutes recorded:

"The NFU's role in the deliberations of the Selborne Committee was extremely modest. They continued to lobby and to produce policy statements but they were not formally consulted. When Lord Selborne addressed the Union Executive in July 1917, four months after the publication of the Selborne Report, the NFU Executive Minutes recorded:"
committee's report, the one question put to him after his address by the Union's Vice-President, Herbert Padwick, was why the NFU had not been asked to give evidence to the Committee. At the same meeting it also became apparent that union officers had not been consulted before the issue of government orders.

The Union had been devoting much of its energy to improving its internal efficiency. The changes included more permanent staff, a smaller executive committee, a central legal fund and a requirement for counties to establish small executive committees. With these changes completed in 1918 the Union turned its attention to remedying the deficiencies in its influence in policy-making which had been so starkly displayed by its exclusion from the Selborne Committee's deliberations. Such efforts were rewarded when it succeeded in persuading the Board of Agriculture not to appoint paid assessors for supervisory work under the 1917 Corn Production Act, but to continue to rely on the farmers serving on the county agricultural committees. However, the Union was slow to develop a clear policy on agricultural support. Protectionism was not yet dominant in a union which retained something of a deferential posture in its approach to government. Thus at the 1919 annual general meeting a resolution calling for 'the formation of a Committee to approach the Prime Minister with a view to ascertaining the policy of the Government towards agriculture' was carried. An amending resolution, calling for guaranteed prices for meat, corn, potatoes, milk, and cheese was lost, but it did receive vocal support from delegates from Shropshire, Dorset, and Bedfordshire.

The debate must have excited much passion, for towards the close of the meeting another motion was proposed which clearly sought to placate the protectionists and improve upon the motion that had been passed. This motion was carried and put the Union on the road to a far more positive role in presenting national policy proposals. The AGM motion read as follows:

That the Executive Committee be instructed to formulate as soon as possible a clear and definite statement setting forth the difficulties and requirements, present and prospective, of agriculture, and the means best calculated to surmount the former and provide for the latter. That they be authorised to obtain any evidence and assistance they may deem necessary, and that their report be submitted to the Government and the Press as the considered recommendation of the National Farmers' Union, as practical representatives of the industry in order to assist the Ministers concerned in framing their agricultural policy.

This move towards a more positive and constructive role in policy formulation took the Union into a much closer co-operation with government; first in its contributions to the work of a Royal Commission on agricultural prices appointed in July 1919; secondly in its involvement in the new political arrangements under the 1919 Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Act; and thirdly in the deliberations over the 1920 Agriculture Act.

The 1919 Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Act, as well as providing for the upgrading of the Board of Agriculture to Ministry status, also established a three-tier system of agricultural representation and regulation, comprising county committees, national councils and a central advisory committee. Soon after the passage of the Act the union scored a notable success by increasing from two to five its direct representation on the Agricultural Advisory
Committee for England and Wales, a source of advice for the Ministry. It did this by successfully persuading the newly formed Ministry to utilize its right to alter the Committee's constitution by regulation. The other members were elected directly by the much larger Council of Agriculture for England and Council of Agriculture for Wales, which, in turn, drew their representation from nominations from the County Council Agricultural Committees and direct nominees of the Ministry.

Initially the executive powers of the county committees were considerable as they were responsible for enforcing standards of husbandry and estate management under the terms of the 1920 Agriculture Act. However, after the repeal of this legislation the committees' powers were greatly reduced. Through the inter-war years their major concerns were the management of county council small-holdings, agricultural education and the administration of various regulations affecting agriculture. But they were not afraid to advocate reforms of agricultural policy, as the following motion passed by the Devon County Council Agricultural Committee in 1930 indicates:

That this Council, viewing with grave concern the present condition of arable agriculture and the increase of agricultural unemployment, respectfully requests Parliament to frame a National Policy for agriculture capable of immediate application.

NFU activists continued to cut their political teeth in the work of the committees. In Devon, for example, the two longest serving chairmen of the County Committee were William Tremlett and John Metherell, who also held periods of office as county chairman of the DFU.

The 1920 Act, which provided for a continuation of war-time support for agriculture, was arguably the first piece of agricultural legislation in which the NFU negotiated with Government as the sole representative of the agricultural industry. Having received support from Milnerite Unionists in the past, the NFU for a time seemed more to identify with the Liberal Party and Lloyd George's onslaught on landlordism. Indeed, the 1920 Act was amended in the Lords by Unionist landowners critical of the NFU. The repeal of the Act, the 'great betrayal' in 1921, did not immediately change this position, for many Unionists were surprisingly mute in the face of repeal. Cooper makes much of this silence among the politicians – Milner was, indeed, the only leading government minister to resign – and furthermore claims both that many farmers were pleased at the repeal of the Act and that the NFU offered only token opposition.

Cooper's case raises important questions regarding the NFU's path to protectionist policies. According to him the farming community had much to gain from de-control and renewed economic freedom. Therefore the NFU was ready to spearhead a new deal for the industry based not so much on the social reform offered by protectionist policies but on economic reconstruction. There is more than a hint of a provocative free market ideology being put forward here, and future key events in the development of the NFU (the handling of the milk issue and the more thorough going incorporation into policy making from 1939 onwards) do little to support the broad thrust of Cooper's thesis. Nonetheless by focusing on a political account of the great betrayal, in contrast to the economic emphasis of most other accounts he does point to a strand of thinking within the NFU not highlighted by other commentators.

But in his anxiety to discredit 'progressive' Unionist advocates of agricultural support

77 Ibid, passim.
76 Cooper, op cit, Chapter 3, passim.
75 Whetham, op cit, for example, in the course of a painstakingly detailed account of the agricultural economic history of the period, accords the NFU only half a dozen pages in a book running to over three hundred pages. Consequently no space is devoted to the political complexity of the union.
such as Milner and Bledisloe, however, Cooper surely overstates his case by failing to acknowledge the diversity of opinion within the NFU.

The Union, by the outset of 1919, had learnt a great deal in organizational terms and had established a reasonable working relationship with Government in order to implement state policy initiatives. It has not yet, however, fully resolved the ambivalences of policy which engendered difficulties in forging a long-term relationship with government. Crucially, as Cooper is right to point out, it was not fully convinced of the role of intervention in the marketplace. This was plain from NFU evidence presented to the 1919 Royal Commission on Agriculture:

A considerable body of evidence given by farmers went to show that in the opinion of many of them no measure for assisting the farming industry by means of guaranteed prices of cereals is necessary solely in the interests of farmers themselves. It was said by witnesses speaking on behalf of the NFUs, which represent altogether over 100,000 occupiers, that the farmers are prepared, if freed from control of their farming operations and permitted to make their own bargains in the labour and produce market, to carry on their industry in a manner satisfactory to themselves without guarantees from the State. In their opinion, it is for Parliament to decide whether the national requirements necessitate increased corn production and consequential restriction on their freedom of action as regards their system of cultivation.

There were a number of reasons for this ambivalence and reluctance to endorse a protectionist policy formula. It has to be remembered that wartime policy (and the 1920 Act) involved far more than just price support. Restrictions on freedom of managerial activity were one component, the determination of farm workers’ wages another, and price controls (as opposed merely to price support) a third. These restrictions, particularly the emphasis in the policy on increasing the wages of farm workers, were a cause of resentment among many farmers. The emphasis by the policymakers on cereal production also provoked some antipathy among livestock farmers and those wedded to the norm of ‘mixed’ farming. But the main characteristic of the Union’s position was its acquiescence in the final view of Government. Thus three of the four NFU representatives did, in fact, endorse the Commission’s eventual support for guaranteed prices, while only the Welsh representative advocated an immediate return to the free market.80

One of the lessons learnt by the Union at this time was to distinguish more carefully between price controls and price support. The recognition that de-regulation did not necessarily mean the abandonment of price support policies was a crucial intellectual step which the Union seems to have made sometime in 1919. Certainly by October of that year the NFU had moved more sharply towards a protectionist stance. A policy document, ‘The Food of the People’, proposed a programme of guaranteed prices, greater security of tenure, and reduced levels of taxation and rates. But Cooper claims that in less than two years the Union was again showing ambiguity on the question of support:

80 The Farmers’ Union was not overly hostile to the government’s repudiation of the Agriculture Act. A cabinet committee conducted confidential inquiries with the NFU on the subject of the Act. To its relief, the committee discovered that the assent of the Union to the suspension of guaranteed prices was not very difficult to secure, provided that the other provisions under Part I of the Act for Wages and Boards and supervision of farming were also repealed and that Part II of the Act was retained. Publicly, the organisation’s only complaint was that the farmers had not been freed of the control, which deprived them of the free play of the market with respect to the prices of their produce, at an earlier date.81

But the position was, in reality, far more complicated. The Union leadership may have appeared compliant in its attempts to salvage something from the wreckage of the government’s ill-fated new deal for agriculture. But it is too simplistic to

80 Brooking, op cit, passim.
81 Cooper, op cit, pp 102–103. Part 2 of the Act dealt with tenure.
suggest, as Cooper does, that unanimity existed within the Union, with support for regulation being confined to a tiny elite comprising leading Unionists such as Milner and Bledisloe. It is true that few NFU activists had a strong liking for Bledisloe, but this was more due to his trenchant criticisms of the tenant bias of the Union than because of his views on protection. Cooper’s case fails to address the evidence that it was in the counties that the debate raged most fiercely and where concern over the impact of de-regulation was often most forcefully expressed. For example, as early as December 1919 a meeting of the DFU Executive passed the following resolution:

That in view of the semi-official announcement that meat is to be de-controlled, we enter our protest against the proposal; we urge the Government to stand by its pledge as to guaranteed prices; and we also ask that in the event of de-control, that at least three months’ notice be given by the Government.

Over the country as a whole the reaction was bitter. As Brooking comments:

Protests poured in from the county branches. Some even went as far as comparing the Government’s ‘breach of faith’ with Germany’s violation of Belgium in 1914, while others suggested that politicians could never be trusted in future and described the Coalition Government as a ‘set of rogues’.

Having secured some compensation and fought off attempts by some government members to retain the Wages Board, the NFU, in Brooking’s words ‘steadily withdrew from any partnership with the State and carried out its activities from a position of political isolation’. At the local level the county agricultural committees had been stripped of many of their functions too, but NFU activists continued to be involved in the low-key duties that remained the preserve of the committees, responsibilities which stood them in good stead when stringent powers were again assumed by County War Agricultural Executive Committees at the outbreak of the Second World War. The Union initially also retained its involvement with the Council of Agriculture but withdrew in 1924. Despite these setbacks its membership did not decline dramatically and, just as importantly, neither did its organizational efficiency:

Any but the strongest and most determined organisation would have declined in similar circumstances. That the NFU did not decline says much for the administrative abilities of its leaders and the resilience and efficiency of its established procedures. On the other hand the very desperate nature of the NFU’s situation helps explain why it fared as well as it did. The repeal of guaranteed prices caused the organisation to lose its innocence. After 1922 it was much more hard headed in its dealing with government and came to regard any single panacea, whether State assistance or co-operation, as unrealistic. From that moment on it came to rely more on its own resources. That tendency helps explain how survival was later turned to real advantage despite the negative suspicion of State assistance bred by the repeal.

IV

We would argue, therefore, that this period of agricultural politics, in which agricultural corporatism has its roots, was marked by the gradual emergence of a powerful and well-organized pressure group. During the 1920s and 1930s when corporatist ideas were being extensively canvassed it had the organizational capability and the monopoly of representation which made it possible for it to contemplate forging fresh relations with Government. Moreover it had sufficient experience of the perils of such a partnership to enable it to face Government as a seasoned and tough negotiator. However, for such a partnership fully to emerge, the sort of conditions which might prompt each side to recognize the need for cooperation had to exist. Such a context became intrusively apparent at the outset of the Second World War. But even before that the beginnings of corporatist relations had been firmly
THE ORIGINS AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION

established by the emergence of the Milk Marketing Board and by the tentative moves back towards agricultural protection which occurred in the 1930s.

In seeking to specify the enabling features which made the development of corporatist relations possible we must give due weight to the experiences of the First World War and its immediate aftermath; for these provided the framework of political understanding which was a precondition for future initiatives. That the specific initiatives taken ultimately failed was due in no small part to the somewhat misguided impulse to tie policies too closely to the unusual circumstances of war: not least the need to concentrate on wheat production. State support of British agriculture did, of course, need to be much more broadly based. It also needed to be more firmly rooted in the market-place, and particularly the sectors of agriculture to which Britain in the twentieth century was better suited. Those developments which moved eventually towards the generation of policy arrangements entailing a 'working partnership' between farmers and the state have been extensively chronicled by Self and Storing and others. Such policy options were, however, only available because of a whole set of preconditions, and critical amongst these was the prior emergence of a representative farmers' organization with the necessary organizational capability and political acumen. We have sought to indicate in this paper the comparatively neglected processes by which the National Farmers' Union came to acquire these necessary competences.

Notes and Comments

ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF FOOD AND SOCIETY
The Association for the Study of Food and Society (ASFS) will be holding its fifth annual meeting at Tucson, Arizona on 14-16 June 1991. For more information contact Dr William Hart, Department of Dietetics, School of Allied Health Professions, St Louis University, 1504 S Grand Boulevard, St Louis, Missouri 63104. Phone 314-577-8525.

HISTORY OF AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT
A symposium on the History of Agriculture and the Environment will be held at the National Archives Building, Washington, DC, on 19-21 June 1991. The symposium will be interdisciplinary in nature and will consider the history of agriculture and the environment in its broadest aspects. The sponsors are the Agricultural History Society, the American Society for Environmental History, and the agencies of the US Department of Agriculture. Further information can be obtained from Douglas Helms, National Historian, Soil Conservation Service, PO Box 2890, Washington, DC. Phone 202-447-3766.

ENVIRONMENT, WILDLIFE, AND CONSERVATION EXHIBITION
The Sunday Times Environment, Wildlife, and Conservation Exhibition will be held in the Grand Hall, Olympia on 6-11 July 1991. A major international conference on the environment will be held concurrently with the exhibition and a feature of the event will be a special Environmental Technology Pavilion. The exhibition will provide an opportunity for all those concerned with the environment and conservation to demonstrate the action they are taking. The exhibition is supported by The Royal Society for Nature Conservation.

(continued on page 51)
Confidence Limits and Enclosure Estimates:
Some Comments

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Abstract
Walton criticizes my revision of the acreage enclosed by Parliamentary action by purporting to show that the margins of error of my sample are so great that Turner's much lower figure falls within them. However, the technique which he uses is inappropriate, since the data do not conform to the conditions which limit its use. Use of the bootstrap technique, which is appropriate in these circumstances, supports my original conclusions, as does direct comparison with Turner's individual parish figures.

Though I would agree wholeheartedly with John Walton's view that we cannot have a totally accurate picture of the Parliamentary enclosure movement until each individual award has been abstracted, I am sure that he recognizes that this is a counsel of perfection, unlikely to be realized in the near future. With the rapid strides in technology made in the last few decades, it is possible to envisage a time when on-line access to machine-read documents in record offices will make such a total coverage a practical proposition; in the mean time, we are left with the alternatives of doing nothing or attempting to refine our estimates by making use of whatever additional information comes to hand.

The sample which I used was not intended primarily for the purpose of calculating an overall enclosure total; it was devised to investigate aspects such as the proportions of different types of land, covered in the later parts of my article, and those such as landownership, and the efficiency of the process, which fell outside the scope of that particular paper. None of the published statistics, including those in the Tate/Turner Domesday, offers any detailed picture of these aspects, and I had little option but to treat the sample as exploratory of a population with unknown characteristics, rather than a confirmatory one, as Walton has sought to do in his comments. In these circumstances the techniques available for testing the confidence limits are restricted, and the graphical methods used in my paper are an accepted means of presenting these limits in comparisons between two sets of data, as indicated in footnote 30.

The application of my sample to the question of the overall total of land enclosed arose because the figures derived from it implied that the Tate/Turner figures were an underestimate. Walton takes me to task for failing to offer confidence limits, but his own attempts to do so hardly serve to clarify the situation. A technique which purports to show that a 100 per cent sample is too small to be reliably representative of the whole population can hardly be regarded as a trustworthy indicator. Calculations of standard deviations are even more susceptible to extreme values than those of the arithmetic mean, and where the data have a highly skewed distribution, as in this case, standard deviation, by setting the same

4 Chapman, op cit, p 32.
5 Walton, op cit, p 82.
value either side of the mean, tends to exaggerate the spread necessary to achieve the required confidence limits. Walton's method of calculation tends to underplay the value of a large absolute sample size in reducing the potential error. Had he taken issue with my Welsh figures he would have been on firmer ground, for with the very small sample size involved there the potential impact of one rogue figure is considerable; indeed, I am at present attempting to refine the Welsh totals. The same does not apply to the English sample. The fundamental problem is that the test which Walton has used makes assumptions about the form of the data which are not valid in this case; furthermore, it is a test for confidence limits about the mean of a sample, and cannot be extended to construct confidence limits about a projected total, as in this case.

The question can, however, be approached in another way. The essence of Walton's argument is that because of the very wide range of values the total produced from any sample is liable to be unduly influenced by extremes, and that different samples will produce widely differing results. The technique known as bootstrapping offers a means of testing this. In brief, the method involves multiple re-sampling from the original sample, the results then being used to provide a sampling distribution against which the likelihood of any particular total being produced may be assessed. Unlike the technique favoured by Walton, it makes no prior assumptions about the distribution of the data. A bootstrap test was applied to the sample, using 1000 re-samples of 300 each, and calculating projected totals in the same way as in my original paper. From this the probability of the true value being equal to, or less than, Turner's figure was calculated at 2.7 per cent, or, in other words, there is a 97.3 per cent probability that it is higher than Turner's total.

Further evidence is provided by direct comparison between my figures and those of the Domesday. If the Domesday totals are indeed correct, then the positive and negative errors contained in them must cancel out; if, on the other hand, I am correct in my belief, then underestimates must predominate. Comparison of my sample with the Domesday equivalents indicates that the latter is indeed the case.

There are significant theoretical problems in the comparison, for it is by no means clear exactly which total either the act or the award figures contained in the Domesday are intended to represent. My own calculations involved three separate totals, one for all land involved in the process, one for land contained in the initial allotment, and one for land which had previously been open or common, and for some individual enclosures these totals may be significantly different. It would appear that the enclosure estimates, whether in the act or the award, may represent any of these totals, and there are even cases where the act figure appears to be an estimate of one while the award figure refers to another. For example, the Biddlestone, Wiltshire, award appears to refer to the total allotted, while the act figure relates to land previously open. However, for the purpose of confronting Walton's calculations these theoretical points may be ignored, for by mimicking my calculations he has in effect chosen the 'total involved' as the starting point.

Using this basis, in 261 of the sample cases the Domesday figures understate, as against 205 which overstate, an excess of understatements over overstatements of approximately 12 per cent. These figures

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7 W(iltshire) R(ecord) O(fice) Enc. Aw. 88.
8 For the remainder of the sample, Turner gives either an identical figure, or none at all.
are in direct conflict with the commonly-stated assumption that the enclosure estimates must, if anything, overstate the acreage, though it must be noted that it is difficult to trace any ultimate authority for such an assumption at national level. Turner himself expresses the view that some under-statement is likely, and there are very few instances in the literature of the actual errors being quoted for more than a few isolated enclosures. Wordie states that the Berkshire figures are an overestimate, though he quotes no precise figures, but this is hardly conclusive evidence for the country as a whole, for the errors are by no means random in time and space. There is also the well-known fact that some acts give the acreage of the whole parish, rather than that of the area to be enclosed. Again, however, this habit appears to be very rare nationally, and to apply largely to act rather than award. Other apparent evidence proves to be misleading. Wordie offers calculations of the errors, quoting an overestimate of 6.7 per cent, but these are in fact based on the differences between the act estimates and the award estimates, on the assumption that the latter are correct. In practice, it can be readily shown not only that the majority of the award estimates themselves are inaccurate, but that they are by no means always closer to the actual figures than those given in the act. In examples as widely spread as Trowle (Bradford), Wiltshire, Loweswater, Cumberland, and Chich St Osyth, Essex, the act figure is correct and the award wrong.

It is unlikely that there is any single explanation as to why the award estimates tend to understate, and any such explanations must be purely speculative at the moment. It is, of course, well known that customary rentals frequently misstated acreages, and it is possible that in those areas of the country where large customary acres were in use totals derived from this source might lead to frequent underestimates. Endacott presents evidence of the opposite process from Dorset, where the customary acre was smaller than the statute, though only in respect of the act figures. It is also highly possible that some of the award totals may have been misinterpreted. A common form of presentation of the award involved the separate treatment of certain lands, notably those set aside for sale, those allocated in respect of tithes, and those allocated for the lord's right of soil. A total is then provided for the residue. It may be suspected that it is this total which sometimes appears, a point to which Turner himself draws attention. Finally, it must be noted that treatment of old enclosed land which was exchanged varies greatly from award to award, and it was undoubtedly omitted from the totals in some, but not others. In allowing a deduction for such land, regardless of whether the original totals included it or not, Walton is undoubtedly lowering the real totals.

A further source of error exists in Turner's treatment of those enclosures for which neither act nor award offers any estimate, a total of 227. I have been unable to find any reference to his method, but back calculations from his totals indicate that missing figures have been supplied by substituting the mean figure for that group for the relevant county. Unfortunately many of the relevant groups have very few members, so means may be based on as few

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*Excluding Monmouthshire. Figures from other sources, listed by Turner under 'Notes', have been ignored.*
as two sets of data, as for example in his group B for Cornwall, or group B for Monmouthshire.\textsuperscript{20} In the latter case, this results in a notional allowance for Tregrug (Llangybi) of 4100 acres, from the mean between 4200 (for Wentwood, alias Trelleck) and 4000 (for Cwmyoy). Unfortunately, the actual figure is 399 acres, giving an error of 927 per cent, albeit in this case an overestimate. Since missing figures are clustered, as for example in Gloucestershire group A where 33 are lacking out of 129, so the potential for significant errors is increased. This is in no way intended as a criticism of Turner, who was faced with the perennial historical problem of patching holes in data sets. It does, however, offer a further explanation of the way in which some of the errors may have arisen.

I am, of course, aware that any random sample may produce a highly untypical result, for Murphy’s Law operates as efficiently in statistics as in any other branch of human activity. I would be as surprised as anyone if the actual total of land enclosed should eventually turn out to be precisely 7,672,884 acres, as my sample would indicate. However, the bootstrap test produces a mean, 7,657,369 acres, and a median, 7,657,369 acres, only marginally below my original total, a mere 0.2 per cent at worst. Applying the same corrective factors to the mean as in my original paper, this would indicate a total of open land subjected to enclosure of 7,243,460 acres, scarcely significantly different from my suggested lower limit of 7.25 million acres.

Given that a high degree of precision is not yet possible, there is nevertheless sufficient evidence to support my contention that the Domesday figures represent a significant underestimate, and nothing in Walton’s paper overturns this conclusion. The point which Walton fails to acknowledge is that even if his calculations were applicable, and the range at the 95 per cent confidence level were as large as he alleges, the central point would still be the best estimate, with the probability of any other value being correct falling with increasing distance either side. From both his calculations and mine, it is statistically far more likely that my total is an underestimate than that Turner’s lower figure is correct. Pending the sort of comprehensive survey to which Walton refers, a figure of the order of 7.25 million acres remains, in my view, the best estimate.

\textsuperscript{20} Turner, \textit{op cit}, pp 82 and 176.

Notes and Comments (continued from page 47)

\section*{PERIPATETIC AUTUMN CONFERENCE}
Members of the British Agricultural History Society will know that we have traditionally run two annual meetings, an itinerant spring conference and a London winter conference. The Executive Committee has recently decided to add to these an Autumn Day School which, like the Spring Conference, will be held in a different location each year. We hope that our many members (and indeed, all interested in agricultural history) who rarely, if ever, attend the other two meetings will be able to take part in these meetings when they are in their locality.

The first meeting, on the subject of woodland landscapes and communities in the South Midlands, will be held jointly with the Oxford University Department of External Studies in Oxford on Saturday 21 September 1991. The speakers will include Glenn Foard on Rockingham Forest in the Middle Ages, John Broad and Richard Hoyle on Bernwood Forest before and after disafforestation, Bill Stevenson on rural nonconformity, and Charles Watkins on the struggle for hedgerow timber in late eighteenth-century Herefordshire.

Details have already been posted to BAHS members, but can also be had from the Archaeology/History Course Administrator, OUDES, 1 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA.
Parliamentary Enclosure, the Bootstrap, and a Red Herring or Two

By JOHN R WALTON

Abstract
Chapman finds problems in my use of standard error where none exists and fails to disclose the margin of error associated with his estimate of the extent of parliamentary enclosure.

The invitation to comment on Chapman's response to my criticism of his enclosure estimates gives me the opportunity to clarify areas of agreement and disagreement. I have no problem with the later sections of Chapman's original paper, nor with the statistical techniques used in those sections. My comment was concerned wholly with Chapman's estimates of the total acreage enclosed, as presented in section I. Had Chapman made it clear that the sample was, as he now says, 'exploratory . . . rather than confirmatory', then I might not have been moved to comment. However, the original paper did not present the resulting acreage estimates in these terms. Rather, the figures, which were said to have implications stretching beyond the question of parliamentary enclosure itself, were offered without any apparent awareness of their likely margin of error. It was merely my intent to suggest that the margin of error was likely to be substantial.

In the course of speculating on its order of magnitude, I pointed out that there was a possibility that Turner's much smaller figure would lie within conventionally-acceptable confidence limits for Chapman's own estimate. This is not to say that I regard it as likely that the extension of Chapman's method to the 90 per cent of English parliamentary enclosures which he has not examined would produce an enclosure acreage for England as small as Turner's. Indeed, such an outcome is highly unlikely. Chapman's new comparisons of his and Turner's estimates for specific enclosures no more than suggest the same. The point I was trying to make is that the degree of variation in the population from which Chapman's sample has been drawn is so great that the confidence interval associated with his estimate is likely to be extremely wide. My hypothetical estimate of the magnitude of that confidence interval suggested that at the conventionally-acceptable 95 per cent confidence level, Turner's figure might well lie within the interval, albeit close to its limits. In other words, there is a high probability that Chapman's acreage estimate is inaccurate, and a small probability that it is so inaccurate that the true figure would turn out to be no bigger than Turner's.

A further implication of the large magnitude of the standard error is that increasing the size of the sample is unlikely to reduce the confidence interval to acceptable proportions. Of course, it is a matter of judgement as to what constitutes 'acceptable' error. I took Chapman's statement that 'for England . . . the amount of open or common land abolished by enclosure would . . . appear to fall in a range from 7.25 million . . . to 7.35 million [acres]' as

evidence of Chapman’s belief that he had achieved an estimation range of 100,000 acres, and as an indication that he might therefore consider an error of this magnitude acceptable. My calculations indicated that it is not possible to be reasonably certain of having obtained a margin of error of 100,000 acres within the framework of any approach involving sampling, since the sample sizes required to produce such a margin of error, assuming a standard error as large as estimated, far exceed the size of the population. This is an argument against the use of sampling. I find it odd that Chapman should present it as an argument against the use of standard error.

Equally odd are Chapman’s other reservations about the use of standard error and his preference for the bootstrap method. Contrary to what Chapman implies, there is no restriction (other than perhaps the non-random character of the sample) which would make standard error inappropriate as a method for setting confidence limits around his estimated mean. In large samples (and the minimum size of ‘large’ in this context is conventionally defined as a great deal smaller than the sample used by Chapman) the sampling distribution of the means is normally distributed about the unknown population mean irrespective of whether the population itself is or is not normally distributed. The standard deviation of the sampling distribution of the means (the standard error of the mean) may therefore serve as a basis for estimating the confidence limits associated with a particular sample mean if the sample is large, irrespective of the statistical distribution of the population from which the sample has been drawn. Only a population exhibiting extreme skewness may require corrective measures. Chapman is in error when he suggests otherwise. He is also in error in suggesting that confidence limits for the sample mean cannot be multiplied by the size of the population to yield confidence estimates for the national enclosure acreage. After all, this is no more than an extension of the method Chapman himself uses to turn a sample mean into a national enclosure total.

Thus, recourse to the bootstrap method is utterly unnecessary when, as in this case, there is no objection to the use of standard error. Furthermore, the bootstrap has its own distinctive set of interpretative difficulties. It is perhaps necessary to explain that the technique is based on the attractive if counter-intuitive notion that we may learn more about the population from which a sample has been drawn not by increasing the size of the sample but by taking a large number of smaller samples, with replacement, from the sample itself. The technique was first proposed as an extension or elaboration of the related technique of the jack-knife in 1979. Since then it has attracted a great deal of attention among mathematical statisticians, but only limited interest among those in other disciplines who use statistical methods, perhaps because it has yet to find its way into the textbooks on which they rely: the book by Noreen referred to by Chapman is the only instance I know of to date. It is therefore true to say that the limitations of the approach have yet to be fully explored. For Noreen at least, bootstrap methods ‘appear to be unreliable and should be used with caution.’ Indeed, there is even confusion about precisely what sample statistics the technique may embrace. Chapman follows one of Noreen’s worked

1 J R Walton, ‘On Estimating the Extent of Parliamentary Enclosure’, Ag Hist Rev, 38, 1990, p 82. In fact, required sample size exceeds the size of the population by a great deal more than my estimate indicated, given that the 100,000 acre difference between 7.25 and 7.35 million acres is an estimation range rather than a margin of error. Chapman’s estimate has an effective margin of error, defined as half the confidence interval or the distance between the sample mean and one or other confidence limit, of only 50,000 acres.

4 See, for example, W G Cochran, Sampling Techniques, 3rd edition, New York, 1977, pp 39-44.


7 Noreen, ibid, p 61.
examples in applying the bootstrap to the mean. Yet Efron, the pioneer of the bootstrap, appears to have been searching for some technique which provided for estimators other than the mean measures of statistical accuracy analogous to that already provided for the mean by the standard error of the mean. He clearly states that assessing the accuracy of the sample mean is 'a problem where [the bootstrap] is not needed.'

When preparing my critique of Chapman's enclosure estimates, I presumed that in any reply Chapman would disclose the standard error of his sample. I am naturally disappointed that he has not done so, and that I have not been able to establish how close were my guesstimate and his figure. Should Chapman be allowed an additional response, then I hope that this deficiency will be remedied. Alternatively, if Chapman still shuns the standard error in favour of the bootstrap, then it would be interesting to know what is the probability of the true enclosure acreage being equal to or less than both his estimate and perhaps some hypothetical figure or figures intermediate between his own estimate and Turner's.9

Still anticipate that considerable margins of error will be revealed, whichever method is favoured.

There is, however, another matter which seems to me not to have been satisfactorily resolved, and which may yet be resolved in such a way as to demonstrate that my suggested margins of error are overstated. As previously noted, random sampling methods are an essential theoretical underpinning of standard error – and, indeed, of the bootstrap. The application of such techniques to a sample which, as in this case, is not derived randomly therefore pose some problems. The only work known to me which is concerned with this issue goes little further than an assurance that the use of non-random samples does not violate the mechanics of the estimating technique involved.10 A non-random sample may be regarded as one of the possible array of random samples. And yet one would anticipate that if a non-random sample has been derived in such a way as to increase the likelihood that it reflects variation in the underlying population (which is the essence of systematic sampling procedures, as apparently used by Chapman), then logically the associated margins of error ought to be smaller than those associated with a sample derived randomly in such a way as to offer no additional protection against the possibility that an unrepresentative sample has been identified. Further exploration of sampling theory would appear to be in order.


* My understanding of the bootstrap is that the technique generally yields probability estimates of this kind. Noreen's (op cit p 74) view of such approaches is that they work 'quite splendidly . . . where the sample is large enough to be indistinguishable from the population.' It is hard to imagine Noreen, or any other statistician, being even this generous to the rather different manifestation of the bootstrap approach which surfaces in the penultimate paragraph of Chapman's comment. Here Chapman gives some curiously precise 'bootstrap' figures for mean and median, which are in fact projected enclosure acreage totals, presumably derived from the means and medians of the bootstrap samples. I can only suppose that the method adopted corresponds to the following sequence. I have harvested a crop of 100 apples and would like to know the mean circumference of the entire crop but am only able to measure a sample of ten apples, which I do. I then rearrange those ten apples into as many different samples of six as are possible (i.e. 10C6, or 210 different samples) calculating the mean circumference of each sample of six. Unsurprisingly, it turns out that the mean of those 210 means is almost identical with the mean of the sample of ten from which they have all been drawn. From this I conclude that the mean of the sample of ten is almost identical with the mean of the entire crop of 100 apples. Moral: easy access to computing power may addle the brain.

The relationship between hunter-gatherer and farming societies is a recurring theme in the literature on prehistory. Until recently it was widely assumed that they lived in isolation but Headland and Reid (94) bring together data that suggests a very different model. They argue that in the late Holocene, forager groups were heavily dependent upon trade with food producing populations. Williams (205) reassesses existing data on the nature of the mesolithic-neolithic transition in Britain. Her interpretation, influenced by an Antipodean perspective, is that agriculture did not originate solely with the arrival of European farming communities but resulted also from a gradual shift to cultivation amongst the indigenous hunter-gatherers. The significance of food storage for hunter-gatherer sedentism is considered by Soffer (181), and Molleson (133) examines human bone from the mesolithic to trace the first known osteological effects of grinding corn.

On the chronology of the agriculture, the scientific analysis of wear marks on sickle blades from the Near East by Bahn and Ungar-Hamilton (9, 195) suggests that full-scale farming began as long ago as the 11th millennium BC. Debate continues over the diffusion of farming into Europe, and Renfrew (155) reconstructs the sequence of linguistic transformations and explains his provocative theory that their movement paralleled the diffusion of agriculture from Anatolia into Europe, c6500 BC. The question of Indo-European languages and their links with the dispersal of farming is also discussed by Ammerman and the Zvelebilts (5, 214, 215). At home, there are reports on the important work in wetland archaeology. Smith et al (176) describe research into the differing settlement patterns and environmental impacts of hunter-gatherers and early farming communities on the fen edge of Cambridgeshire, and Coles (38) summarizes the insights that have resulted from the discovery of the 6000-year-old wooden Sweet Track which crossed the Somerset Levels. The analysis of artefacts, pollen records and other material buried in peat surroundings has allowed the reconstruction in some detail of the neolithic economy and lifestyle. The current view of prehistoric man's radical impact on the environment is reinforced by Drewett's study (53) of the Sussex greensands. Here the stripping of large areas of turf for round barrow construction was a cause of widespread soil erosion. Copeland (39) examines the linear characteristics of Grim's Ditch in Oxfordshire in the light of aerial photography, fieldwork and documentary evidence. Findings suggest its functions were political and economic rather than military. In an analysis of Bronze Age Britain, Gosden (78) argues that production should be placed in a social context and outlines the insights that can be gained from this approach. Reece (153) offers a new model to further the discussion of continuity between Roman and Saxon Britain and on the same theme Crabtree (43) has reconstructed the animal husbandry of the early Anglo-Saxons, from extensive bone analysis. Results indicate that although pigs were important when communities were first established they subsequently lost ground to sheep and cattle, but there was also evidence reflecting broad continuities with the preceding Iron Age and Roman periods. It has been usual to associate the Anglo-Scottish border with footloose Celtic cowboys and pastoralism. However Topping (192) has identified surface remains of cultivation which in conjunction with the demonstrably pre-Roman terraces indicate that an arable regime was significant. Reid's view (154) is that understanding of social organization in prehistory can be achieved by examining the organization of buildings and the space within them. His study centres upon northern Britain where major changes in house design occurred during the first and second centuries AD, linking these to phases of acute political and economic pressure during the Roman period. Foster (67) also focuses on the spatial patterns in buildings and uses the formal geometrical method of 'access analysis' to interpret social structure during the Iron Age.

The reliability of the Anglo-Saxon chronicle's taxation figures is examined by Gillingham (72) who concludes that they are a gross exaggeration of reality. Lawson (122) disagrees. On the later medieval period, Britnell (26) compares the economies of England and
Italy, in a study of trade, banking, wealth and social structure. Differences, he argues, arose chiefly from similar resources of knowledge and similar social attitudes at work in different environments. Factors responsible for progress in the medieval economy are discussed by Astor (7) and technological breakthroughs are highlighted in a number of other articles. Langdon (120) summarizes his important work in the region of the Cistercians to Anglo-Saxon Ireland, but Rynne (167) demonstrates both the horizontal and vertical wheeled mills were in use there by the eleventh century at least. More traditional approaches to the medieval economy are taken a step further by Bailey (11). He calls for a less simplistic interpretation of the concept of the 'margin' in the population-resource model, and urges a fuller analysis of market forces, demographic factors, resource endowments and institutional influences before definitive statements about the medieval economy are made. The damaging effect of the English Conquest on the rural Welsh economy is stressed by Given (74). Taxation, expropriation and the assertion of royal control over woods and wastes all contributed to the severe dislocation. In his account of agrarian depression in the north east of England during the mid-fifteenth century, Pollard (149) links the consequent financial difficulties of great lords to events in the national political arena. Demographic history is a perennial interest. Nash (138) presents an analysis of Domesday Book which attempts to go beyond the usual global estimates of population size and to focus upon the question of the relative sizes of different social groups in a regional context. A new source for population history is brought to our attention by Jones (111): the Myntling Register. This records in detail hundreds of villein family trees in the wealthy Priory of Spalding. The reliability of these records is questioned by Bailey (10) who believes a more useful source is the long series of notai di sangiune lists which give not only genealogical information but also important details about lord-peasant relations. The ravages of the Black Death are illustrated in dramatic form by Davies (47) using episcopal registers and Lomas (124) exploits a variety of indirect indicators as well as source material to assess the impact of the Black Death in Durham. Results suggest that the lowest point was reached in the mid-fifteenth century, when the population was less than half of the total in 1348. On marketing, Dyer (56) uses household accounts and records of debt to determine the spatial pattern of purchase in relation to the wealth and status of consumers. One striking feature was the importance of transactions conducted outside formal markets; another was the dependence of market town economies on the prosperity of the particular wealth group that patronized them. The trading pattern of two Wiltshire manors is reconstructed by Farmer (64) who highlights the ingenuity and enterprise of those concerned with marketing the produce of the countryside. The combination of legal and social history using court rolls has been a growth area in medieval research but Bonfield (21) questions whether it has been based upon a perception of customary law which is flawed. Payling (144) describes the fourteenth-century dispute over the valuable Ampthill estate to illustrate how local rivalries for land and influence could alter political allegiances at the highest level. In his study of lordship at work, Walker (197) exposes the realities of power, authority and lawlessness through the experiences of John of Gaunt, the leading magnate of his day. Difficulties stemmed from the depredations of agents who acted in his name and alienated the gentry. On settlement, the origin of planned villages has been the focus of considerable interest recently, with authorities assuming that modern maps are valuable indicators of earlier forms. To test this assumption, Campey (33) has examined an exceptionally rich archival source which shows that although this was often true, many seemingly regular layouts were actually the result of gradual polyfocal development. Our understanding of spatial variation in medieval agriculture is advanced by the work of Campbell and Power (31) who outline the results of an important pilot study of some 700 demesne and 1500 annual farm accounts. Cluster analysis of the data has revealed a large degree of differentiation by the late thirteenth century – which the authors link to environmental conditions, field systems and market forces. Farming practices have received little attention. The usual focus of medievalists has been upon the large cereal dominated estates of the English lowlands, but Watkins (200) directs attention towards an area where livestock was dominant. Postles (151) considers the significance of weeding, or the lack of it, for grain yields. Doubts over the reliability of the Domesday record are reinforced by Hooke's careful study (103) of the extent and usage of woodlands in the post Roman era. Place-names, charters and other evidence suggest that their significance has been seriously underestimated.

On the early modern period, Fletcher and Upton (66) describe the bundles of stewards' accounts held by Merton College, Oxford. They contain what are probably the earliest continuous references to the daily supply of food and drink to an academic community.
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community. Harley (90) looks at maps as documentary records, arguing that we should treat them as a text rather than as a mirror of reality, and English (61) draws our attentions to the new on-line bibliography of literature relating to East Yorkshire which should be a valuable aid for local history studies of all periods. Considerable attention has been paid to developments in the Scottish economy. Whatley (203) for example takes stock of the various arguments over the economic causes and consequences of the Union of 1707, pointing out that in many areas issues remain unresolved. Changes to the taxation system during the late sixteenth century are traced by Goodare (76) who finds that it remained basically feudal in nature, inequitable and unpopular. The economic condition of the Scottish nobility is explored by Brown (27, 28) in his search for the root cause of the mid-seventeenth-century rebellion. He cites taxation and the royal threat to property rights as placing intolerable pressures upon an elite which was already suffering financially. In a comparative study, Lachman (119) examines elite conflict in France and England, and on government in the localities Robertson's West Country study (158) describes Thomas Cromwell's masterly political and administrative skills. These extended over a whole range of local issues from treason to fishnets. Central-local relations during the Civil War are explored by Paffrey (143) who argues that central authority had to rely on negotiation and persuasion rather than brute force to obtain popular support. Articles on population history are legion this year. Poos (150) summarizes recent research and current issues and Crenshaw (46) provides a review of the literature. The rise in mortality from the late seventeenth century is explained by Dobson (49). She argues that the greater incidence of disease was linked to increased mobility which when combined with unfavourable environmental and domestic living conditions accentuated the transmission of pathogens. Historians have given the mean age of first marriage a central role in explanations of subsequent demographic increase, but Hill's account (99) of the complex social and economic factors involved suggests that their statistics should be questioned. A broad historical survey of family structures in Britain and other European countries is provided by Wall (198), and Stapleton (183) uses a local study to build up a picture of patterns of mobility. In her penetrating analysis of class relationships in the north east, Gregson (82) urges less reliance on the ideal-type models for explaining change and a greater consideration of the peculiarities of place and circumstance. Her own regional study suggests that class struggle per se had less influence upon the emergence of capitalist class relations than market fluctuations, farm size and the nature of customary tenure. Gunn (83) offers a detailed re-examination of the Lincolnshire revolt and suggests new approaches to the study of disorder generally and in his account of protest in a Tudor market town, Mayhew (131) argues that disorder was not merely an expression of economic crises but endemic in society at large. Phillips (147) uses a variety of personal documentary records to illustrate his belief that there was more defiance than deference in later Georgian England due to fierce individualism combined with a strong sense of personal dignity, and Kingman (116) investigates a dispute over an enclosure. Despite thirty years of popular resistance to the loss of their open fields, locals were defeated by the threats, bribery, corruption and extensive use of social contacts by the leading family. Higson's article (98) further illustrates how easily a local magnate could manipulate the redistribution of land to consolidate and glamorize his country seat, and Turner's investigation of enclosure in Buckinghamshire (194) reveals a widespread but passive opposition to it. Smith (178) examines the little-used wages books and other accounting records of employers to reconstruct the diverse work patterns and lifestyles of the sixteenth-century labourer. Research into the poor law has tended to focus upon southern England, so to restore the balance Rushton (166) draws upon local records of the north east to trace changes in the approach to welfare support. In the main there was a growth of hostility towards outsiders. This is confirmed in Eccles's own local account (58) of the vagrant poor who were most vulnerable. On Irish agriculture, Solar (182) used reports in provincial newspapers to investigate pre-Famine harvest fluctuations. These highlight the stabilizing effect of mixed farming and strong regional differences in crop performance.

Much attention has been paid to innovation. Overton (142) considers the complex role of the weather in decisions to adopt new practices and Hidden (97) reconstructs Tull's family history to throw light upon his ideas. It seems that financial difficulties may have prompted enterprise. The flow of information on the New Husbandry between England and Hungary is explored by Kurucz (118), and Sullivan (186) analyses trends in the issue of English patents. He detects a marked upsurge from the 1750s and relates it causally to productivity increases. With Simon (175) the same author offers an econometric model of invention in agriculture, linking book publication and patenting with rising food prices, population growth and the stock of knowledge.

Much less has been written on the modern period. Amongst the more important contributions Crafts (44) argues the case, in an international context, for the superior productivity achievements in British agriculture, and through an economic analysis constructs an explanation of the paradoxical transfer of labour to industry. Also on the supply side of farming Bairoch (12) provides a long term view of productivity
between 1800 and the present day and Grantham (8o) employs French evidence to explore the role of market opportunities in the growth of European farm production. King (114) considers the civil case of 1788 in England which made gleaning illegal. This has been cited as reflecting elite pressure on the poor and a growth in absolute conceptions of property ownership. But from a scrutiny of local court records King shows that the legal sanction was largely inoperative because tradition favoured gleaners, sympathy was on their side and religious considerations favoured them. McKeown (127) examines different explanations for the change in attitude of the Peel government towards Repeal and offers an empirical regression analysis of Corn Law voting to provide a clearer verdict on some conflicting theories. The scant historical sympathy accorded the Protectionists contrasts with MacIntyre's portrayal (126) of this movement. From the 1840s it offered a powerful and concerted challenge to Liberal Conservatism. The philosophy that underpinned the proposals of the Liberal land reformers to tax the incremental value of estates is discussed by Vogel (196), and Leneman (123) investigates the government's Scottish land settlement programme after the First World War. Despite mismanagement and disappointment during the early years, by the 1930s many of its aims had been achieved. Copus (4o) sheds light on why and how sheep breeds were developed from the mid-eighteenth century, and shows how remarkably responsive farmers were to market influences. The survival of the 'peasantry' is discussed by Donajgrodzki (51). Using the example of an upland Yorkshire area he argues that family-centred farming on small acreages, low rents and flexible attitudes to work provided efficient mechanisms for surmounting economic conditions which were often disadvantageous to large farmers. A systematic sampling of passenger lists by Erickson (62) provides a demographic and occupational structure of British emigrants to America, and Tsokhas's detailed study (193) deals with imperial wool purchases during the First World War to expose the fallacy of Australia's dependent position. Although well placed as never before to exploit the so-called imperial division of labour, British interests failed to take advantage.

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Agrarian History in The Netherlands in the Modern Period: a Review and Bibliography*

By MICHAEL WINTLE

The agrarian history of The Netherlands has produced some household names in the discipline, like Jan de Vries at Berkeley, and B H Slicher van Bath, who laid the foundations of the Wageningen School when he was the Professor of Agrarian History at the Agricultural University of Wageningen. Dutch agriculture in the later Middle Ages and the early modern period is quite well known in the English-speaking world, for example through Jan de Vries’ work on the Golden Age (114), and through studies on the neighbouring southern Low Countries, which now form Belgium (eg Van der Wee 116). Nevertheless, partly as a result of the perceived impenetrability of the Dutch language, the activities of Dutch historians of agriculture and rural life in the modern period after 1750 are not well publicized outside the Dutch-language area. This article therefore attempts to give an account of the more significant developments in the last twenty years, with reference to works which appeared prior to 1970 where they are still the accepted authorities on their subjects.

The account will of necessity be selective: for a small country, both in terms of population (less than 15 million) and in terms of agricultural area (34,000 km², half of which is presently used for agriculture) there is a very lively interest indeed in agrarian history, reflected in very substantial published output. I shall limit myself to the academic research, which means omitting the enormous production of an army of regional historical societies, which all produce periodicals filled with articles and source publications on the Dutch rural past. There are several reasonably comprehensive bibliographical tools available (Van Zon 132, Brouwer 23, Repertorium 82, Vervloet 110) to anyone who wishes to unlock this mine of information for a particular region or theme. It is true that the profession in the Netherlands does lack the equivalent of the Agricultural History Review: an academic journal exclusively for agrarian history; nonetheless, there is an active Society for Agricultural History (Vereniging voor Landbouwgeschiedenis). Moreover, the irregular series produced by the Wageningen department, A A G Bijdragen (AAG 1), another issued by the Institute for Agricultural History in Groningen (40), and a journal of historical geography (41) partially fill the gap.

This substantial output is the subject of a lively theoretical and methodological debate, which is rigorous without being at the expense of the research itself. The Wageningen School still dominates the discussion by dint of its achievements in the last generation. The approach of its adherents is secular, serial, quantitative, and systematic. The research is problem-oriented, and the interest is in the structure of the agrarian society and economy, usually on a regional or provincial scale. Meanwhile, community studies thrive, and recently, in addition, a more economic-scientific approach has also been taken to the subject, attempting to locate the agricultural sector within the economy as a whole.

The standard work covering all aspects of Dutch agriculture in the modern period is still the multi-author work edited by Sneller, published in 1945 covering the period 1795–1940 (97). It can be supplemented by earlier works, like Blink’s study of farmers and their world (14) and the Agriculture Ministry’s 1914 survey of the previous century (Nederlandsche landbouw 70). In Brugmans’ 1969 standard work on the economic history of the Netherlands in the period 1795–1940 (24) there are substantial sections devoted to the agricultural sector, and in Slicher van Bath’s survey of the agrarian history of western Europe from 500 to 1850 (94), the Netherlands features prominently. For the first half of the twentieth century there is a useful survey by Van Stuijvenberg (100). Many of these works are now very dated, albeit still useful, and what is really required is a single-author synthesis covering the period 1750–1950, embracing all aspects. This has been achieved in a masterly fashion for the economic aspects of agriculture in the period 1800–1914 by J L van Zanden’s brilliant survey (128); the social, cultural, technological, and political aspects still await

* I am grateful to A M van der Woude and J L van Zanden for their advice in compiling parts of this bibliography, although the opinions expressed here are mine and not necessarily theirs.
synthesis. Two multi-author works have appeared recently which are of assistance in this direction: one on the history of agriculture in the last two hundred years, edited by Jansma and Schroot (47), and another covering the ground from prehistoric times up to today, edited by Noordegraaf (73). Both are richly illustrated and are clearly intended for a wide market. Also worthy of mention in the category of general works are the sections in books offering new views on Dutch history in general. In the fifteen-volume 'General History of The Netherlands', published between 1975 and 1983 (2), each period has a useful survey on agriculture written by the appropriate specialists, and for the early nineteenth century two historians, De Meere and Griffies, have radically revised the accepted view that the Dutch economy was in malaise at that time, not least by their studies of the agricultural sector (66 and 38). For those who do not read Dutch, the best short introduction to the field is in Milward and Saul's study of the European economy from 1850 to 1914, which includes a ten-page section on Dutch agriculture (68, pp 184-94). Griffies' study of the economy from 1830 to 1850 (38) is in English, and contains a short survey on agriculture, and there exists a large though unsystematic English-language study by Robertson Scott (83) of the period before the First World War. For more detail, the now dated works in German by Frost (35, 36) may still be consulted. In an unfamiliar research area it is also useful to have a guide to government statistics, and specialist dictionaries. The former are explained by Wijk (118), and there are two particularly useful Dutch-English agriculture dictionaries available (Huitenga 44 and Logie 63). It must be said that few of these works in this general category are entirely satisfactory: the one which really stands out is van Zanden's dissertation on the economic aspects of agriculture (128), the translation of which into English would unlock many of the secrets of Dutch agriculture for historians outside The Netherlands.

It is in the major studies of regions, most usually provinces, that the Dutch have done their best work in agrarian history, and in this respect the situation is not dissimilar to that in France. There have been two impulses here: the Wageningen School, with its quest for systematic data in serial form covering a substantial area over an extended period of time, and the provincial governments which, since the war, in a country where nationalism is reticent, have often attempted to strengthen and enhance the provincial identity by commissioning major studies by distinguished academic historians on the history of the province. In the rural areas in the north, east, and south of the country, this has in effect meant agrarian history. These two agents of advance have brought about a present situation where most of the rural areas of the country have had major studies committed to them, or where plans for such studies are well advanced and producing results. Slicher van Bath himself, the first Professor of Agrarian History at Wageningen, authored a pioneering study of rural life in the province of Overijssel (93); he also edited a more popular history of the province, 96, which was to define the 'Wageningen' genre: the sections concerned the demographic dynamics, the structure of the working population, social stratification patterns, wealth and poverty, the extent of farmland, landownership and tenancy, the farm economy, and the techniques of farming. Studies in similar vein followed for other areas of the country. Friesland was the subject of a Wageningen dissertation by Faber (31), and already had a more general social history by Spahr; van der Hock (98) and a detailed study of the agricultural crisis in the last quarter of the nineteenth century by Hille de Vries (111). The present incumbent of the Wageningen chair, Ad van der Woude, followed with a comprehensive study of the northern part of the province of Noord-Holland (124). The province of Drente is now extremely well covered, having a general provincial history (Heringa 39) of high quality, in which the chapters on the agrarian history of the modern period were written by Jan Bieleman, who has since completed a dissertation on agriculture in Drenthe from 1660 to 1913 (9), and who has published some of his findings in this Review (8). The southern province of Limburg has a very active local historical association, and has been well catered for in agrarian history. The pioneer of local and regional history W Jappe Alberts has produced a two-volume history of Dutch and Belgian Limburg (48; vol II covers the period from 1632 onwards), which has sections on agriculture in each chronological chapter; there is also a history of agriculture in Limburg by Claessens and others (27) which covers the period since 1750. Jansen has completed a more detailed and specialized study on the cyclical movements in southern Limburg agriculture from 1200 to 1800 (46), which is firmly in the tradition of long time-series and secular trend studies based on quantitative sources favoured by the *Annales* school in France. Noord-Brabant is also well served by its local historical association, and a number of very thorough studies have appeared, often in the series of 'Contributions to the History of the South of the Netherlands' (Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis van het Zuiden van Nederland 12). A recent issue in this series is a study by Crijns and Kriellaars (28) on the mixed farming of the Brabant sands from 1800 to 1885: again the approach is quantitative and systematic, dealing with population, land use, crops, cattle and other finite variables. Klep wrote his dissertation on the Belgian part of Brabant (54), taking a demographic approach to a mainly rural province in the eighteenth and
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nineteenth centuries, and he has also contributed to the history of Brabant north of the Dutch–Belgian border, in his study of the area around Breda and the Kempen (Campine, 54). The Kempen is also the subject of a historical anthropological study by Meurkens (67), dealing with this heathland area’s rural economy and society in the period 1840–1910, superceding the earlier classic by Barentsen (5).

A useful study of the eastern part of the province of Noord–Brabant from 1700 to 1920 has recently appeared (Van den Brink 22), and Bieleman has provided a survey of agriculture in the Twente district of Overijssel in the early nineteenth century (10). The province of Gelderland does not have an agrarian history yet, but Roessingh’s work on the Veluwe district (84) and Verstegen’s recent dissertation on the same area (109) go some way to redressing the balance. Groningen, the northern sea-clay province, lacks a specifically agrarian history (although one by P Priester is in preparation), but a good general history of the province has recently been edited by Fromm and others (32), and many studies have appeared over the years on particular aspects of farming in the province, notably by the veteran historical (rural) sociologist, E W Hofstee (eg 42). Zeeland was fortunate in having two early but thorough histories of the province’s agriculture, by Boerendonk (17), and an excellent work on the period from 1800 to 1943 by Bouman (20); this is now dated, and though Wintle’s work on religion in this rural province in the nineteenth century (122) has advanced matters, more research is needed.

Not all eleven provinces (twelve, including the new polders in the IJsselmeer) are covered in the account given above: Zuid-Holland, Noord-Holland and Utrecht are too predominantly urban to have had agricultural histories devoted to them on a provincial scale. It would almost be like writing an agrarian history of London. In the urban core provinces there are of course many agricultural villages, and it is in studies of communities that this part of the country has its agrarian history recorded. Community studies, or ‘village history’, is thriving in the Netherlands, and has done so for some decades. Sociologists and anthropologists join historians here, and when the community is a rural or agricultural one, then the results contribute to agrarian history. In 1982 Jansen and Groot produced a useful guide to the methods and bibliography of these studies in the Netherlands since the 1930s (45), when the discipline was called ‘sociography’. The central provinces are well represented here: Baars’ Wageningen-inspired serial study of the Beijerland villages (3); Gadourek’s sociological case-study of the small town Sassenheim (37) after the war; Noordam’s economic-demographic examination of the village Maasland from 1700 to 1850 (71); Schutte’s in-depth look at four hamlets known as the Banne Graft from 1770 to 1810 (90); and Verrips’ anthropological study of the village of Ottoland from 1850 to the 1970s (108). Similar studies, either directly or indirectly concerned with agrarian history, have been completed in all the provinces, for example Boer’s study of a Drentse village (16); the Keurs examination of the isolated village of Anderen, also in the east of the country (52); and Hille de Vries’ case-study of the Frisian village of Oostdongeradeel in his examination of the whole province (111).

Among those historians who take a thematically rather than geographically selective approach, the activity is equally wide-ranging. The physical environment is a fundamental starting point in such a mankind-influenced countryside as the Dutch; as well as very detailed works of historical geography, like Barends’ study of the Achterhoek area in the east (4), which pays special attention to post-war land-reallocation issues, a more general introduction to Dutch landscape is provided by Bijnouwer (13). The history of climate in the Netherlands was written by Labrijn in 1943 (61): it is clearly due for an overhaul.

Studies which try to define the general character of Dutch rural community life in the past are not at present in fashion, but Van den Berg in 1949 (7) and Trienekens has written in 1965 (117) made classic attempts, the latter being a sociological explanation of the variety in regional characteristics. More recently these attempts at rural histoire de mentalité tend to be undertaken on a less general scale, as in the community studies dealt with above, or on the basis of specific source materials such as probate inventories. Work at Wageningen on probates has produced a collection of papers (Van der Woude and Schuurman 127), and recently the dissertation by Schuurman (91, and also 92), which uses the source to define changes and regional variations in material culture in three rural areas in the nineteenth century. Included in these studies of the rural ‘mentality’ in the past are investigations of the rural family; Saal made a study of farming families (88), and Kooy’s long series of works on the Dutch family began with a monograph on the Achterhoek area (57). A recent example of this subject is Vernooy’s study of Catholic farming families from the 1930s to the 1980s (107). Wildenbeest investigated a handful of wealthy rural families in the extreme east of the country from their rise to power in the late Middle Ages to their eclipse in the mid-nineteenth century (119). The debate on the standard of life is discussed efficiently for the first half of the nineteenth century by De Meere (65), and as far as rural communities are affected the debate often centres on diet: Baudet and Van der Meulen have studied the period from 1850 to World War One (6), and Trienekens has written controversially on Dutch diet during the Nazi occupation in World War Two (103), concluding that
for most of the war the Dutch ate rather better than they did before it. Van Eekelen has studied infants' diet in the period 1840 to 1914 (30).

Turning to a more directly farming-related side of agrarian history, certain individual farms which have exceptionally well preserved records have been the subject of special studies, like the works on the model farm Wilhelminapolder, since its foundation at the start of the nineteenth century, by Van der Poel (77), Bouman (21) and Kuperus (59), and by Van Mol on a more ordinary farm in Zeeland in the middle years of the last century (69); however it is by no means clear how representative these studies are. Kuperus also contributed a study on pre-1900 farm book-keeping (60), and the recent publication by Botke of a late eighteenth-century farming diary (8) is used to investigate the socio-cultural world of the diarist as well as the economic side of the farm. Slicher van Bath's famous study of yield ratios (95), and his use of them as indicators of economic development in predominantly agricultural economies, relies heavily on data from the Netherlands from the ninth to the nineteenth century. Studies of particular crops include Roessingh's fascinating investigation of the cultivation of tobacco in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (85, 86), in which he shows the flexibility and adaptability of what we had thought were fundamentally conservative farmers. Several studies have appeared on the crop madder, which was important in the Netherlands (Van der Kloot Meyburg 56, Wiskerke 123, Van der Poel 78; see also Schot 89), and recently Buis has produced an exhaustive study of the history of forests and woodlands in the Netherlands up to 1850 (25). Technological developments in farming since 1850 have been dealt with by Van der Poel (80), and advances in the chemical side of agricultural technology have been investigated by Maltha (65). The introduction of steam power in agriculture is dealt with in an article by Lintsen (62), and Van Zon's dissertation (113), on non-industrial pollution from 1850 to 1920, is central to the whole question of land fertility and manuring: several of his chapters are directly on agriculture, and his case-studies focus on Groningen. Land ownership, absentee landlords and their effects on the agricultural economy have been explored by Klijnhout (who is the landlords' apologist, 55) and by Hille de Vries (112) and Wintle (121), who differ on the periodicity of shifts in the absentee landlord system; the swing of land use in Groningen from grass to arable in the late eighteenth century and subsequently is the subject of a recent monograph from Hofstee (42).

In a country which never experienced an industrial revolution, at least not before 1945, the agricultural sector has always been an important contributor to the economy. Pilat examines agricultural exports from the 1840s to the 1920s (75), and Bos' dissertation on Anglo-Dutch trade from 1870 to 1914 (18) deals of necessity with the Dutch export of agricultural goods in some detail. Agricultural industry has been a dynamic sector in Dutch manufacturing, as Griffiths shows for the period 1830-1850 (38) and De Jonge for 1850-1914 (49); Schot (89) has reassessed Wiskerke's standard work on the madder-milling industry (123).

The manpower aspects of Dutch agriculture are intimately connected with the history of demographic behaviour, and as such are the subject of many studies and several controversies: an introduction in English, though not unpartisan, is provided by Hofstee (43), while Klep has taken a particularly demographic approach to the agrarian history of Brabant (53, 54). Migration of agricultural labour has been investigated by Swierenga (101, 102) and by Hille de Vries (113), who concentrate on the exodus to the United States at various stages since 1830 of large numbers of Dutch farmers and farm workers; Lucassen's work on seasonal migrant labour in Europe (64) concentrates on the coastal provinces of the Netherlands as a major destination for migrant labour in the nineteenth century. Frieswijk has made a special study of agricultural labourers and peat diggers in the northern provinces from 1850 to 1940 (33, 34). Regarding the quality of labour, literacy in the countryside has been the subject of a preliminary investigation by Van der Woude (126), while Van der Poel has compiled an account of agricultural education before 1918 (79), and Van der Burg has dealt with agricultural home economy education for girls since 1909 (26).

The organizational and governmental aspects of agrarian society have long been the subject of study because of the propensity of organizations, especially in the Netherlands (where many have a confessional affiliation), to sponsor commemorative publications about themselves. The general works already cited all deal with government intervention in agriculture, which in the Netherlands was almost non-existent until the First World War, and thereafter very dirigiste, especially in the 1930s. Vermeulen has made a special study of nineteenth-century agriculture policy (105), Van der Poel has examined the role of the Agricultural Commissions (76), which before 1851 were the government agencies in the provinces, Krips-Van der Laan has studied government policy on farming in the 1930s (58), and Piers wrote a commemorative study on The Netherlands Agriculture Committee (74) which ran agricultural politics in the years from 1934 to 1959. Vermeulen has written on the Dutchman Sicco Mansholt's contribution to early European agricultural policy after 1945 (106). Legal reform to the benefit of agriculture is dealt with by Demoed, whose work on the enclosure of the common lands (marken) in the east of the country (29) contends that the main reform of 1886 had in fact very little effect, and by Wintle, whose work on tithing reform (120)
suggests that legislation was ineffective until after 1900. Organizations of farmers themselves are also well served in the literature: De Ru’s work on the movement called Agriculture and Society (Landbouw en Maatschappij, 87) investigates a farmers’ pressure group in the 1930s, Van Stuijvenberg provides a survey of the early agricultural cooperative movement (99), and amongst the many works on local and ideologically affiliated cooperatives and other organizations, Jonker’s studies of the Noord-Brabant Christian Farmers Union (50, 51) show how the organization was used at local level to reinforce the position of the local rural elite. Several of the major banks in the Netherlands have their origins in the agricultural cooperative movement, for example the now giant RABO-Bank; commemorative publications abound, the best of them by professional business historians like Johan de Vries, whose work on the Dutch agricultural cooperative banks in the quarter-century between 1948 and 1973 (115) is a useful update and inventory of most of the preceding publications in this genre.

In a less formal organizational sense, agrarian society in the Netherlands was an important part of the impetus to the formation of the confessional parties and ‘pillars’ in Dutch society, which (until the 1960s) was divided into Socialist, Protestant, Catholic and Liberal organizations protecting their members ‘from the cradle to the grave’. This process, known as verzuring or pillarization, is being studied at local level, and many of the studies concern rural communities in the period since 1850. They are too numerous to list, but a collection of local investigations edited by Blom (15) includes work on two villages in Holland, as well as an authoritative introduction on the theoretical and methodological issues involved.

The work of the churches in shaping rural society has been explored by Roessingh for the Veluwe district at the beginning of the nineteenth century (84), by Verrrips for a dairying village in Zuid-Holland from 1850 onwards (108), and for Zeeland in the last century by Wintle (122).

What is the sum of all this activity? The profession of agrarian history is very much alive in the Netherlands, and it appears to be in good condition. There is an influential running debate on theory and methods, which turns on two matters, the first of which is the perceived need to harness the army of amateur local and regional historians into a coordinated force which will be capable of yielding answers to important questions we wish to pose about the past, rather than simply piling up more and more unintegrated antiquarian information (see ‘Regionale geschiedenis’ 81, and Trienekens 104). The other is the question of the most productive methodology in making sense of the mass of quantitative and qualitative data now available for the various regions over periods of a century and more. The approach to this scale of work is much influenced by the Annales historical school, reflected in some Dutch work on lengthy time-series of rents, tithes and other prices, like Van der Wee’s collection on secular trends in land productivity (116), and Jansen’s study of Limburg 1250–1800 (46). The influence of the Wageningen School is still very strong, with its emphasis on demographic data: its present chairman, Ad van der Woude, has provided an account of the Wageningen department in the last thirty years (125). The most exciting new development in recent years is the work of Jan Luiten van Zanden on the economic aspects of the agricultural economy (128): starting from a theoretical economic premise he has displayed the most extraordinary facility for channeling the mass of raw data and secondary studies on the agricultural economy into his quest for the dynamics of its development. The answers he has provided have formed the basis for new, improved estimates of the national income in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century (129), which is the subject of a major project at the Free University in Amsterdam under his general guidance.

But there is no feeling of complacency: there is a long way to go, and some areas, like the river-clay area of Gelderland, remain relatively untouched. The government agency for academic research in The Netherlands, the NWO (Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek), is funding extensive research into agrarian society in the modern period in two important regions: the Meijerij area around the southern town of ’s-Hertogenbosch (Bois le Duc) in Noord-Brabant, and the rural province of Groningen in the north. These are long-term and comprehensive projects: we can expect major studies to be forthcoming in future years. The only principal agricultural region left uncovered is the province of Zeeland: the local historical society has launched a campaign to commission a properly funded and professionally organized programme of research into rural society since 1750, and the Department of Agrarian History at Wageningen has taken up the challenge: the project will last several years, and will provide the essential material and analyses for this predominantly arable province on the coastal clays.

It is true that the Dutch do not argue much: there are few celebrated historical debates, and intra-professional criticism tends to be mild. But there are some major revisions going on in Dutch agrarian history: Jan de Vries’ classic study of the Dutch rural economy in the early modern period (114), which puts forward specialization as the force behind a highly successful agricultural sector in the period 1500–1800, and links it with proletarianization, has been challenged by Noordegraaf (72), and by Van Zanden (131), who points more to the role of capital
and questions whether there ever was such a thing as a peasant economy in the western part of the Netherlands. Another debate which, if not raging, is ticking over in Dutch agrarian historical circles, arises from Bieleman’s recent thesis on agriculture in Drenthe (9), in which he challenges Van Zanden’s assertion (in 128) that Drenthe’s agriculture experienced a marked rise in fortunes in the first half of the last century: Van Zanden has replied to the challenge (130), and Bieleman has fought back (11). It is in part a polite joust in print between scholars who are gentlemen, but the debate centres on the appropriate use of certain crucial quantitative sources, and the resulting interpretation of the dynamics of the eastern farming economy in the nineteenth century is fundamental to our whole view of recent Dutch history. It is in these discussions of the long-term dynamics and overall shape of agrarian society that the future lies: for a while it seemed that the enormous productivity of both professional and amateur historians would swamp us with an infinity of micro-data: the achievements of the Wageningen School, and of Van Zanden’s economic analysis, have been to establish a broad framework into which the micro-research can be related and integrated.

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Conference Report: ‘Farmers and Landowners’  
Winter Conference 1990

By RICHARD PERREN

A day of dull weather was brightened when members of the society met in London for the sixteenth joint Winter Conference with the Institute of British Geographers' Historical Geography Research Group on Saturday 1 December at the institute of Historical Research. Including the four speakers, the conference eventually attracted well over fifty persons into the Local History Room of the institute to hear four excellent papers on the general theme of 'Farmers and Landowners'.

Papers were delivered in chronological order and the first of the morning was from a deceptively grey-suited Christopher Dyer (University of Birmingham) on 'Farmers and landlords in the middle ages: the origins of a partnership'. Using a variety of records, such as court rolls, tax payments, letter collections, and indentures, and concentrating on the west midlands, he detailed the salient features of the emergence of farmers as a specific occupational group from c 1400 onwards. He emphasized the profound social consequences that followed lords' decisions to transfer the management of demesne land from the hands of stewards to tenant farmers. Although initially tenants were seen as personal retainers, and some even given liveries, eventually their relationship with the lord became purely contractual and was regulated by a formal legal agreement - the indenture. As farmers came to supply up to forty per cent of the estate income, lords needed to modify these agreements to accommodate changing circumstances and allow farmers more freedom of action. From the point of view of farmers, this flexibility was particularly needed in the fifteenth century, which was a time of falling prices causing at times a pressing requirement for rents to be revised downwards. For the lord, who was often absent from the estate, choosing a good tenant was not an easy matter as he had no personal knowledge of applicants, but had to rely on the recommendations of stewards and letters from interested parties. For both sides, the best results were achieved where tolerant lords allowed enterprising farmers to respond to market demands, and where this allowed them to specialize in the production of a particular range of crops. The eventual separation of the lords from the management of the land was mirrored by the separation of the farmers from the rest of the village community. The appearance of consolidated blocks of land encouraged the building of farmhouses out of the village, so emphasizing the social distinction between the farmers and the peasant community from which they had emerged.

The morning’s second paper was from John Chapman (Portsmouth Polytechnic) on 'Landownership and enclosure: the impact of land sales'. He returned to the debate, initiated by Marx, over whether parliamentary enclosure was a land-grab whereby small owners lost out to the gentry and aristocracy. When enclosure took place, commissioners had certain expenses, particularly public costs like roads, which they could meet either by levying a rate on the owners or by selling part of the land to be enclosed. Using his ten-per-cent sample of enclosure awards, scattered over the whole country, he finds that out of the 545 awards in his sample, 141 used sales to defray expenses. These sales were regionally concentrated in Wales, Cumberland, the south-west, and the south-east of England. In Wales they accounted for 17 per cent of the land enclosed (c 125,000 acres) but in England only 3.5 per cent of the land was sold (c 250,000 acres). On the question of whether the land was bought by existing owners or by outsiders, he found that c 40 per cent went to outsiders in England, but c 76 per cent was bought by outsiders in Wales. In both countries these outsider buyers were not speculators from distant parts, nor were they large landowners. For the most part they were local people, and in Wales 75 per cent of them actually lived in the parish being enclosed. Descriptions of their occupations support G E Mingay's assertion that they were predominantly craftsmen, tradesmen, and labourers and not gentry or aristocracy. The amounts they bought were small, averaging nine acres in England and 36 acres in Wales, and the motive for their purchases seems to have been either for a source of pension or, as Dennis Mills
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suggested, to have a small piece of accommodation land for personal or business use. But, whatever the reason for purchasing, Chapman stressed that the findings from his sample provided no support for the Marxist view that land sales by the enclosure commissioners were used to feed the territorial appetites of large landowners.

Because of late-returners from lunch, the afternoon session began somewhat after the scheduled time with Sarah Wilmot (University of Reading) speaking about ‘Landlords, tenants, and the march of science 1770–1870’. She was able to trace the interest in science as a key to agricultural improvement back to the 1730s, but in the later eighteenth century its importance was underlined in the works of William Marshall and Arthur Young. In the post-1815 world of agricultural depression, enthusiasm for science waxed in agricultural circles, only to revive in the 1840s when emphasis was placed on the theoretical works of Humphry Davy (Elements of Agricultural Chemistry), Justus von Leibig (Organic Chemistry in its Relation to Agriculture), and the empirical work of John Bennet Lawes, and Joseph Henry Gilbert. The literature of the 1840s to the end of the 1860s chronicles this progress. The proliferation of agricultural societies was one way in which this was emphasized, and another was the further growth of the agricultural book trade. Links between agricultural societies and professional scientists were particularly strong in Scotland, where the first chair of agricultural science had been founded at Edinburgh University in the 1790s. By the mid-nineteenth century one way of establishing a scientific career was by becoming a consultant to one of the agricultural societies. But the scientists of the 1850s tended, rather smugly, to discount the work of their predecessors and scornfully regarded the early nineteenth century as an age of alchemy in contrast to their own age of the modern chemist. Practical farmers were uniformly sceptical of the claims of both modern and early agricultural scientists. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries landlords were far more impressed by the pretensions of scientists than were their tenants, who remained intellectually and physically isolated from scientific developments of both ages.

With time pressing on, Michael Thompson delivered the final paper on ‘Business elites and land purchases in the nineteenth century’ to a diminishing audience. He linked what he had to say to the views of R C Allen, who argues that land in Britain was always overpriced, even with built-in elements of income and capital appreciation, and those of Lawrence Stone and W D Rubinstein who find no evidence that it ever was overpriced. Instead, Stone says that there was a shortage of land because the old land-owning aristocracy would not release it, thus excluding the entry of newcomers into their ranks, whereas Rubinstein believes that the new men of wealth did not want to enter the landed elite. Thompson believes the demand for land, in large blocks, was always sufficient it keep its price above its strictly economic value. However, as prospective purchasers did not view the acquisition of this asset in purely economic terms, but often regarded it as a way of confirming a desired social position, he wondered just how strictly the concept of price could be applied to land. There was always a demand for land from men who had made money in business or commerce and had male heirs. But, having bought land, such men did not necessarily abandon the counting house for the country house, preferring instead to adopt a composite lifestyle by combining elements of both. Sometimes the newcomers had no aim of family permanence in the landed classes, perhaps just wishing to confirm a personal lifestyle, but then leaving their estates to be divided among sons and grandsons after their death. Such transient owners may have bought land as a form of insurance to hold for one generation only, or at least were not concerned that it might be re-sold at the next. Even though the amount becoming available was limited, there was no particular evidence of growing concentration of land in the nineteenth century, and that on offer was enough to satisfy demand. Entry into the landed elite was always possible, even though the wealth and acreages of parvenus did not come to match those of the really large old-established members of the landed aristocracy.

The conference concluded with a vote of thanks to the organizer, Peter Dewey, for the smooth efficiency with which he oversaw the whole proceedings and also to Dr Patrick K O’Brien, the Institute’s Director, for allowing the use of the comfortable Local History Room for what all agreed to have been a most worthwhile day.
L Genicot, Rural Communities in the Medieval West, (The Johns Hopkins symposium in comparative history), The Johns Hopkins UP, 1990, x + 185 pp. 20 figures; 6 tables. £21.50. This short and concise book, developed out of a series of lectures given in the United States, is a new attempt to explain some of the general issues connected with that elusive historical entity – the rural communities of the Middle Ages. Few scholars are better equipped than the author to deliver such a synthesis, based as it is both on his own pioneering work on Belgium and on a broad sweep of the scholarly literature from all over Europe. Even with such a wide angle Genicot wisely refrains from over-generalization, and his admission of ignorance is as frequent as is his practical advice to the less experienced. The introduction gives a short overview on the latest state of research techniques, including archaeology, pedology, palinology, historical meteorology, archaeozoology and osteology. Then follow five chapters on the problem of village origins, the economic, legal and religious aspects of the agrarian communities, and their ties to the wider entities of the medieval world. To summarize shortly some of the conclusions: On origins most communities were part of a manor... The parish was the second step, from a perspective of consciousness... (p 28). Following the demographic upswing of the central Middle Ages, assuring has played a crucial role in the consolidation of the rural community (p 42). The French concept of seigneurie banale seems to be applicable in other parts of Europe too, contributing again to the birth, maturation or reinforcement of the rural community, by largely unifying the status of the rustici as well as by leading the peasants to react to the action of the lord. As for institutions, most of local organisms were born before the eleventh century, but nearly everywhere they were appropriated and more or less distorted by the lord. Then new ones, entirely or largely independent of the lord, would arise and compete with them’ (p 81). In this second phase, ‘the rural community gained consciousness, strength, and shape thanks to the concessions of liberties by many lords and the pressure of population growth, which led to fixing and normally mitigating seignorial burdens and to creating or reinforcing local bodies’ (p 89). Of these the most important was probably the parish, in which the nobles did not have a part (p 105). For the reader still conditioned to insular singularity, except for thirteenth-century ‘high farming’ Genicot finds little distinction between the continental and English experience of village development. Michael Toch

Michael Aston, David Austen and Christopher Dyer, eds, The Rural Settlements of Medieval England. Studies Dedicated to Maurice Beresford and John Hurst, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989. xii + 318 pp. 45 maps and diagrams; 19 plates. £57.50. Members of this society will require little introduction to the work of Maurice Beresford and John Hurst. Beresford’s Lost Villages of England (1954) is a seminal and evocative work, whose recent re-issue in paperback is confirmation of its lasting appeal. In 1971 they collaborated on Deserta Medieval Villages, which documented the significant advances that had been made in the study of medieval settlement during the intervening period. Yet even to a reviewer from a younger generation, it is clear that their enormous impact on the subject has been as much due to their personal influence and enthusiasm, particularly on the famous summer excavations at Wharram Percy.

This Festschrift is a fitting successor to Deserta Medieval Villages. The sixteen contributors reflect the development of a more multidisciplinary approach to medieval settlement studies, and the volume is appropriately segregated into three sections: ‘history and geography’, ‘fieldwork’, and ‘excavation’. Its scope is ‘anglocentric’, to borrow the editors’ own phrase, although within these bounds the individual essays are eclectic in subject matter and methodological approach. Of those which assume a broad sweep, P D A Harvey presents a challenging reappraisal of the role of lordship in settlement change, and Dyer questions conventional assumptions about the nature of ‘marginal’ regions. Other general surveys are content to summarize the existing state of research, such as Wade-Martins’ contribution on East Anglian settlement, and Bond’s on the south Midlands. These are interspersed with some highly particular or localized studies, for instance Wilson on forms of ridge-and-furrow, and Fox on the settlement of the Nottinghamshire-Leicestershire wolds. The essays are prefaced by a useful editors’ introduction, which not only acknowledges Beresford and Hurst’s contribution to the study of medieval rural settlement, but also points the way forward with suggestions for future inquiry.

Scholars have clearly made some impressive strides since 1954. The older explanations of settlement patterns and movements have been greatly refined, and gone is the preoccupation with nucleated villages. Yet this volume reveals that there is still much important work to be done, and not only in the vital task of preserving the diminishing number of medieval sites from the predations of developers and agriculturalists. Taylor’s piece on Whittlesford is a case in point,
for in a fascinating and honest account he highlights the many interpretative problems which can face the settlement historian. A considerable amount of new information about medieval settlements has been uncovered in recent years, but we have yet to construct a suitable conceptual framework in which to accommodate it all. Perhaps it will soon be time for some brave individual to paint broad strokes in the fashion of Beresford himself.

Therein lies the challenge for the future. For the present, this collection of essays indicates that much sensible and cautious research has been undertaken. The volume is beautifully produced, and the many maps, diagrams and plates enhance its attractiveness, particularly to a non-specialist audience. It is unfortunate, though, that the price will be prohibitive to many potential purchasers.

MARK BAILEY


As the incoming administration after the 1979 general election sought to slim the machinery of government, it discovered one of those delightful English anomalies and eccentricities - that the Ministry of Agriculture owned the last surviving open-field village farming system in England, at Laxton in Nottinghamshire. This was deemed not to be the business of government, and accordingly Laxton was put on the market. Widespread protests against the possibility of enclosure ensued, and eventually the Crown Estate Commissioners took it over with guarantees to continue existing systems as long as the tenants wish it. Laxton's field system was first recognized as unique in 1906 since when the open fields have been preserved despite several alarms and excursions, and has attracted distinguished historians.

John Beckett's book, engendered in the latest battle to preserve the fields, traces the history of Laxton from medieval times to the 1980s using a wide range of estate, taxation, and administrative records, as well as photographs, memoirs and oral material. After a quick survey of Laxton's medieval period when its castle and owner brought royal visitors to the village, his second chapter sets out clearly and succinctly the institutions and practicalities of open-field farming in Laxton over the centuries, and the rest of the book charts the course of landownership and village life from the seventeenth century to the present day. His sources enable him to follow patterns of landownership and farm size at surprisingly frequent intervals. He shows that Laxton is above all a statistical anomaly, for its patterns of landownership, farm size, and landlord-tenant relations are not markedly different from its Nottinghamshire neighbours, nor indeed from general trends in Midland England. Although Laxton's freeholders increased in numbers during the eighteenth century, the percentage of land they held fell from 25 to approximately 15 per cent, and was no real barrier to parliamentary enclosure. The freeholders and tenants accepted periodic reorganization and piecemeal enclosure at regular intervals, so that the open fields already constituted less than half the village land area in 1635, and less than one eighth, some 483 acres, in 1988. The absence of the final coup de grace is explained by chance factors amongst the elite - the long neglect of the Thoresby estates by the 2nd Duke of Kingston, the quarrel between the two prime landowners in the 1840s, and, after preparatory land purchases and exchanges had been completed in the 1860s, the competing claim for capital from the rebuilding of Thoresby Hall. Above all, the poor clays of Laxton promised their landlords no substantial improvement in rent or farming methods, and the survival of open fields did not prevent farm sizes rising to respectable levels for the county, or the majority of larger tenants making an adequate living.

This excellent study offers a mine of information which has been digested and presented in its national context with the author's customary lucidity. I occasionally wondered why some of the diagrams and photos appeared exactly where they did in the text, and whether the inhabitants of Laxton over the centuries were as peaceful, un-litigious, and apparently uninvolved in the question of enclosure as they sometimes appear. Some assessment of the percentage of open field on each size group of farms, and what percentage had none at all, would have helped to slot open-field cultivation into the overall farming context at different periods. But these are quibbles when set against the achievements of the book which uses the computing techniques of the eighties quite transparently to make it a worthy successor to Orwin and Chambers.

JOHN BROAD


In so far as historians and geographers have focused particular attention on eighteenth-century Norfolk agriculture, or the subsequent industrialization of the Midlands, South Wales, and parts of Northern England, they fail to produce a balanced interpretation of national economic and social development. In part this deficiency arises not so much from a lack of detailed research on other areas, as an absence of overall surveys of their development. Plugging this gap is one positive achievement of this historical study
of the South East of England, comprising the modern counties of East and West Sussex, Surrey, Kent, and Greater London south of the Thames, from later Anglo-Saxon times to the 1980s, as one volume in an ambitious series covering ten English regions.

It is the work of two historical geographers who are clearly well versed in the sub-regional complexities, and geographical and geological intricacies, of the area under investigation. A consistent theme throughout is 'the essential difference . . . between the Interior and the Coastal Fringe' (p 373), the former being the Weald stretching across the ancient counties of Kent, Surrey and Sussex. Irrespective of period this has been 'a deep force within the region' (p 373), and has allowed 'new insights to be brought to bear on regional history' (p 14).

Quite apart from any original research, a pulling together and summarizing of a considerable volume and range of the publications of 'several hundred scholars, past and present' (p xix), is another outstanding achievement of this book. Although 376 pages of text are bereft of footnotes, published sources are acknowledged, and on pages 378-403 there is an impressive and useful Bibliography.

Brimming with detailed facts and considered arguments, five of the seven chapters are sub-divided into themes for ease of reference, but additionally this study is well supported by a forty page index, ten tables, and numerous illustrations, well-executed maps, etc.

There is much in this book to interest the student of agricultural history and rural society, including the structure of early medieval society and land management, early medieval agricultural techniques and productivity, followed by deer parks, forests and chases. Attention in the later middle ages is devoted to demography and the agrarian economy, rural dereliction, and the drowning of the marshes. Between 1520 and 1660 the changing countryside is examined. The themes of the period 1660-1837 include regional variation in farming systems, agricultural change, agrarian employment and rural stress, and gardens and landscape parks. Agriculture and changes in the countryside are analysed between 1837 and 1939. Encompassed within at least a third of the book devoted to rural themes are some excellent tables and maps: a table showing the principal crops and livestock of the agrarian regions of south-east England, 1640-1730 (pp 204-5), and land use trends in south-east England, 1875-1939 (p 328). Among the maps are early medieval deer parks and forests (p 73), south-east agricultural regions within the period 1660-1837 (p 206), forms of rural protest in south-east England in the 1830s (p 236), and gardens, parks and turnpike roads (p 248).

What is clearly a scholarly and well-written study deserves a wide readership spread among professional historians and researchers, as much as among those who care for the history of south-east England.

JOHN WHYMAN


Studies of medieval agriculture have often relegated pastoral activities to a secondary or marginal role in the economy, subordinate to cereal cultivation. In this important work on the estate of Peterborough Abbey Kathleen Biddick sets out to rectify this situation. Pastoralism and arable husbandry were not competing systems of land-use on the estate, she argues, but rather meshed together in an integral whole, the prime purpose of which was to satisfy the direct consumption needs of the monastic household.

Drawing on both archaeological and documentary evidence Biddick traces the changing ways in which the Abbey exercised feudal power to exploit its resources over a period of six centuries. The core of the book, however, is a detailed study of the demesne accounts of 1300-01, 1307-08 and 1309-10. One of the strengths of her analysis lies in viewing the estate as a network and in demonstrating the meaning of the 'flows' which take place within it; the seasonal movements of animals which permitted the Abbey to maximize its self-reliance and minimize dependence upon the market. The market was used to generate a cash income through the sale of wool, grain from outlying manors, and those animals and animal products which were surplus to consumption requirements. Replenishment of herds and flocks was achieved without significant market involvement, except in the case of cart-horses. Biddick shows how the dominance of 'consumption strategies' was compatible both with an intelligent but restricted interaction with the market and with those progressive features of the agrarian economy - the use of horses for transport, widespread weeding, manuring and consequent high crop yields - which have been associated with significant levels of commercialization elsewhere.

Peterborough Abbey had 'focused' requirements from each group of animals; horses were primarily for transport, oxen for ploughing, cows for breeding, sheep for the cash value of their wool, and pigs for meat. Biddick calculates that the quantity of pigs received and slaughtered in the Abbey's piggery in 1309-10 could have provided an astonishing one-half of the annual calorific requirements of the 140-strong community.

Although this is an estate study it is slightly disappointing that Biddick does not give greater consideration to the regional context within which
the Abbey operated. Manorial accounts are often frustratingly uninformative as to places of sale and purchase of commodities. However, given the selective and disciplined use which Biddick shows the Abbey to have made of market opportunities, it is a pity that she does not speculate on the loci of exchange beyond brief mentions of the likely demands of the towns of Stamford and Northampton for raw materials and foodstuffs. And how typical were the individual manors of the localities within which they lay? To what extent could the estate's strategies over-ride the factors of resource endowment, local knowledge and technique? How commercialized overall was the regional economy? Clearly, tackling these wider questions requires a marriage between estate studies and broader analyses of manorial accounts and other sources relating to a whole region. Nevertheless Kathleen Biddick has successfully demonstrated that an appreciation of the dynamics of pastoral husbandry and of the 'strategies of consumption' are essential to a proper understanding of the medieval agrarian economy.

JAMES A GALLOWAY


It is perhaps a sign of the times that almost a quarter of this beautiful and lavishly illustrated book describing both the history and types of traditional buildings from houses to watermills, should be devoted to agricultural buildings. Ten years ago, this section, if it had been included at all, would have concentrated only on some of the finest barns, but here again this book takes account of the increasing interest in all the buildings of the farmstead and what they can teach us about past farming practices. Granaries, shelter sheds, field houses, dairies, stables, pigsties, and hen houses as well as local variations are all described in detail. Many examples are cited and illustrated, providing a wide ranging introduction to the regional and typological variations to be found across the country.

Although this book is the work of an architectural historian of some renown, it does not confine itself to discussing architectural features. Farm buildings are first and foremost functional, and explanations of how they were used are always included. An agricultural explanation for regional variations such as field houses or barns, bank barns, and linhay is sought and put forward.

The book is specifically about traditional buildings and therefore confines its attention to the period before the eighteenth century when the designers were the local farmers and yeomen rather than the gentry and aristocracy who replaced them. They were 'well-versed in architecture and this meant more to them than tradition'. As a result, model and industrial farms are not covered; instead they are dismissed as 'demonstrating architectural taste rather than an understanding of agricultural economics'. Many would dispute this statement. All but the most ostentatious home farms were built to attract progressive farmers with capital whose improved methods would increase output and thus provide higher rents. These practical farmers were certainly concerned that their buildings took account of agricultural economics and were quite capable of expressing their preferences to land agents. On many estates an element of tradition remained until the age of corrugated iron and pre-stressed concrete.

It is to be hoped that this attractive and not over-priced book with its authoritative, but readable text will find its way into many homes. It has an important part to play in educating the general public to appreciate the historic value of the ordinary as well as the unique in the hope that some of our rural heritage survives into the twenty-first century.

SUSANNA WADE MARTINS


Andrew Appleby, a tall quiet American, came late to academic life and departed from it tragically early. His published works concerning famine, disease and mortality in the early modern period, span a mere seven years. Even so, these were remarkably fruitful, since Appleby was able to heighten awareness of, and raise questions about famine and disease to such an extent that, like only a limited number of scholars before him, this volume has appeared dedicated posthumously to his memory.

Its eight essays are all appropriately related to themes which Appleby developed, and although demography may be regarded as the most obvious of them, there is much in this volume of value and interest to the agricultural historian, particularly of the early modern period. Six of the essays are concerned with grain output and prices, four of which also deal with harvest failure. The first, by the joint editors, is an extensive and stimulating synthesis of the current state of research and writing into early modern famine, disease and mortality. It begins with Appleby’s work contrasting the vulnerability to famine of north-west England in Tudor and early Stuart times with the experience of south-east England where subsistence crises were largely absent. This view was based on regional differences in the incidence of local mortality crises in years of major dearth, and needs, as Appleby himself stated, to be supported by detailed local studies, for some northern arable
parishes avoided the catastrophes of the largely pastoral communities, just as some Wealden parishes in Sussex, having similar agricultural and ecological characteristics to the famine-prone north, also suffered from mortality crises in years of high food prices.

In any case for determining death by malnutrition or starvation it would be helpful to have regular recording not only about the nutritional intake of individuals but also their causes of death. Rarely is this sort of information available in early modern England and hence the sources used have been movements in market prices of grains, and burials recorded in parish registers. But are grain prices necessarily a good indicator of the amount of food available (an aspect also discussed by Wrigley in his essay) and were higher numbers of deaths when related to prices good indicators of malnutrition or starvation? Perhaps where overseers of the poor accounts have survived, the fluctuations in the numbers receiving relief could be measured against grain price movements to assist in clarifying the issue. The likelihood is that little correlation between numbers in poverty and the measurement of grain prices will result, particularly since harvest variations had the effect of increasing migration (p 53) rather than acting as an institutional barrier to it (p 69).

What is clearly needed is further work on the geography and chronology of famine in order to establish whether starvation or disease was the major cause of mortality crises.

This problem is addressed in the essay by John Walter concerning the social economy of death which indicates that starvation from harvest failure was generally avoided since, by extensive official and unofficial (widespread payments in kind, assistance by local gentry, credit and charity) provision of relief, the poor, both urban and rural, survived harvest failures. Much evidence is provided to support this view, but the more the evidence mounts so does a nagging doubt. With so much insulating so many against price increases, why did prices rise so considerably in Tudor and early Stuart England, since the implication must be that the real market for grain must have been substantially reduced. And since these prices rose at a time when gross grain yields doubled (p 80) and net yields rose by another third more, according to Wrigley (p 257), whilst population less than doubled, another conundrum remains unresolved.

The theme of harvest failures and mortality is continued by Dupaquier and Weir both, in writing about France, reminding us that Appleby was one of the few scholars to have published a comparative study of grain prices and subsistence crises in France and England. Both take the view that such crises in France were diminishing in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries suggesting the gap between England and France was not very wide. But Dupaquier’s methodology is not without criticism and Weir’s conclusion that climatic influences were probably more important in reducing subsistence crises begs the question as to why then and not earlier, and certainly does not suggest the increased productivity which assisted English cereal farming out of its sixteenth-century crises.

By contrast to these national surveys the sort of detailed local study which Appleby called for in his Famine in Tudor and Stuart England is provided by Wrigley and Levine’s examination of mortality in the Tyneside parish of Whickham, Co Durham. This agricultural community emerged late in the sixteenth century as a major centre of coal production with a highly mobile population and with mortality seriously affecting its industrial workers who increasingly formed a higher proportion of its ever-growing population.

Appleby’s last publication ‘The disappearance of the plague: a continuing puzzle’ is evoked by Paul Slack’s essay on the response to plague in early modern England which demonstrates how public measures to combat plague assisted in its disappearance.

The final two essays are by Wrigley and Schofield, jointly famous in another context. Wrigley writes about the quality of harvests and behaviour of prices and is particularly concerned with the differences between gross and net (allowing for seed corn, annual feed and a personal consumption) yields and the influences these had on prices, whilst Schofield discusses the quality of life, examining family structure and its effect on demographic behaviour. Here again the implication is that England did not have a traditional peasant society and associated extended family structures, but a society of nucleated families in a more individualist, collectivist society. It is becoming increasingly necessary to define exactly who a peasant was since some scholars still find them in nine teenth-century England. (see M Reid, History Workshop Journal, Autumn 1984.)

Having an extensive bibliography (but note that Rose should read Rosen), this thought-provoking book, itself inspired by the writings of Andrew Appleby, is testimony to the influence he generated in such a short time. His ideas, and the questions he raised, are being assiduously developed and the quiet American can rest, assured that his legacy continues in good hands.

BARRY STAPLETON


In this impressive volume, seventeen of Joan Thirsk’s colleagues and former research students pay tribute
to the profound and lasting influence which she has had on the economic and social history of the early modern period, and especially on its agrarian component. Readers of this Review, which she edited in such distinguished fashion from 1964 to 1972, will need no reminding of the scholarly achievement of the editor of Volumes IV and V of The Agrarian History of England and Wales covering the period 1500 to 1750, substantial portions of which she wrote herself. However this volume also draws attention to, and supplements, her contributions to industrial and social history.

Seven of the contributors write on various aspects of agrarian history. John Broad’s chapter on the Verneys as enclosing landlords, 1600–1800, not only throws much light on the long-term process of enclosure but adds an intriguing new insight into why so many open-fields survived in the eighteenth century. The Verneys bought small properties in parishes surrounding their seat at Middle Clayton, Buckinghamshire in order to prevent these places being enclosed, fearing that new enclosures would increase the supply of pastures and thus reduce the rents of their previously enclosed pastures at Middle Clayton. The Verneys managed to delay the enclosure of Steeple Claydon for 120 years! John Beckett goes some way to restore the slightly tarnished reputation of eighteenth-century estate stewards in a revealing study of John Spedding, the Lowthers’ steward in Cumberland. Richard Hoyle charts the failure of James I’s schemes (‘vain projects’) to increase the revenue from the Crown lands by increasing tenants’ entry fines or offering them the opportunity to purchase freeholds at fifty to seventy years purchase. It’s hardly surprising that most refused. Peter Large’s fascinating study of the relationship between traditional agrarian custom and agricultural improvement is based on an analysis of the large parish of Ombersley on the east bank of the river Severn just north of Worcester. Here absentee landlords were confronted by a powerful and well-organized group of tenants (known as ‘the homage’) in the manorial court. They successfully thwarted plans for rack-renting and enclosures, but introduced convertible husbandry into their open-fields between 1604 and 1640. Strips were exchanged to facilitate temporary enclosures for clover, while pulses and oats were grown on the fallow field. The numerous small farms thrived and grew more valuable throughout the seventeenth century. Ombersley was no doubt exceptional but one wonders if its experience was not more widespread than has often been thought. Peter Edwards throws a revealing light on the development of the horse trade and horse breeding in his study of Shropshire, a leading county in that regard. Donald Woodward’s study of manures explores a vital, but neglected, topic in a useful way, though one would have liked more on liming. The agrarian contributions are nicely rounded off by Malcolm Thick’s analysis of the contribution of the root crops grown in market gardens to the feeding of London’s poor from c 1550. The open fields of Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea played a part in this, showing a similar flexibility to Ombersley.

The age was alive with new industrial projects. One of the fastest growing, c 1560–1750, was the distilling industry. John Chartres explores its relation to cider production and poses the intriguing question, why no English calvados? It seems that cider was too variable in supply and too low in sugar content to be a good raw material for gin distillers, but this does not entirely explain why the cider counties never distilled a high-quality liqueur. Perhaps port was too powerful a competitor? David Hey charts the rise of the cutlery trade in Hallamshire from medieval beginnings and argues cogently that it owed almost nothing to imported Huguenot influences, contrary to some local traditions.

In the field of social history there are some important contributions on the neglected role of women. Barbara Todd shows that widows frequently farmed their husband’s holdings in a study of the Berkshire parishes of Long Wittenham and Sutton Courtenay, and Mary Prior reveals the growing sense of independence of women, 1580–1700, in an increased propensity to make their own wills (rather frowned on by the authorities).

Andrew Pettigree shows how the families of foreign immigrants into London (of the 1560s) had become more wealthy and more integrated by the 1590s, again using wills to good effect. Finally Margaret Spufford issues a salutary warning against relying too heavily on probate inventories as a measure of wealth. They ignore real estate and the deceased’s debts and need to be checked against probate accounts, where these exist.

In a clear introduction the editors assess Joan Thirsk’s deep and widespread influence on historians since the 1950s and Alan Everitt provides a superb inside view of her historical methodology in a fascinating personal appreciation. This volume is a distinguished tribute to a distinguished career and it’s a pity it’s so highly priced.

MICHAEL HAVINDEN
published a full-length academic monograph and his contributions to journals and books were widely spaced over nearly forty years. To read them side by side is a potent reminder of the remarkable qualities of breadth of vision, penetrative thinking and analysis, and compact and lucid writing which characterized all his work. For one whose primary research work concentrated on matters of foreign trade and urban development, his continuing interest and sympathetic understanding of matters agricultural and rural was marked. His 1935 article on the London food market remains an excellent starting point for undergraduates, and his central interest in the problems of economic growth and backwardness meant that acute observations on the relationship of agriculture and landownership to overall British economic development are to be found throughout his general essays. Penelope Corfield and Negley Harte have done a signal service in bringing the best of these essays together. Many are accessible in published thematic collections but some, such as 'London as an “Engine of Economic Growth”' have been hidden away too long. Their juxtaposition reveals just how coherent and wide-ranging Jack Fisher’s contribution was and how relevant much of it remains. What makes this collection even more worthwhile, particularly to those who knew the erudition, sparkling wit, and sociability of the man, is the collection of short memoirs from students, colleagues and contemporaries which do something to carry on a sense of the human contribution to academic life which Jack Fisher made. Short and vivid, they aptly reflect his published academic output, and, with Penelope Corfield’s excellent introductory essay on Fisher’s place as a historian, make this book much more than a routine collection of periodical articles.


This judicious summary provides a wide-ranging and efficient introduction to debates on various aspects of English agrarian change. The major foci are the chronology of agricultural change, innovation patterns, and enclosure. In addition, there are short discussions of landownership, of output patterns, and of the relationships between agriculture and the national economy as a whole. A good range of work, both classic and recent, is brought to bear on the central questions, and the complexities of these debates are clearly communicated: a notable achievement in such a short book. Overall, this book is accurately targeted for inexperienced students, and offers as highly effective a return per hour’s reading as any introductory text available. Moreover, the relatively sensible price should encourage students to buy their copies, thereby using the useful bibliography to flesh out the text’s slightly terse framework.

Beckett successfully conveys the current dynamism of debates, especially on enclosure and productivity. Broader questions of historiographic change are tackled through presenting successive revisions and modifications to Ernle’s notions of agricultural revolution. Of course, this is a device which virtually all of us use in teaching. But as the years and decades pass, it becomes an increasingly contrived approach. Beckett concludes (p 68) that ‘Little now remains of Ernle’s views, and the old certainties . . . seem misplaced.’ It is no reflection of this valuable book to say that reading it raises the question of whether there is a case for abandoning Ernle as a base-line. We might instead adopt a different set of starting points, rooted in broader questions of economic and social development, as well as the specifics of agricultural change.

PAUL GLENNIE


For many years John Donald have provided a welcome outlet for the fruits of primary research into many aspects of Scotland’s past. Their policy of publishing the best of postgraduate research has, however, been a mixed blessing and this book amply demonstrates both the benefits and shortcomings of such a practice.

Dr Bil aims to provide a fresh and detailed perspective on the shieling and the role that transhumance played within the agricultural framework of the Central Scottish Highlands. Detailed it unquestionably is, for there is much of importance which has been drawn from an extensive and thorough examination of the archives relative to, in particular, the highlands of Perthshire. There is ample testimony, for instance, on how the seasonal movement of livestock to the shielings functioned both to minimize the conflict between arable and pasture and to rest the home pastures. There is much too on the shieling as a base for exploiting the varied upland resources which would otherwise have been beyond the reach of the lower-lying summer towns. Most intriguingly, however, is the evidence which suggests that shielings also acted as territorial markers and provided a means by which landowners could lay claim to disputed tracts of moorland. In a wider context, perhaps the book’s greatest strength lies in the fact that it adds a wealth of useful detail to our knowledge of the diversity of a whole host of agricultural practices in what was an essentially pastoral region. For this at least Dr Bil’s meticulous observations will be appreciated and must be applauded.
BOOK REVIEWS

Where the book is less successful, and where its origins are most transparent, is in its failure to provide an interpretative overview of the shieling system. Similarly, it is regrettable that the opportunity to address the wider issue of the shieling as a regionally specific form of transhumance has been missed. In the end, the book’s rigidly empirical stance means that it does little to further a broader understanding of the use of summer shielings as one of many potential strategies of resource exploitation and management which have been adopted by pastoral communities.

ALEX GIBSON


Richard Lathom farmed on the Scarisbrick family’s manor of Scarisbrick in Lancashire, near the modern Southport, on a three-life lease. This volume is his record of expenditure. There is no parallel set of receipts, and little beyond unhelpful examples of probate records to tell us more of him. (There is no mention in the introduction of the records of the Scarisbrick family in the Lancashire Record Office, though Dr Weatherill is right in her essay to concentrate on the accounts.) Do payments to avoid the ‘Darby Court’ (eg p 6) suggest a connection with the Earl of Derby?

We learn from Richard’s payments about farming in a part of Lancashire on which little research has been published. The accounts are informative on crops (winter wheat, spring oats, potatoes, clover, and hay); on digging turf from mossland, burning the moss, grazing, and reclaiming it; on buying-in, rearing, breeding, and selling cattle; and on pigs. And they survive for long enough to detect change over time. There is also detail on payments for work done on a farm whose family comprised six long-lived daughters but only one male child (who died at the age of nineteen). The expenditure on tools to work flax, wool, and cotton, and on raw materials has been interpreted by Dr Weatherill to indicate some participation in putting-out in textiles.

Dr Weatherill’s main interest in this text was its information on consumption in a stratum of society from which account books rarely appear. Believers in a consumer revolution will find it rewarding. Furthermore, as Dr Weatherill points out, for the historian of the family there is detail on Lathom’s kin, on his neighbours, and, probably, on his friends.

An innovation is the 153-page computer-produced index to a text of 125 pages! It is a concordance for each year, giving brief contextual references to items. But to look up an item, eg hay, one has to look in more than forty places in the index – there is a lot to be said for a paragraphed index! Use will prove the value or otherwise of Dr Weatherill’s index.

Though Lathom’s accounts are frequently difficult to interpret, the detail given, and social provenance of his volume make it a valuable one.

C B PHILLIPS


This vignette of Belgian rural history has its origins in a series of lectures which Professor Adriaan Verhulst, of the State University at Ghent, delivered to the students of the Universitï Libre in Brussels, where for the first three months of 1983 he held the visiting Francqui Chair. It is, then, a series of broad brushstrokes, spanning the period from 500 to 1800 AD, with the chapters covering great swathes of time, like ‘The High Middle Ages’, in just 44 pages.

Verhulst includes in his remit the geographical area of present-day Belgium, plus the neighbouring districts of Dutch Brabant and Zeeland Flanders, Lorraine and substantial parts of northern France (Hainault, French Flanders, and Walloon Flanders). This broad-front approach is on the whole to be welcomed: detailed studies abound, but there are few surveys or synthèses available, and Verhulst’s summary is a useful point of departure. Because of the book’s origins as a lecture-series, there are no footnotes or systematic references, but there is a useful bibliographical essay appended, which includes pointers for further investigation of more detailed subjects. The subject matter of this ‘rural history’ is rural demography, agricultural technology and technique, land reclamation and clearance, and, in the period after 1300, prices and the volume of agricultural production. There is, as the author freely admits, little attention to rural social history in any broader sense, such as religious or community life, or the history of mentalities.

Verhulst’s leitmotif in this broad survey is the rise and fall of intensive small-scale peasant farming. The classic feudalism of the southern part of Belgium in the early and high Middle Ages, by retaining large estates, retarded the efforts of the small entrepreneurial farmer. In the north, however, in Flanders and much of Brabant, feudalism had been much more diluted than in the south, and, assisted by the proximity of the greatest towns of medieval and early modern Europe, a dynamic small-scale agriculture evolved, technically innovative and thoroughly integrated into the market. In the course of the early modern period, it spread throughout the country. This rise and fall of intensive small-scale farming, by retaining large estates, retarded the efforts of the small entrepreneurial farmer. In the north, however, in Flanders and much of Brabant, feudalism had been much more diluted than in the south, and, assisted by the proximity of the greatest towns of medieval and early modern Europe, a dynamic small-scale agriculture evolved, technically innovative and thoroughly integrated into the market. In the course of the early modern period, it spread throughout the country. By 1800, however, Verhulst sees this system as having reached the limits...

Anton Schuurman has been working on Dutch probate inventories for more than a decade, and must rank as one of the world's experts on this type of source. In this, his doctoral dissertation, he has selected for his database a 700-strong sample of probates from three rural areas in the Netherlands, one industrialized, one of large clay-soil farms and one of small sandy-soil farms. The study then sets out to identify differences in 'material culture' between the three regions and between three different periods (the 1830s, 1860s, and 1890s), as well as intra-regional differences based on class and wealth. The 'material culture' of the rural household is defined by consumer durables such as furniture, textiles and jewelry, and Schuurman professes a special interest in consumption as a non-verbal medium for communicating social commitments and aspirations (which goes some way towards explaining the intriguing subtitle about 'the language of objects'). The whole operation is securely located in the international theoretical debate over the pitfalls inherent in using this type of source, and about the (computer) methodology in analysing the data. The empirical results of the study are perhaps not very surprising: 'domesticity', or the culture of the home, increased during the century; there were more differences between the behaviour of the various classes and over time than there were between the three regions; and such regional differences as there

were focused on low-income groups, declining as the century went on. More significant is Schuurman's contribution to the theoretical debate on two matters: the use of probates as a source, and the history of daily life, of consumer behaviour, and of collective mentality, especially in reaction to economic modernization. There is a summary in English, and this book is a worthy addition to the already highly prestigious series AAG Bijdragen, which has for thirty years given us the best of Dutch agrarian history.

MICHAEL WINTLE


The appearance of this collection of reworked seminar papers, and its promised successors, reflects a burgeoning interest in the origins and nature of industrialization. The objective of the series is to acquaint students with the major strands of current thinking on the process of European industrial development since the eighteenth century; and this first volume ostensibly offers an appraisal of recent research on the first industrial revolution in Great Britain. In fact, traditional views on British industrial leadership dominate the collection which embrace such 'themes' as the role of population, agriculture and transport in industrialization. While a hint of recent thinking is included here, most of the reinterpretations of Britain's experience which also emphasizes the homogeneity of European industrialization are, sadly, ignored. Not only is the content of several chapters out of date and poorly structured, but the whole volume lacks integration.

Mathias's opening discussion on the nature and meaning of the Industrial Revolution overlaps with both Crafts' clear account of the quantitative contribution to the Industrial Revolution debate (useful for those who may have missed it in earlier publications) and Davis's consideration of the relationship between British and European industrialization, which emphasizes Britain's industrial priority. Mathias and Crafts independently examine recent reassessments of growth rates, sources of productivity gains and structural change in the British economy. Mathias also highlights current preoccupations with the diffused nature of industrial growth, the persistence of traditional industries and methods and the value of the region as a unit of analysis; while the standard of living debate forms a gratuitous addition to the Crafts chapter. Davis presents some of the more original perspectives to appear in this volume, and although his chapter lacks cohesion, its value lies in the exploration of a range of new approaches to international industrialization, including the regional and
proto-industrial models, and a noteworthy assessment of the role of the state.

The thematic chapters are disappointingly traditional in concept and content. The financing of British industrialization is discussed by Mathias in a sound but familiar way. Barker's contribution fails to place transport within the context of the process of industrialization. His thesis that 'old' forms of transport continued into the industrial age, is supported by a lengthy presentation of developments in roads and stagecoaches, but little reference to recent literature or to novel interpretations. The relationship between agriculture and industrialization is examined thoroughly, if conventionally, in a third chapter by Mathias; and while Woods ably offers state-of-the-art demography, the impact of population trends on the process of industrialization receives only cursory treatment. In the final chapter, Bruland rightly emphasizes the importance of the link between the organization of work and technical and industrial change. In content and analysis this work stands at the forefront of knowledge and justly reflects recent trends in thinking in European industrial history. It sticks out like a sore thumb.

Both the promise of this volume and the content of individual chapters reveal either outmoded conceptualization or the time lag between authorship and publication. More might have been expected from such a team, and it is to be hoped that subsequent volumes will more completely fulfill the objectives of the series.

**KATRINA HONEYMAN**

**BOOK REVIEWS**


This book reprints, with substantial new essays by the editors, a series that appeared between 1979 and 1988 in *The Journal of Peasant Studies*. The result is a powerful corrective to the confidence with which notions of social conflict and class consciousness have been dismissed by what is here termed the 'ploughs and cows' approach to rural history ('its present profoundly ossified state exemplified by the Agricultural History Review'). It will be unfortunate if such polemical flourishes alienate the wide readership this book deserves. It combines attentive archival scholarship with an admirable commitment to open debate; and the rural history for which the editors call, 'a study of everyday life rather than concentration on so-called landmarks', should command the respect of all agricultural historians.

Reed's introduction attacks the lazy, anglocentric assumptions of much writing about English rural history. It pleads for closer attention to concepts like class, market economy, social control, and labour, and for the integration of insights from the study of non-English rural cultures. It is here, perhaps, that the enduring importance of this debate for the study of rural history may lie. Originally, however, it arose from Wells's argument for the extension to rural England of a key aspect of E. P. Thompson's thesis on class-formation. For Wells the nineteenth century was a watershed after which social protest was endemic in the rural south: but 'the repressive agencies were fully adequate to the suppression of disturbance', and therefore covert action ('crime, arson, and anonymous letters') rather than overt protest remained the norm until the early 1830s.

Other protagonists in the debate questioned the nature of rural protest, but not the core of the Wells thesis. Charlesworth stressed the importance of overt protest throughout the early decades of the nineteenth century, struggles in his view that cemented and thus help to explain the solidarity that underlay Swing. In so far as there was really a debate, it centred on the open/close parish concept and its capacity to elucidate the nature and incidence of protest. The use of it by Wells and Charlesworth was subjected to close scrutiny by the geographers Short and Mills. They, and the concept itself ('simply irrelevant'), now receive short shrift from Reed and Wells, but rumours of its death are, one suspects, an exaggeration.

Wells's close adherence to Thompson's typology of class formation obscured the more general aptness of his own thesis: that claims for any natural harmony of interests between farmworkers and their employers are increasingly unfounded from the 1790s onwards. In a new essay, much the longest here, Wells now elaborates and extends his argument, laying open the largely unsuspected extent which the politicization of southern English rural workers had reached by the 1830s. Occasionally the evidence will not bear the interpretative weight he imposes (for example, a claim that in the late 1830s 'land nationalisation speedily assumed prominence' in the south, on close inspection rests on a single reference to a speech delivered in Brighton). However, Wells's grasp of archival material enables him to paint with both broader and more-detailed brushwork than his predecessors on the subject. Even those who are uncomfortable with his broader conceptual framework are unlikely to be deaf to the implications of much that he has to say.

The meat of this book lies in the period to 1840, though there is a useful survey of issues needing to be addressed in the later period. One senses the editors will be disappointed if its picture of rural England as populated by village Hampdens rather than Hodges goes unchallenged. Like the work of Hobsbawm and Rudé (which it largely supersedes) this book should become a touchstone for future scholarship, both critical and sympathetic.  

**MALCOLM CHASE**
There are common characteristics shared by these authors and their volumes. First, both have their predecessors. In Reay’s case, P G Roger’s *Battle in Bosenden Wood* published in 1961, was principally interested in the charismatic millenarian, and self-styled Sir William Courtenay, who led and was killed in what proved a localized rising, nipped in the bud by the army in the north-east Kent countryside in 1838. Roger’s account was somewhat anecdotal, but Jones’ predecessor was the legendary Welsh historian, Professor David Williams, whose superb *The Rebecca Riots* was, despite its 1955 vintage, a model study of a fierce and sustained regional rebellion which quickly established itself as the definitive account of South-west Walian events which reached their riotous climax in 1839-40.

So both these revolts were, secondly, rural. Thirdly, an essentially minor affair in Kent, and something approaching a sustained populist imposition of socio-economic morality in a much larger Welsh region, comprising the counties of Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire, and Pembrokeshire, are contained only through the intervention of the British regular army. Fourthly, both authors locate their principal foci within a context defined in their subtitles; Reay, *‘Rural Life and Protest in Nineteenth-century England’*, Jones *‘A Study of Rural Society, Crime and Protest’*.

Fifthly, the contexts of these events are also directly intertwined with the universally experienced, if with regionally differential impact, of the post-war agricultural depression, which began to lift in some regions only from the later 1830s. The uneven restoration of agrarian capitalism’s profitability eluded some localities, including Courtenay’s patch comprising the villages of Boughton-under-Blean, Hernhill, and Dunkirk, and some entire regions, including what became Rebecca’s country. Similarities between the geographical areas under review deriving from agrarian conditions, included under-employment, and abysmally low wages which produced under-nourishment among many labouring families. Smaller farmers, country tradesmen and craftsmen were economically severely compromised, and some experienced the trauma of downward social mobility into labouring ranks. Prior to the attempted social-security revolution through the notorious Poor Law Amendment Act, the operation of its predecessor was of critical importance in the maintenance of a rough and ready form of equilibrium, which – as the Swing jacquerie in England demonstrated – could be fractured on occasion.

So, the sixth and last principal shared characteristic was the very radical machinery and objectives of the infamous Poor Law Amendment Act, implementation of which commenced in the agrarian South in mid-1835 and by 1837 was being extended across Wales. This sparked widespread protest in large parts of England and Wales, but perhaps owing to the close correlation between the organized Anti-Poor Law movement and the genesis of Chartism, historians of resistance to the ‘Poor Man’s Robbery Bill’ have focused inordinately on the principal theatres of the renewed Democratic Movement, namely London and other urban centres, and especially the industrializing North, Midlands, and South Wales. Both Reay and Jones, in different ways, establish the adverse – indeed for some, devastating – impact of the new system in their areas; in so doing they emphasize not only that that principal facet of state policy, introduced by the Whigs supported by the Tories when ephemerally in office, contributed much to the sheer alienation of much of the populace in Rebecca’s Wales and Courtenay’s Kent, and thus these events became another telling testimony against those historians who have dismissed the view that the implementation of the Robbery Bill imposed radical change in practice.

Having sketched some common factors, the very real differences, not only between the societies involved, but also in the rebelliousness itself, must be acknowledged. Among the most significant were the large proportion of small farmers, some of whose production patterns were virtually subsistence oriented, and others whose low profitability derived from trying to get a living from poor lands, who were all particularly vulnerable to the Anglican clergy’s exaction of tithe. In the three counties, the 1836 Tithe Commutation Act – hailed as something of a saviour in many English regions – actually increased the burdens. Some mining and industrial districts were to be found in South-west Wales, and here industrial relations were generally poor, germinating much militancy amongst a workforce which not only in part came from the regional countryside, but also maintained contacts with their home parishes, and through this probably reinforced indigenous inclination towards direct action. Finally, but most importantly, the turnpiking of many roads came relatively late to this part of Wales, and new trusts – which essentially represented the privatization of roads – were being founded in the 1830s, saddling rural communities with what amounted to a new form of taxation (pocketed by turnpikes’ wealthy backers) through the new tolls imposed on the users of roads, whose journeys were previously free; this innovation clearly fractured a fragile ‘moral economy’ already evaporating through the multifarious changes.
BOOK REVIEWS

- including orthodox interpersonal relationships - imposed under the New Poor Law.

Whereas Professor Williams dealt at considerable length with Rebecca’s attacks on tollgates, Dr Jones emphasizes that whoever these were, dressed in women’s clothes to lead local groups in their direct actions, they had a rather larger number of targets. Indeed, it was only the army units detached to guard the workhouses, which effectively stopped their demolition. Magistrates who attempted to oppose the movement were humiliated, and their properties – if not invariably their persons – were attacked. Among other objectives, Anglican clergymen were compromised in their exactions of tithe, while putative fathers released from responsibilities for their illegitimate offspring under one of the nastier (and chauvinist) clauses of the Amendment Act, could be pressurized into adopting a more supportive role – including marriage. The breadth of Rebecca’s enforcement of social responsibilities impresses. So too does another major element in Jones’ work, namely the chapter on ‘Crime and Deviance’ which reveals – among many findings – the high, and rising, level of indictable crime, especially immediately after Waterloo, and the fact that where the identities of Rebecca activists can be primarily established, ‘all in all they were no strangers to crime’. Jones’ findings here contribute another serious qualification of George Reay’s protesters were numerically miniscule compared with Rebecca’s children. Yet, quite a proportion of those who mobilized at Courtenay’s call, had criminal convictions of one sort or another – the most common for the primary rural ‘social crime’, poaching. The locality had also figured prominently in the Swing revolt of 1830, and the riotous mobilizations specifically against the implementation of the Amendment Act in 1835. It is in this context that Reay’s notion of the ‘last rising of the agricultural labourers in England’ can be sustained, though like Swing’s, Courtenay’s followers included craftsmen, dual-occupationists, and small farmers. However, the tiny scale of the rising so dramatically terminated in the unequal shoot-out in Bosenden Wood – under fifty men were actually mobilized behind Courtenay on that day, or the previous one – certainly facilitates belittling. To some extent Reay’s devotion of an entire book to the topic is an act of faith in what this dramatic moment represented. It had millenarian overtures, though considerably more activists were practising Anglicans than Nonconformists; there were elements of ultra-radicalism, as talk flowed of ‘the division of the land’, and more immediate intended targets – including the physical artefacts of the New Poor Law itself. Interestingly, kinship patterns are relevant – a number of the mobilized were related – and they were rather older than those involved in other mobilizations, with a high proportion of men in their thirties and forties, married with children. Several of their wives were pregnant.

The capacity to reveal these – and other normally untouched facets of the faces in the crowd – derives from Reay’s localized approach which involves the derivation of aspects of everyday life from the copious information in criminal dispositions, and family reconstruction. Reay’s self-praise of being the first to use such methodology on the study of a rising is justified, and his recreation of the rising’s setting also involves considerable detail on a host of individuals, though it could be argued that it is only the scale of the numbers of people, and the limited geography which makes this possible. Although Dr Jones has also used handfuls of very localized evidential sources, he is rarely able to penetrate or reconstitute communities after the style of Dr Reay. The latter also warrants recognition for his grasp of nineteenth-century secondary, as well as primary sources, for all his previous published work is on the seventeenth century, though curiously Reay misses the potential significance of the ironically (?) named Dunkirk beershop, ‘The Church and State’. In stark contrast, Jones is certainly the most published expert on nineteenth-century Wales; indeed his output is prolific. But if Rebecca’s Children has established itself as an essential complementary text to Williams’ Rebecca Riots, the former contains not inconsiderable evidence of an unsustainable rush into premature publication. The recurrent mentions of the question of professional policing suggest that Rebecca’s influence on decisions to adopt or ignore the 1839–40 Rural Policing Acts, should have been systematically addressed, but the only essay in that direction (pp 352–4) reveals Jones’ unfamiliarity with the details of the relevant legislation. Twenty-one-year leases on farms taken ‘in the first decade of the century’ came to an end during the mid and late 1830s’ (p 60); and an illegitimate ‘baby was found by a stray cow some miles away on Treffgarne mountain’ (p 184).

ROGER WELLS


Routledge have now issued three books developed from G E Mingay’s previous compilation, The Victorian Countryside, of 1981. Of this book’s ten chapters, six have been reprinted as a thumbnail study of the rural farming community in the nineteenth century, with no changes except that W A Armstrong has updated his comments on rural population
development, and revised his paragraphs on women’s involvement in farmwork and the emigration of farmworkers. Four chapters are newly commissioned to carry it forward to the present day. Numerous proofreading errors have crept in, the worst the transposition of a line of table 4.3 by one column to the right. Dates are incorrectly rendered and words are changed (impudent becoming imprudent in a quote on page 30), leaving a general worry about unreliability.

As an alternative to reprinting in the original format, perhaps with an extra volume, this seems a poor and expensive strategy, for only 53 pages are new. To cover the changes that farmers, farmworkers, their families, and the wider rural communities have faced in this century in that, on anything but a superficial level, is surely an impossible task. C W Chalklin’s chapter on the decline of crafts and trades is both poorly focused and too reliant on unsupported anecdotal evidence, while two pages of fourteen on farmers examine their treatment in literature, a topic covered in the companion The Rural Idyll. As good a job was done as could be expected on, for instance, rural religion in one and a half pages, but much was missed out, like the rise of agri-business, and it has little to offer except as the most general introduction.

**S A CAUNCE**

**PETER BOSLEY, Light Railways in England and Wales, Manchester UP, 1990, xiv + 210 pp. £35.**

Between 1864 and 1896, a number of Acts of Parliament were passed relaxing some of the most stringent railway safety requirements but restricting engine speeds and axle-loads. The main purpose of the 1896 Act was to develop low-cost transport in rural areas to alleviate the effects of agricultural depression. This book’s claim to interest the agricultural historian is that it concentrates on rural light railways. The first four chapters cover general aspects of the problems facing these railways, while chapters five and six examine the working histories of five of them, and chapter seven deals with their decline in the face of competition from road transport from the 1920s onwards. Light railways were among the last to be built and, although they did see the extension of lines into remote parts of England and Wales, they were, by definition, the most economically unpromising. The precise reasons for their failure varied in each case, but for all of them agricultural traffic proved to be only a minor part of what they carried. For the Southwold Railway in Suffolk, passenger receipts always exceeded the entire goods revenue (p 105); the North Sunderland Railway between Chathill and Seahouses was built primarily to serve the local fishing community (p 116); and the Wantage Tramway in Berkshire (pp 133-37) appears to have had no agricultural traffic at all.

For such a short work there are too many tables at the expense of text. For instance, we are given twelve consecutive pages (pp 138-49) of passengers, traffic revenues, and profits for the Southwold, Easingwold, and North Sunderland Railways. This is a case of the statistics literally being left to speak for themselves, as these tables are annoyingly marooned from the sections of text dealing with these railways. The best parts of the book are those that deal with the local economies and societies of the districts where the railways were built and their effects on these communities. For example, the discussion on the Lampeter and Aberaeron Railway in chapter five provides fascinating insights into rural politics. Unfortunately, such sections are in a minority, and the overall impression one gains from this book is that light railways alone do not provide a sufficient body of interesting material to sustain even a short study such as this.

**RICHARD PERREN**

**HANS-HEINRICH MÜLLER and VOLKER KLEMM, Im Dienste der Ceres. Streiflichter zu Leben und Werk bedeutender deutscher Landwirte und Wissenschaftler, Urania-Verlag, Leipzig, 1989. 264 pp. £15.40 DM.**

This slim volume contains twenty-one short essays on the life and work of German landowners and scientists who made significant innovations in agricultural and agricultural science. The book is weighted towards the nineteenth century, but an introduction emphasizes the stimulus of English writers, notably Arthur Young, and the French Physiocrats in the eighteenth century, while the first essay, though only ten pages long, concentrates on three sternly practical and successful farmers, Johann Gottlieb Eckhart and Christian Reichart, both of whom wrote influential textbooks as early as the 1750s, and Johann Christian Schubart, the master propagandist of clover, who wrote his first prize essay on animal fodder in 1783.

After these follow the more familiar story of Albrecht Daniel Thaer, the medical doctor who turned agriculturist, writer, and teacher, and Johann Gottlieb Koppe, who worked under Thaer, managing his model farm at Möglin, and later, when in charge of the farms of other landowners, revised Thaer’s arable farming system in the light of his own practical experience of different soils and changing price levels. A short piece on Carl Philipp Sprengel, who was a pupil of Thaer in Hanover, and then made a special study of agricultural chemistry, introduces the forerunner of Justus von Liebig, who himself receives a fourteen-page essay. The next account of Albert Schultz-Lupitz shows the influence by 1851 of the Hohenheim Agricultural Academy, where Schultz...
BOOK REVIEWS

first studied, resulting in this case in a lifetime’s work to redeem sandy land on the north German plain. Lupins, assisted by experiments with fertilizers, were the solution here. The remaining essays turn from pioneers in plant nutrition, to livestock feeding, improved ploughs, milk production, pig breeding, plant diseases, and plant breeding.

Threading their way through most of these essays are the international connections, which served to stimulate, deepen, or disseminate the progress described. August von Weckherlin’s ‘rational livestock management’ for example, prospered with the help of merino sheep which he bought in Saxony and France, and managed on Bakewellian principles. German pig production was improved with the help of pigs from Spain, China, Hungary, and the Large White from Yorkshire.

It is a mystery how two distinguished East German historians allowed their book to be published without footnotes or bibliography. But its subject matter marks a significant step forward in East German agrarian history by paying some tribute to the agitations of liberal landlords against feudal backwardness, and according a place of honour (along with photographs) to the life and local affiliations of enlightened middle-class individuals. When the bald outlines of their work are filled in with more detail, we can expect to learn still more about the dense international network which promoted European agricultural improvement between 1700 and the present.

JOAN THIRSK


This is a reprint of Alexander Somerville’s travels through England and southern Scotland in the 1840s, first published in 1852. These travels began in 1842 and they were designed as an inquiry into the demerits of protection, as he put it. He was fiercely against the Corn Laws, and as a result of a meeting with Richard Cobden was supported by the Anti-Corn Law League in his travels. William Cobbett was another influence on his life, though Somerville’s critique of the condition of the rural labouring classes derived more from his humble origins than his contacts. The 1840s may have been a ‘good’ time to tread a path of investigation into the lot of the labourer, and rural conditions in general, but Somerville’s name, observations and opinions from his other writings have been more closely linked to Chartism. As a period of history the decades of the 1830s and 1840s have been hijacked by the ‘Age of Peel’ style of historians and history teachers. The broad period is pregnant with large issues, such as parliamentary and poor law reform, and Chartism. These, and the debate over the Corn Laws, have had more to do with political reform and the rise of the commercial political interest than with the nuts and bolts of rural life. Therefore, perhaps, Dr Snell, the editor of this volume, is correct when he observes that The Whistler at the Plough has been overlooked by agricultural historians for too long. The landowning interest rather than the rural labourer has held centre stage. Yet if the byways of rural England are now to be explored, the question of whether that exploration will rank The Whistler as an essential source alongside Arthur Young, William Cobbett and other travellers, as Dr Snell thinks it should, will depend on the value historians attach to anecdotal evidence (which gains some kind of scholarly legitimacy by being called oral history), and how they treat Somerville’s declared political bias. Somerville may appear to be informed, in a local history/cow and plough/customary practice sort of way, but he lacks information or data of the hard or original sort, which was the hallmark of Young. An interesting exercise might yet be to see how Somerville’s view of England compares with James Caird’s almost contemporary, but post- Repeal view in 1850–1, and the other much-used contemporary observations contained in the Prize Essays.

MICHAEL TURNER


In this short monograph – 104 pages – Brian Short describes a remarkable source for the history and historical geography of Edwardian England and Wales. In the Finance Act of 1910, finally passed after the struggle with the House of Lords, taxes on land values were proposed. These taxes were not implemented, and indeed the legislation was repealed in 1920. But the Inland Revenue had established a description and assessment of the value of land and buildings in both urban and rural England in 1910 which remained unavailable until the commissioners began to release the vast documentation which accompanied the assessment. Since 1968 letters, forms, field notebooks and maps have been made available to the public, and are to be found in the Public Record Office and local archives.

The surviving documents include valuation books, forms of return, which were filled in by owners, field books recorded by officials, form 37–Land, the provisional valuation, and Ordnance Survey sheets.

Brian Short provides a description of the material available and a critique of the difficulties of interpretation. In the second half he provides some
microstudies of the way in which the material can be used to recreate the geography of 1910; it allows a reconstruction of the urban ecology of the time, the location of industries within cities, and provides a wealth of information upon rural England. He notes that the data can be compared with similar sources such as the tithe maps and files, the land use surveys and the National Farm Survey.

Agricultural historians will find his monograph fascinating, and opening avenues of detailed research. All those interested in modern English agricultural history will want to read this guide to what appears to be one of the most detailed records of the past available to the historian.

DAVID GRIGG


Professor Grigg's aim in this book is to 'describe farming in England and Wales in the 1980s' (p 1). To do this effectively, he goes back to medieval times in order to describe and analyse the long-run evolution of farming in Britain, giving adequate attention to regional differences, so that the reader can appreciate by the end of the book that not all farmers are East Anglian barley barons.

The structure of the book is analytic rather than chronological. Thus, of the seventeen substantive chapters, there are, for example, chapters on the growth and structure of output, prices and policies, land use, crop yields, livestock, farmers and farm-workers, the use of power on the farm, and lowland and upland farming. Within these subjects, the story is told chronologically and in considerable detail. The result is a very satisfying synthesis from a wide range of sources, so that a clear picture emerges of why farming has developed in the ways it has, and some thoughts are added on current controversies and policies (in particular, the future of the Common Agricultural Policy).

A particular strength of the book is that it provides a very up-to-date picture of the industry (to the late 1980s), while placing recent changes firmly in the historical context. Thus it will be of use to the layman wishing to know how and why agriculture has developed in the way it has; to those interested in agricultural policy-making, for whom it provides a firm factual basis; and for the historian and technical specialist who wishes to understand the variety of forces which have contributed to the development of contemporary agriculture. The farming community might also read it with profit, as supplying a coherent view of what has happened in the past.

The only real criticism of substance must be directed against the book's title, since at various points in the text (especially on statistical data) we find ourselves considering the UK, England and Wales, or Great Britain, but seldom England alone. This is a problem inherent in the use of official statistics, which needs to be borne in mind when reading this very useful and comprehensive survey.

PETER DEWEY


Our knowledge of agricultural history during the First World War, as with that of other areas of the British economy which attracted state intervention, has been strongly shaped by the quasi-official Carnegie histories, most of which were written by civil servants prominent within the state agencies that were appointed to control them. T H Middleton's Food Production in War (1923) was typical of the genre. In extolling the plough policy of 1917-18, it estimated an increase in annual output of 24 per cent between 1909-13 and 1918. Dewey has for some years been associated with a re-examination of this view. His contributions to the reviews are here coalesced into the backbone of a useful and important monograph that seems set to become the received wisdom. In parts the book is somewhat tedious reading, but this is in the nature of the work and its remorselessly sequential treatment of its subject. On the other hand, it is a model of clarity. Dewey's methods are explained with no obscuring frills, and there is full discussion of the limits and imprecisions of the surviving evidence, and of the assumptions made in presenting new estimates of gross farm output (ie. after making deductions from farm self-supplies).

Treatment of the political framework and periodization of the development of control is conventional. Despite pressure from Selborne, Milner, and Crawford, the Board of Agriculture was unsuccessful in persuading government to adopt any considerable intervention to stimulate food production before the Lloyd George coalition of December 1916, partly because of the inclinations of Asquithian Liberals, partly because of the bumper US harvest of 1915. Thereafter, as exemplified by the Corn Production Act and the transformation of the County War Agricultural Committees into Executive Committees with executive powers, controls were introduced, but only became really widespread in the last year of the war.

Estimating the labour loss in the 'uncontrolled' period of the war (to December 1916) presents considerable difficulties, not least because the pre-1914 base level is in some doubt. Dewey questions the estimates of Erule and Middleton that as much as
33 per cent of farm labour had been lost by early 1917, since these were based on the Board of Trade's Z8 returns, which appear to have been based on a sample of only 1–2 per cent of farms, and larger ones at that. A detailed re-working suggests a figure of 11 per cent, reduced to 9 per cent when allowance is made for substitute labour – women, children and soldiers. Dewey makes no claim for precision in his new estimates. Calculations of the loss in inputs of horses, machinery, fertilizers and feeds result in figures of similar magnitude. In the 'uncontrolled' period, there was no great change in agricultural practices and organization, but the loss was evidently not serious.

In examining the second, interventionist phase of the war, Dewey pioneers the use of the records of the County War Agricultural Committees and Agricultural Executive Committees as a source for agricultural history, as well as giving an informative account of the operations of the Committees themselves. In a detailed chapter, he shows how the loss of agricultural labour was slowed down. Protection from military requirements was never secure during the war, but what losses remained were largely made good by the use of soldier, POW, and female labour. Under the Ministry of Munitions and the Food Production Department, there was an increased emphasis on tractors and a heightened dependence on the USA. Substantial progress was made, but not without experiencing delays, especially in the supply of the superior Fordsons. Dewey's overall conclusion is that the plough policy was relatively successful in making gains in a short time under difficult circumstances, but less successful than was claimed by his previous historians. Two-thirds of the acreage intended was brought under the plough, the 1918 total of 12.36 m acres being little short of the probable all-time 1875 peak, with northern and western counties not surprisingly showing the largest expansion. (Interestingly, it is shown that the powers necessary to effect these changes were contained not in the CPA, which would have involved lengthy appeals to tribunals of investigation, but in the Defence of the Realm Act).

Altogether, UK food production recovered from 91 per cent of prewar levels in 1916 to 101 per cent in 1918. Because of some curtailing of imports, especially in 1917–18, this still left a food shortage, but it was not serious and was compensated for by food control policies. Farming profits, on the other hand, showed a much more positive trend. Two calculations are presented, one based on the 1908 Census of Production, the other on the 1911 Census of Population. Both show a substantial rise, essentially due to fixed rents and agricultural wages lagging behind inflation.

Avner Offer's book on the First World War is a delight, though as a contribution to agricultural history per se it is much less orthodox than Dewey's. Furthermore, it is not for those only interested in the detail of agricultural techniques and practices, evolution and stability. Such matters form the substantial part of only one section of the book, that which concerns international economic specialization in the half-century before 1914. Here, Offer traces the rise of the frontier economies, and their impact on European, particularly British, food imports and consumption. More than simply a manifestation of superior conditions of production in the New World, he sees this process as having been forced to a peculiar degree by the presence of a British landowning class – beyond mere relative economic efficiency, British wheat production was forced into an artificially large contraction by the necessity of payments to an unnecessary class. Thus, more than is usual in analysis of late-nineteenth century British agriculture, Ricardian comparative advantage is brought into close proximity with the Ricardian theory of rent. British farmers had to fight against a virile frontier society.

The main thrust of the book concerns the impact of world specialization on the origins and, more importantly, the conduct, of the war. In Britain's Dominions on the 'Pacific rim' there arose in the populist politics of the frontier the spectre of Asian immigration and nativist demands for exclusion. Whilst Britain, reluctant to offend the Indian administration and in alliance with Japan, had precious little motive in endorsing such demands, fear of the 'Yellow Peril' nevertheless acted as a powerful cement in tying the loyalties of the White Dominions to Britain, and ensuring that the enthusiasms so evident in the Boer War were repeated in 1914.

International specialization also affected strategic thinking. Gradually, it came to be realized that what had initially been perceived as the weakness of the British economy in wartime – her dependence on foreign trade, in particular of food – was in fact a strength. Britain could mobilize the resources of the settler frontier, and deny them to Germany. In spite of its utilization of the archives of three continents, Offer claims with undue modesty that this book is largely a work of synthesis, but in what is clearly the most archivally-based part of the book, he analyses more fully than ever before the evolution of British thinking on a blockade strategy, emphasizing the role of four men, Hankey, Fisher, Esher, and McKenna, and the extent to which they perceived naval power as a deterrent to war as well as its potentially decisive element. The Germans too perceived their weakness – the Schlieffen plan was the prescription for a short war, the U-boat campaign a belated recognition of the correctness of Tirpitz and the navalists in emphasizing the importance of the global dimension. Such recognitions did not prevent entrenchment in a continental land war dwarfing all precedents – here,
Offer presents a trenchant criticism of the 'military mind' and the tendency to be misled by 'intuitive reasoning' on the basis of blinkered preconceptions. But, as the war dragged on, the international dimension came to dominate its conduct. Increasingly, food shortages in Germany sapped morale—the theme with which the book opens. And increasingly, men from the dominions assumed a larger and larger burden in the bloodletting of the Western Front.

The agricultural considerations of the periphery also conditioned the peace, to a far greater extent than has been realized. For Australian Billy Hughes what mattered was the recognition of dominion sacrifice. For American Herbert Hoover, there were huge surpluses of hogs to sell. In the tensions of Versailles, the Second World War too had an agrarian legacy that has until now been but dimly perceived.

There are inevitably contentious elements in a thesis so grand in scale as this. Were landlords absent from frontier economies? Was the link between anti-Asian feeling in the White Dominions and their subsequent loyalty to and sacrifice for the Crown as close and as exclusive as is presented here? Were Hankey and the Committee of Imperial Defence as influential as Offer portrays? Were naval and continental strategies and commitments so exclusive of each other?

But such caveats are minor. This is a beautiful book, with a literary quality that makes it hard to put down. Offer might sometimes take us farther into his several frontiers than is strictly necessary to sustain his thesis, but no one will reproach him. Elegant, pithy, often amusing, even with an element of suspense, his work is reminiscent of the tradition of the epic movie or the grand travelogue. But there is much more than entertainment. We are given a fresh perspective on agriculture in the Edwardian world economy and on the thinking that led to war. 'Stimulating' and 'provocative' are words frequently used in reviews, but seldom with as much justification as in this case.

A J MARRISON


This important study traces the evolution of agricultural policy in Conservative thinking from the pre-World War 1 commitment to free trade and minimal interference, through the wartime controls, to the evolution of protectionism and controls in the 1930s. Except for the incident of 'The Great Betrayal' where the author has published a paper (Andrew Fenton Cooper, 'Another look at "The Great Betrayal"' Agricultural History, 60, 1986, pp 80–104) the material is new and based largely on primary sources: inevitably since, as the bibliography shows, there are few useful secondary studies for the period. Its thesis is that the adoption of 'quasi-corporatism', with the integration of the NFU into policy making and implementation was not a revamped agrarianism. Rather it represented the triumph of forward looking elements over the traditional rural interest. The new thinking saw agriculture as an industry and not as a way of life, took a commodity approach to policy, and stressed the importance of an efficient and stable agriculture for manufacturing and economic growth. The defeat of backward looking agrarianism by the business approach to farming is a recurrent theme in the study.

The irony of seeing a permanent and elaborate system of protectionism as a necessary condition for efficiency, and the confusion between the technical and the economic that underlies it, is not explored. As the title suggests, this is a study of the politics rather than the economics of agricultural policy. But in documenting the evolution of conservative thinking on the subject it provides interesting insights into how the policy came to be what it is. The story is a complicated one, with large numbers of actors with one-liners and walk-on parts. Guidance on their roles and antecedents is usually provided in the footnotes, but to anyone without a working knowledge of Conservative politics of the period, it is not an easy read.

None the less some more analysis of the rationale of the policies would not have been out of place in the study. This is particularly the case for the evolution of policy in the 1930s when, in contrast to the earlier period, the author's touch is less sure. Parallels are drawn between tariff reform and cartelization in industry, and the creation of marketing boards and quota restrictions in agriculture. Plainly there are parallels but there are some obvious differences: nothing akin to the quasi-corporatism of agriculture was proposed for manufacturing. Was the difference to be explained by industrial structure? Or is it perhaps that agrarianism was not moribund after all? The survival of the rural interest required both prosperity and freedom from outside interference. Since these requirements were clearly in conflict perhaps the element of self-control offered by marketing boards together with the political leverage that the system offered was the best achievable compromise.

This book is unlikely to be the last word on the subject and it seems likely to lead to several debates. It should, however, become a standard work for the period and will repay reading by anyone interested in twentieth-century agricultural policy.

JOHN BOWERS
Shorter Notices


Tools & Tillage first appeared in 1968 and is produced annually by the International Secretariat for Research on the History of Agricultural Implements which is connected with the National Museum in Denmark. It represents the principal publishing outlet for detailed research into the development of agricultural equipment and cultivation methods from earliest times to the present day.

Although the journal is mostly European based, two of the three main articles in the current issue are from further afield. Wan Xing-guang of Zhengzhou University has contributed a historical survey of the Chinese plough with the help of archaeological, documentary, and pictorial evidence previously largely unknown to the west. Next, the ard-plough in ancient and early medieval India is examined by Gyula Wojtilla in a study that combines archaeological with linguistic evidence. The third article is from Magdalena Beranova and looks at agricultural implements and milling equipment in prehistoric Bohemia. It introduces another avenue of investigation that has frequently been associated with past issues of Tools & Tillage, namely the experimental reconstruction of early implements and testing them in the field.

ROY BRIGDEN


The underlying theme of all the contributions in this book is the changing perception of the countryside through the Victorian era and the twentieth century, and how this has affected how people live in, plan for, and use the land.

The first six essays cover various aspects of the Victorian countryside, and indeed first appeared in the book of that name. The Victorian country house by Jill Franklin, The model village, by Michael Havinden, and country towns by C W Chalklin look at the more bricks and mortar aspects of the subject, but especially the first two centre on how changing social and moral attitudes influenced the layout and architectural style of buildings. The perceived image of the countryside is brought out strongly in the next three contributions, by Rosemary Treble, Louis James and W J Keith, which review the land as portrayed in Victorian art and literature. One of the most interesting themes here is the contrasting images that emerge, rather than any strong unifying concepts.

The three new essays bring the subject into the twentieth century; Alan Rogers gives a very useful overview of legislation for a planned countryside and goes on to look at social influences, especially through urbanization, on rural life; and Philip Lowe continues this theme with how social attitudes have shaped current attitudes to nature.

All the essays stand as important contributions to the subject as a whole, and there is just the regret that the artistic and literary themes explored for the Victorian era could not have been continued into the twentieth century.

ANNIE HOOD


This well-produced and nicely illustrated book will find a ready market amongst machinery enthusiasts, and those with an interest in rural nostalgia. There are many new photographs and illustrations, but it seems a pity that the familiar images shown in early pages could not have been replaced by fresh material which must exist amongst the collections at the Institute of Agricultural History.

The period is broken down into four chapters, dealing with the eighteenth century before mechanization, the rise of the agricultural engineer, the steam age, and the twentieth century. Why is it that the farmer is still described as unwilling, or too mean to adopt new machinery? There is ample evidence to show that when economics are right, farmers will take great leaps in technical advance, but generally see no need to do so when cheap labour is abundant, returns are minimal, or supporting technology is unavailable to take advantage of the benefits claimed for new machines.

The book goes no further than similar publications produced over the past twenty years. Too little serious work has emerged on agricultural engineering, and it is surely time that more critical assessments of its impact were forthcoming, even for works aimed at more popular markets.

ANDREW PATTERSON


This is not the 'scholarly work' we are led to expect from the Duke of Edinburgh's foreword. Nor was

Ag Hist Rev, 39, 1, pp 93–95 93
Robert Burns a serious candidate for the first Chair of Agriculture.

The first half of the book is much the better, being a genuine attempt to explore the forces underlying the origins of the Chair. There is much here of interest to the historian of economics, science, and agriculture in Enlightenment Edinburgh. Sadly, there are no detailed references.

The second half is a descriptive chronology of the accomplishments of 'great men'. Gone is any attempt to unravel the hidden agendas (so beloved of historians) that can make compelling an unpromising institutional history. In its small way the book deals with a great theme, but the greatness of Edinburgh University's contribution to agricultural education would have been more apparent if its role in the overall Scottish achievement—so much more rational than in England and Wales—had been spelled out at the expense of internal detail.

The classic dilemma of university agriculture is encapsulated in an atmospheric etching of John Wilson, the third professor, lecturing on mangel wurzels in full academic regalia. By teaching science he claims to improve practice and must therefore attempt the impossible: to humour his academic colleagues and the sceptical farming community.

STEWART RICHARDS

JOHN ORD, (ed), The Bothy Songs and Ballads of Aberdeen, Banff and Moray, Angus and the Mearns, with a new introduction by Alexander Fenton, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1990. xxv + 493 pp., 54 tunes, 8 plates. £9.95.

This is a paperback re-issue of the 1973 reprint of the work posthumously published in 1930, with seven new plates but two of the original three silently omitted; likewise, what little information is given about the author on the original title page is omitted and not covered in the new introduction.

A classic work of regional amateur scholarship in popular culture, which badly needs interpreting, the more so like many in the same tradition, it has been as much an intervention in as a description of a regional culture. Ord, a north-easterner by birth and a Glasgow policeman by profession, offers no more than an anecdotal account of the agrarian culture of the north-east and the place of singing in it. Dr Fenton, likewise a north-easterner, provides little more. To a local patriot, or an enthusiast of Scottish balladry, it will not matter much. For a historian of agrarian Britain or of popular culture it may be important to know why Ord's ingeniously eclectic compilation (he was no theorist) contains texts of obviously local origin and reference, addressed briskly to the social conditions of the ferm toun, alongside classics of the nineteenth-century British and American variety and concert stage; or what part the book played, along with publishers such as Kerr of Glasgow and Beltona Records, in fixing and idealizing a culture even as it was fading; or why Superintendent Ord did it at all, and even who he was.

Sadly, this re-issue will not help.

A E GREEN

CHRIS PAGE, The Oxford Down: One Hundred Years of Breeding, Oxford Down Sheep Breeders Association, Banbury(?), 1990. 100 pp., Illus, no price stated.

Chris Page's history of the the Oxford Down breed, from its development in the 1830s and 1840s, to its listing as a rare breed in 1974, (and since then its modest revival), is attractively presented, with numerous illustrations. It incorporates a wealth of information on the principal breeders, the Oxford Down Breeders Association, fairs, shows, and the export trade. The arrangement is broadly chronological, interspersed with topical chapters, dealing with particularly important breeders. A considerable quantity of price data is treated in an anecdotal, rather than a systematic manner. The non-specialist reader may be disappointed that discussion of the breed's place within the general context of agricultural development and the market environment is limited to brief passages in chapters one, and twelve. James Johnston of the National Sheep Association provides a helpful postscript on the future potential of the breed.

ANDREW K COPUS


The Jacob sheep is a piebald and four-horned 'park' breed that has been kept in ornamental flocks in Britain for 250 years. Lady Aldington, the author, was the prime-mover in the founding in 1969 of a breed society for the then declining breed, which has since become popular as an 'easy care' sheep for smallholders, meeting the demand of handspinners for naturally-coloured wool. The book's chief value lies in the reproduction of an amazing collection of illustrations (many in colour) of piebald and/or four-horned sheep going back to antiquity, although the distribution of these characteristics is so widespread that the existence of similar sheep elsewhere does not necessarily mean that they are related to the Jacob.

There is an account of an attempt to set up a Park Sheep Society in 1911 and the bulk of the book is taken up with details of all the Jacob flocks in existence before 1969. The last part deals with the recent history
of the society and lists current members. There is no index and the lack of a bibliography means that there is no reference to the ‘Enquiry into the origin of Piebald or “Jacob” sheep’ written by A R Werner in the 1970s and reprinted in 1988. He gives more documentary evidence and inclines towards my view that the breed could well have originated in Britain.

M L RYDER

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The Early History of the Carp and its Economic Significance in England

By CHRISTOPHER K CURRIE

Abstract
The carp, by the admission of most authoritative fish farmers and pisciculturists, is one of the most important food fish in the world. However, their origins are shrouded in mythology. Even where serious attempts have been made to trace the origins of this fish in the British Isles, the difficulty in distinguishing myth from reality has clouded the issue. This essay attempts to put the introduction of the carp to the British Isles in its correct historic perspective. Changes in the management of estates over the period 1250–1400 prompted the growth of commercial fish keeping and this created a situation into which the introduction of the carp was appropriate. The early history of the species in England is traced, and attempts to explain their rise to dominance nationally are expounded.

C F HICKLING, writing in 1971, was of the opinion that the species, carp (Cyprinus carpio) was introduced to England between 1450 and 1500, and was still only maintained on a small scale by fish-keepers by 1531. Furthermore he was of the opinion that this fish, in his own words ‘the mainstay of fish farming’, was not a native of Europe but had been transported from the East by way of Cyprus. More recent research by the present author and Balon has shown both opinions to be inaccurate.

Balon was the first scholar to question the opinion that the carp was introduced to Europe from China. He showed that the River Danube contained an indigenous wild carp population since the retreat of the last glaciation 10–12,000 BC. Cassiodorus (AD 490–585) confirmed this when he told of the glory of King Theodorus’ (AD 490–526) court in Italy:

... and from the Danube come carp and from the Rhine herring. To provide a variety of flavours, it is necessary to have many fish from many countries. A king’s reign should be such as to indicate that he possesses everything.

Written sources are insufficient without other evidence, since it was not unusual for classical writers to confuse fish species. For instance, Ovid named ‘swift pike and perch’ (Rapidique lupi percaequae) amongst the common sea fishes when both are freshwater fish. It is, therefore, archaeology that provides the most convincing proof of the presence of carp in the Danube in prehistoric times. At the mesolithic site at Vlasac, on the Lower Danube, Prinz records carp bones found in massive quantities amongst the excavated food remains.

Having shown that the carp was a native of the Danube from the earliest times, it needs to be explained how they came to be

3 Ibid, p 5.
5 Ovid, The art of love, and other poems, (Original text with parallel translation, Loeb Library), ed, J Mozley, 1923, p 318.
established in the rest of Europe. Balon has discussed this but laid undue weight on the monastic contribution to the spread of fishkeeping. More recent research has shown that fishponds came to be established by secular authorities as indications of their status as landowners from at least the 1st and 2nd centuries BC. In England, the first large-scale building of artificial fishponds was undertaken by the members of the Norman secular aristocracy to enhance their status. The earliest monastic fishponds were frequently granted as already existing entities by wealthy secular patrons. The monastic contribution was generally later in date, and on a smaller scale than that of the laity.

Examination of detailed accounts of aristocratic fishponds before 1350 seems to indicate that little attempt was made to realize their full potential in terms of yields. In many cases they were seen as a conspicuous luxury. A good example of this is the 400 acres of ponds maintained by the bishops of Winchester, where barely a tenth of their potential was exploited.

Despite extensive searches, this author has been unable to find reference to carp being kept in ponds in England before c1350. Research has shown that the most popular freshwater fish before this date were bream and pike, particularly on the royal table, where it is thought contemporary trends would be mirrored.

Although sea fisheries, and possibly estuarine fisheries seeking migratory fish, were involved in the commercial sale of fish, it seems unlikely that aristocratic and monastic landlords kept fishponds for the purpose of entering the commercial market before the early fourteenth century. Even after this date there is little evidence that the upper classes of medieval society kept freshwater fish for profit. Before c1250 the kings of England seem to have been able to supply the greater part of their requirements from their demesne lands throughout the kingdom. During the reign of Henry III (1216-72) royal accounts recorded the increasing necessity of purchasing freshwater fish for profit. Before c1250 the kings of England seem to have been able to supply the greater part of their requirements from their demesne lands throughout the kingdom. During the reign of Henry III (1216-72) royal accounts recorded the increasing necessity of purchasing freshwater fish for both stocking new ponds, and for providing for the larger feasts held at Westminster. By the early fourteenth

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9 Currie, op cit, pp 26-41.
11 Currie, 'Function of fishponds', pp 159-60; Examples include the de Warennes who were particularly precise about their reasons for granting rights to freshwater fishing. At Lewes, East Sussex, their grant of 1091-8 to fish their waters in the district held the condition 'for the great feasts and for great guests and especially the (memorial) service of my mother and father...' (cf. L F Salzman, ed, The Cartulary of the Priory of St Pancreas of Lewes, part i, Sussex Record Society, vol 38, 1932, p 19). At St Mary's, York, the same family made grants of freshwater fish from local meres c1158-47 'at the feast of the Assumption' and c1174-5 three times yearly at the Annunciation, the Assumption and the Nativity of St Mary, cf. C T Clay, ed, Early Yorkshire Charters VIII, Yorkshire Archaeological Society extra series, 1949, pp 82, 114. The Earls of St Clare granted fishing rights in their ponds to the alien priory of Stoke-by-Clare for the celebration of the feast of St John the Baptist (1138-45) and the anniversary of the death of their ancestor, Gilbert FitzRichard (c1132-73), cf. C Harper-Bill and R Mortimer, eds, Stoke-by-Clare Cartulary, Suffolk Record Society, Suffolk Charters IV, 1982, pp 17, 25.
12 E Roberts, 'The Bishop of Winchester's fishponds, 1150-1400: their development, function and management' in Proc Hants Field Club Archaeol Soc, 42, 1986, pp 125-38; p 130; Currie, 'Medieval Fishponds', p 44 and following. A good example is quoted by Roberts (p 127): in 1393 the Bishop of Winchester procured quantities of smoked and salt sea fish and salmon for his household from outside sources but it was only when Richard II visited Winchester in September that the episcopal ponds were fished.
13 Currie, 'Medieval Fishponds', pp 50-89.
THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE CARP AND ITS ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE IN ENGLAND

century, the kings seem to have become largely dependent on commercial sources. From this it can be concluded that a class existed that supplied freshwater fish for the market. Research seems to indicate that these fishermen were concentrated in areas of large natural fisheries. In the twelfth century it is recorded that, although The Fens were fished day and night throughout the year, they continued to supply large quantities of freshwater fish. The estates of Ramsey Abbey in the fifteenth century record the considerable income derived from their fisheries there; in many cases it was almost as great as that received from livestock, and often in excess of manorial rents. Such income, however, generally derived from rents and leases; it was not general practice for such establishments to be involved in the direct sale of the produce. Thus when Henry III required extra freshwater fish he sent to the sheriff of Cambridge and Huntingdonshire to procure them for him, almost certainly from the abundant natural fisheries in those areas.

Generally, the greater aristocracy seemed uninterested in making profits from their own fishponds beyond the relatively meagre rents they asked for them when they were put out to farm. This is shown at St Swithin's Priory in Winchester where, as late as 1491, they were asking 23s 4d per annum for their two ponds at Fleet which covered a minimum of 130 acres. This was little more than the value they put on the one hundred fish from those ponds that the lessee was required to send to the priory each year.

The comparatively low rent per acre of the Fleet ponds seems to be fairly typical of the medieval period. This is confirmed by Dyer, who recognized that riverine fisheries appear to have been more valuable than ponds. He assumes that this is because river fisheries are 'generally more productive'. The disparity in rents may alternatively derive from the way in which the different types of fishery functioned. Medieval ponds have been shown to have been mainly managed by draining down and sorting the entire population after a set period (often every five years). Ponds were hence treated as underwater pasture and once the stock had been removed, they were rated as any other pasture, i.e. devoid of its stock. The yield of a pond was not generally reflected in the rent charged, as a lessee would generally be expected to provide his own breeding stock, but in the effectiveness of the management. Rivers may have been seen differently as the stock was entirely self-generating – a major proportion of the catches of all river fisheries were of migratory fish which were not easily regulated. Therefore the rent was higher as the fish were in a wild state and were not domesticated animals provided by the lessee, as in the ponds.

It must have been these lessees who caught many of the fish that found their way on to the open market. Before 1300 the leasing of ponds was relatively rare; the upper classes kept them for their own use. But with the decline of demesne farming over the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries many ponds were farmed out. This was not always the case: many landlords jealously retained their ponds, but as the fourteenth century progressed, so more ponds fell into the hands of lesser gentry and rich peasants who could afford the leases. This facilitated access to regular supplies of freshwater fish easier for these groups. In this way the rigid élitism associated with pond ownership was diluted, although the association of freshwater fish with high social status did not die away entirely until much later. It
managed to survive until the fashion of fly fishing for trout in clear chalk streams was taken up by the upper classes in the nineteenth century. Then a new aspect of freshwater fishing became associated with prestige and status. The influx of supermarket trout in recent years is now eroding this manifestation of class elitism, but it is still a sign of status to ‘own a bit of fishing’ in late twentieth-century England.

Commercial fishermen may have been bringing some freshwater fish to market throughout the medieval period but this increased dramatically after 1300–1350. B K Roberts has shown how wealthy peasants owned fishponds in the Forest of Arden in Warwickshire in the early fourteenth century and the wording of agreements between these people and other persons of middling status seems to imply that at least part of the produce of the ponds may have been intended for commercial sale. There is little evidence here for members of the aristocracy being involved in this activity.

The best evidence for the development of commercial production dates from the later fourteenth century. Along the southern bank of the River Thames at Southwark was a series of waterfront plots known as ‘The Stews’. This was formerly held to represent an area inhabited by prostitutes, but it would seem that the real origin of the name derives from the fishponds there in the 1360s, and possibly much earlier.

In 1363 it is recorded that John Tryg, a fishmonger, had a messuage and yard there containing a pond for ‘feeding and keeping fish’ worth 13s 4d a year. He is ordered to repair three perches of wharf opposite this messuage. In the same year it is recorded that William Stode had a fishpond and yard worth 13s 4d a year plus eight perches of ditch round the said yard opposite Maydelane. The ditches were not kept clean causing the river to flood the adjacent land. Two other persons are ordered to appear before the King for the same complaint; William Strokelady had a yard and fishpond worth £1 a year and four perches of ditch by Maydelane and William Neuport of London had there ‘divers’ messuages with yards and fishponds worth £1 6s 8d with 30 perches of uncleaned ditches. Hugh Ware of London had messuages with yards and fishponds worth £4 a year and 12 perches of uncleaned ditches. It is further recorded that these messuages backed on to an area aptly called Pyke Garden.

These documents seem to record a thriving system of holding ponds operated by professional fishmongers to supply the open market. The description implies that not only was the system very extensive but that the fish were deliberately fattened with supplementary food. It is even possible that the ditches referred to imply a complicated system of supply leats, and possible diversion ditches to empty the ponds when the fish were needed. Archaeologists in the area have often come across rectangular tanks and ditches but, until this document was noticed, they had not been able to identify the purpose of these features. This evidence seems to record that a commercial fish-keeping industry existed in England by the 1360s.

Supplementary feeding is, in many ways, the best indication that fish-keepers were trying to increase their yields, probably for commercial gain. By the fourteenth century changes in the national economy were beginning to foster the emergence of

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21 Industrial pollution may have contributed to this.
24 C T Flowers, Public works in medieval law, II, Seldon Society, XL, 1923, p 188.
27 Southwark excavation personnel, personal communication.
28 Although the gardener at Abingdon Abbey was giving fish artificial food, and then selling them in the fourteenth/early fifteenth century (see R E G Kirk, Accounts of the obedientiaries of Abingdon Abbey, Camden, new series, LI, 1892, pp 3, 52, 74), research has shown that this was an uncommon practice for a high-status institution (see Currie, ‘Function of Fishponds’, pp 154–6).
THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE CARP AND ITS ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE IN ENGLAND

The introduction of carp to England seems to coincide with changes in both the economic climate and attitudes towards fishponds. It now seems probable that it began to be introduced to this country in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century. This was a period described by Dyer in which:

The aristocracy always recruited new blood from below its ranks, but in the late fourteenth and fifteenth century there was a new threat posed to the privileged classes by parvenus like Chaucer's Franklin. The leasing out of demesnes, and with them many ponds, provided just one of the changes threatening the aristocratic way of life. 35

Writing in 1984, without the benefit of much subsequent research the present author suggested the following reasons for the introduction of carp to late medieval England. Although many of the conclusions drawn then have needed revision the basic premises hold true:

The reasons for its (the carp's) introduction as a popular species must now start to become plain. The secularized fishing industry of England, in an age of increasing materialism, could not have failed to notice the opportunities awaiting it. They would have been quick to notice the hardiness of the carp, the ease with which it could be transported, and, more importantly, its rapid growth rate compared with other freshwater species. As fish culturists know only too well, the quicker a fish will grow, the more money there is to be made. 39

Previous views concerning the introduction of carp to England had been based on comments in 'The treatyse of fysshynge with an angle', attributed to Juliana Berners, and published as part of The boke of St Alban's in 1496. Here the author says she knows little about the carp as 'there be but few in England'. 34 As a consequence it was considered that the fish was largely a Tudor introduction. There is now some evidence to suggest that they had already begun to make their appearance in the late fourteenth century, at a time when changes were taking place in the fish-producing industry (this includes evidence to suggest major changes in the sea fishing industries

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29 Dyer, 'Carp', p 35.
30 Hickling, 'Prior More's fishponds', p 123.
31 Ibid, p 120.
34 Hickling, 'Prior More's Fishponds', p 120.
35 J Berners, 'Treatyse of fysshynge with an angle' in The boke of St Alban's, 1496.
at this time.\textsuperscript{19} An early manuscript of Berner's 'Treatyse' has recently been found that seems to date from 1406 to 1450.\textsuperscript{17} Furthermore it has been discovered that royal kitchen accounts of the fourteenth century record the carp.\textsuperscript{38} It would seem from this that carp had begun to find their way onto London tables towards the end of the fourteenth century. The most obvious point of dispatch was the Low Countries. The first detailed writings on the keeping of carp originated from The Netherlands in the mid-sixteenth century. Janus Dubravius' work \textit{A new book of good husbandry} was an extremely influential work on fishkeeping.\textsuperscript{39} Its writer was a Dutch cleric, and when the first English work to extol the virtues of keeping carp, John Taverner's \textit{Certaine experiments with fishe and fruite}, was published, it went to some lengths to recommend Dubravius as an authority on the subject. Even much later, in the early eighteenth century, the Dutch and Flemish peoples were still seen as masters of all forms of husbandry, particularly the keeping of fish.\textsuperscript{40}

It may, therefore, be more than a coincidence that a Fleming, 'Frows of Flanders', was leasing 'The Stews' at Southwark at the time of the peasants' revolt of 1381 when his property there was attacked and 'wrecked'.\textsuperscript{41} Dyer has suggested that peasant discontent often expressed itself by assaults on fishponds, which were seen as bastions of privilege.\textsuperscript{42}

East Anglia has a long tradition of connections with the Low Countries. It is therefore not surprising that the earliest record of carp stocked in ponds in England dated from this region in 1462, when the Duke of Norfolk stored his ponds with them. The accounts of this man record that between 1462 and 1468 he stocked six of his own named ponds with carp and made gifts for stocking in other ponds to five of his wealthy neighbours, including Lady Waldgrave and Thomas Moleyns.\textsuperscript{43} The extent of the Duke's interest and the generous gifts he made suggests that East Anglia, at least, would have been reasonably stocked with the species by the 1470s at the latest.

A particularly interesting account of the keeping of carp in this region dates from 1538 when it is recorded that the Gyffard family of Suffolk had been about to supply the King with carp for his pond at Comebury when misfortune overtook them:

\begin{quote}
About Christmas 2 years ago the King wrote to Thos Gyffard to provide carp and other fish for his manor of Comebury. He drew his pools and put the chosen fish into Theves pond, which was robbed in the night, before they could be taken to Comebury, by persons from Claydon. Raffe Gyffard stole 5 carps worth 5 crowns out of the same pond, and on the 6th of this August, the Warell's pond was robbed, and a cart was traced to Steple Claydon, where Raffe Gyffard lives and nets and other things were found there. Raffe told those sent by Thos Gyffard that he would fish his ponds before his face. About 5 years ago Nicholas Gyffard (and others) . . . were taken in Thomas' park at night with stalking horse, crossbows, longbows and last St Thomas' Day a buck was killed . . . the keeper's hound drew straight towards Claydon but Thomas ordered him to stop, as he did not wish his kinsman's conduct to be talked of in the country.\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

By the time of this document, carp are frequently recorded. The large number of places from which it was possible locally to obtain them must show that Hickling's comment that they had only been introduced to England on a small scale in the 1530s seems to be incorrect.


\textsuperscript{17} R C Hoffman, 'Fishing for sport in medieval Europe: new evidence' in \textit{Speculum} 60/4, 1985, pp 877-902; p 879.


\textsuperscript{19} J Dubravius, \textit{A new book of good husbandry}, 1559 translation.

\textsuperscript{20} R North, \textit{The gentleman farmer}, 1726.

\textsuperscript{21} Douglas-Irvine, 'Southwark borough', p 148.

\textsuperscript{22} Dyer, 'Consumption of freshwater fish', p 35; lecture given at Bristol University, Feb 1984.
Amongst those recorded as keeping carp Cromwell was in Farnham, Surrey, also in in ponds was Prior More of Worcester. In 1539, a Mrs Covert brought him carp worth 153o the Prior of Llanthony Secunda, near Gloucester, sent a gift of carp to the King. In Hampshire, early in 1537, Thomas Wriothesley is recorded as being about to stock the former monastic ponds at Titchfield with them. The document tells us how they were to be transported to the site, as well as indicating that commercial dealings in fish was now acceptable amongst the rising classes of society:

The bailey of Gernsey and Mr Wells of Hampton were here at the same time. Viewed the ponds – four of them a mile in length. The bailey will give Wriothesley 500 carp to stock the ponds, Mr Huttuf providing the freight, Mr Mylls tubs, and Mr Wells conveyance of the carps, so that in 3 or 4 years time he may sell £20 to £30 worth of them every year... In 1538 it is recorded that the monks of the London Charterhouse had kept carp in their ponds. At the closure of this monastery, the despoilers were keen to have their share of these fish, and a quantity were sent to the royal pond at Foyerwell. Meanwhile a number of the royal circle are recorded as eating carp. In a letter of John Husee to Lord Lisle, dated 1538, it is mentioned that two 'pasties' of carp have been delivered to the Lord Privy Seal. Sir William Penison wrote to Cromwell that same year to inform him how the mayor (of London?) had presented 'my Lady' with:

10 great pikes, 10 carps, 10 fresh great eels, fresh salmon and sturgeon, tench, bream and all other good fishes as can be gotten.

In 1539 Sir Brian Tuke wrote to Lord Lisle concerning a gift he had received: 'I thank my lady for her baken partridges, baken carps... Finally, whilst Thomas Cromwell was in Farnham, Surrey, also in 1539, a Mrs Covert brought him carp worth two shillings.

At Mangotsfield (Gloucestershire), an incident is recorded in 1537 that reflects the above mentioned Gyffard family feud, and demonstrates that fishing was not always a peaceful pursuit. Here, as the result of a local dispute, sixty people broke down a mill dam and let all the fish out, stealing tench, bream, and carp worth more than £20.

From these accounts it would seem that carp were not hard to come by in the 1530s. They were obtained from such widely diverse places as Norfolk, Suffolk, Hampshire, London, Surrey, Worcester, and Gloucestershire. From this distribution, it would appear that they were reasonably well established in this country.

There is a scarcity of recording in matters of fish-keeping between c1350 and the 1530s for reasons that are not altogether clear. From the popularity of fish in the 1530s, when they are clearly still prestigious gifts, it might be suggested that disruptions in the recording systems brought on by the plagues and wars of the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were more likely reasons than lack of interest for this absence of notice. The records suggest that carp were present in England from the late fourteenth century, and that by the 1530s they seem well established and much sought after.

By the end of the sixteenth century, if not before, the carp had become the most popular freshwater fish in England. Treatises such as those written by Taverner (1600) and North (1713) give them pride of place above all other fish.

A large number of early post-medieval pond owners are recorded keeping carp.
The Earl of Rutland, in the early seventeenth century, bought his supply from a Lincolnshire fisherman, Paul Robinson, who charged 12d for 10-inch fish and 2s od for 18-inch fish. In 1590 a John Pyke was accused of having stolen 'many and great carpes' from the Bishop of Winchester's fishpond at Frensham, near Farnham, in Surrey. At Cornbury Park, in Oxfordshire, a mid-sixteenth century survey records three fishponds next to a mill which were stocked with bream, carp, and eels. Carp are recorded in ponds, formerly belonging to the Archbishop of Canterbury, at Harrow, in Middlesex, in 1554.

The popularity of carp with pond-keepers is demonstrated in innumerable post-medieval treatises. Taverner and North, noted above, devoted their comments almost entirely to the species, paying little attention to any other kinds of fish in their praises. Amongst others recording the carp is Gervase Markham, who records angling methods for them in his *Country contentments* or the husbandman's recreations. Here he refers to them as river fish as well as pond dwellers, thereby suggesting that sufficient numbers had escaped into English river systems by the early seventeenth century for them to be so considered. Other treatises recording methods of keeping carp or fishing for them are Walton, Worlidge, Balgrave, Smith, Mortimer, Bradley, and Hale to mention but a few. Many of these works are little known but would repay further study for the information on early fish-keeping and fishing that they contain.

That fishponds were still popular in the post-medieval period with a great many landowners can be demonstrated from numerous sources. Roger North indicates that freshwater fish are still considered luxury items at the beginning of the eighteenth century:

But you may contrive to keep your Stock (of fish) within Compass; for you may enlarge the Expence of your House, and gratify your family and friends that visit you, with a Dish as acceptable as any you can purchase for Money; or you may oblige your friends and Neighbours, by making Presents of them, which, from Country-man to the King, is well taken; . . . it is a positive Disgrace to appear covetous of them, rather more than of Venison, or any other thing; so that Presents are not only expedient, but necessary to be made by him that professeth a Mastery of fish.

Further witness to this statement is the account of Lord Wharton of Upper Whendon in Buckinghamshire for the year 1686. Many hundreds of 'great carp' are taken from a number of ponds on his estates, some for sale and some for restocking other ponds. In Sussex, the diaries of Thomas Marchant show that a large number of ponds in that county were stocked with carp. Here Marchant spent much of his time as a fish dealer, travelling from pond to pond to catch the fish therein. At various places in Oxfordshire, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ponds are identified as being systematically managed to produce good sized carp for eating and stocking. In Hampshire, a number of ponds are identified within the Titchfield area in the 1740s that contain carp. At least a dozen can still be identified today, four of these

60 J Worlidge, *Systema agricultura*, 1660.
63 J Mortimer, *The whole art of husbandry*, 1707.
64 J Bradley, *A general treatise on husbandry and gardening*, 1721.
70 Hants R O, 5M33/1110-4, letters relating to the management of former Wriothesley estates in the mid-eighteenth century.
ponds being those stocked in 1538 by Thomas Wriothesley (see above).

Although North records a flourishing market for carp, there are hints of some decline in the keeping of fishponds in the post-medieval period. In the more remote parts of the country, he comments that the current fashion is to let estates to tenants, who tend to neglect fishponds. Taverner claims also one of his reasons for promoting the qualities of the carp so strongly is that fish-keeping is no longer as popular as it once was.

IV

A study of medieval fish-keeping shows that the bream was by far the most popular freshwater fish on the royal table in the thirteenth century. Other species that enjoyed popularity amongst the non-migratory species were the pike and tench. By the time of the first major treatises on fish-keeping in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these fish had been supplanted in popularity by the carp.

It has been suggested above that the carp's faster growth and its hardiness were the principal reason behind its ascendency. Medieval fish-keeping seemed to work on a five-year maturity cycle. Dubravius, writing in 1563 about fish husbandry based mainly on carp, seems to rely on a three-year cycle.

By the post-medieval period, this latter cycle seems to have been accepted by most commentators. It is also generally agreed that the bream is a slow growing fish, although the rate of its growth seems to have been exaggerated by Hale who claims they are not 'profitable' as they take fifteen to twenty years to grow to edible size.

Taverner is more realistic when he records that they need five to six years to reach edible size, but this is only if they are kept in a large pond and kept from over-breeding. North repeats this advice, saying that they are 'slow growers' on waters of less than ten to twelve acres.

In comparison, the carp grows much quicker. North claims various rates of growth, all of which are much quicker than bream or other indigenous cyprinids such as tench or roach. With correct keeping, he claims they can grow from ten to eighteen inches in one or two years. This is a weight gain of approximately two pounds, a weight the bream cannot usually obtain in five years. Bradley claims that twelve rods of water will produce forty-two carp and eighty-four tench in three years to edible size.

Hale gives other reasons why the carp should be preferred to other fish. He claims they command the best price in the market; they also '... require so little trouble, or is liable to so few accidents'. They are praised for their ability to endure the hardship of cold winters, and are much harder than other fish 'to take by the common methods of stealing'. North records that London is the best market for carp, where they are in much demand. Here a fish between thirteen and sixteen inches can be expected to realize 12d.

North gives advice on bulk selling. He urges the seller to contact the person being sold to before the event so that a price can be agreed beforehand. The common procedure seemed to be with him for the seller to transport the fish to the buyer. North considers it a disadvantage to have to haggle after the fish have been transported. If the sale is of fish for eating, the price will be by the measure of so much per inch. If

71 North, Discourse of Fish, p 69.
72 Taverner, Certaine experiments, p 8.
73 Currie, Medieval Fishponds, p 255.
75 Dubravius, New book of good husbandry, p 19.
76 Hale, Complete book of husbandry, p 252.
77 North, Discourse of Fish, pp 53-4.
78 Bradley, General treatise, p 346.
79 Hale, Complete book of husbandry, p 255.
80 North, Discourse of Fish, pp 63-4, 90.
they are for stocking then the price is so much per hundred or dozen with the fish to be between certain lengths. He gives examples of between seven and ten inches and between nine and twelve inches.83

On the return from ponds, North gives the most detailed information. He compares his returns with that of the normal return per annum on meadowland, which is where most ponds are built. This is £2 per acre at the most in 1713. He argues that four acres of ponds will return 1000 carp per year fed to fourteen or fifteen inches (about two to two-and-a-half pounds in weight). We have seen above that a carp of this size can command a price of 12d each but North chooses to halve this to 6d to prove his point. From this, with carriage deducted, the seller can expect to make £6 5s 0d per acre.83

It might be wondered what sizes these fish attained in comparison with the modern varieties, which can exceed 40 pounds weight in favourable conditions. Roger North notes that his carp can reach eighteen inches (about four pounds weight) in five years. It was not usual to keep fish much larger than this for the commercial market. Nevertheless Taverner claims to have seen carp in 1600 that were thirty-three inches from between the eye to the fork of the tail. Such a carp, even allowing for poor condition factors, could be expected to exceed twenty pounds weight.84

William Peard gives some idea of the maximum weights for carp in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He recalls how a water known as Stonehead Lake was fished in 1793 to produce 2000 carp of ‘large dimensions’ including a fish of thirty inches length, twenty-two inches breadth and weighing eighteen pounds. In Weston Hall, Staffordshire, he notes that there is a painting of a carp of nineteen-and-a-half pounds weight. In Sussex, a Mr Ladbroke presented Lord Egremont with a brace of fish from his park at Gratton that weighed thirty-five pounds between them. It is recorded that Ladbroke made this gesture to demonstrate to the men of Surrey the sort of carp Sussex was capable of producing.85

V

The growth of a commercial market in freshwater fish seems to coincide with the gradual decline of direct demesne farming. As more lords were prepared to lease out property for money rents, so the opportunity for large-scale acquisitions of former demesne fishponds arose. This created a situation where profitable breeding of a high status, and hence, highly-priced, food item, became increasingly viable.

Whereas, there can be little doubt that some lesser fish-keepers were able to produce freshwater fish for the market before the fourteenth century, opportunities increased dramatically thereafter. Not only were commercial fish-keepers able to acquire more ponds in which to produce stock, but the decrease in the number farmed by the aristocracy led to an increased demand for freshwater fish on the open market. It has been shown that the kings of England, formerly maintaining hundreds of acres of ponds, came to be largely dependent on the commercial market by the fourteenth century.

However, not all the upper aristocracy leased out their ponds. Many of the country aristocracy maintained fishponds to supply fish well into the post-medieval period. The idea of freshwater fish as a status item of food may have declined somewhat as fishponds became accessible to the lower orders of society, but high prices continued to ensure that only the wealthy could afford

83 Ibid, p 69.
84 Ibid, p 86.
85 Personal observation: condition factor is a fish-farming term referring to the ratio of length to weight in fish. Low condition factors generally mean the fish are underfed.

86 W Peard, Practical water farming, Edinburgh, 1868, p 153.
to eat them. The evidence suggests that the earliest commercial freshwater fish breeders were directing their sales at a growing London market. The arrival of the carp in England seems to be related to these increasing opportunities of making large profits from the sale of freshwater fish.

The overall evidence shows that the carp is likely to have come to Britain at some time in the fourteenth century although it was only over the course of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries that the species established itself in any numbers. By the 1530s it was well established and appears to have been much prized by the aristocracy and fish stealers alike. The methods used for the keeping and breeding of the fish achieved a very reasonable standard which was maintained until at least the beginning of the nineteenth century. At some time between 1800 and the 1950s tastes changed, and the fish declined in popularity as a table fish. The exact reasons for this decline must await further study.

It is this that led to the neglect of the many ponds throughout the country that held carp. This loss of interest probably led to the silting up and possible infilling of many of these ponds. The loss of habitat resulted in a reduction in the distribution of the species to such an extent that by the 1950s popular angling writers thought carp relatively scarce compared with its cousin the tench, which maintained a wide distribution. Nevertheless, the evidence shows clearly that the carp was, for nearly four centuries, the most popular freshwater fish in England and was widely cultivated.66

66 Throughout this article, the term freshwater fish refers to fish species that live entirely in freshwater. Migratory fish, like the salmon, who come into freshwater to breed, are not considered true freshwater species.

Notes and Comments

WINTER CONFERENCE 1991
Will be held on Saturday 7 December at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London. The theme of the conference is 'Rural Society and the Poor'. Papers will be by Dr Paul Glennie on 'Early Modern English Labourers', Dr Dennis Mills on 'The Peasantry and the Poor in Open and Closed Villages', Dr Christine Hallas on 'Nineteenth-century Poor in the Yorkshire Dales', and Dr Alan Howkins on 'The Intermediate Workforce: Peasants, Labourers and Farm Servants'. The Conference begins at 10.30 am and lasts to 4.30 pm. Registration forms can be obtained from Dr Peter Dewey, History Department, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, Egham Hill, Egham, Surrey, TW20 0EX.

SPRING CONFERENCE APRIL 1992
The Society’s annual residential Spring Conference will be at Nottingham from Monday 13 to Wednesday 15 April. Accommodation has been arranged at Florence Boot Hall on the spectacular campus of the University of Nottingham. A full conference programme of papers by leading figures in agricultural history will be arranged and the traditional field trip on the Tuesday afternoon will be to the nearby famous open field village of Laxton. Further details can be obtained from the local conference organizer, Professor John Beckett, Department of History, University Park, University of Nottingham, Nottingham NG7 2RD.

SPRING CONFERENCE APRIL 1993
This will be at Gregynog Hall near Welshpool, Powys. Further details will appear in the next copy of the Review.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE RECORD SOCIETY
Members may wish to know that the Northamptonshire Record Society has moved, together with the County Record Office, to Wootton Hall Park, Northampton, NN4 9BQ. This has compelled the Society to reduce the stocks of its publications, and many volumes from the record series, and copies of Northamptonshire Past and Present, are available at reduced prices from the Secretary, Northamptonshire Record Society, Wootton Hall Park, Northampton, NN4 9BQ.
The Social Structure of Manorial Freeholders: An Analysis of the Hundred Rolls of 1279

By M A BARG

Abstract

This study reassesses the evidence of the Hundred Rolls of 1279 to investigate the social structure and socio-economic identity of the freeholders, significantly revising the classic analysis of E A Kosminsky. Careful linkage of the personal names of freeholders within and between manors and vills reveals four groups within this broad category: clergy; gentry; craftsmen; and tradesmen. The investigation suggests that more than half the freehold land of the counties surveyed was not in the hands of their direct cultivators: manorial freehold was of major importance, and subtenancy and rent relationships already widespread at the time of the compilation of the Hundred Rolls.

When medieval freeholders became the subject of special historical research, the problem became the centre of sharp polemical debate, which to this day has not been satisfactorily concluded. The course of this lively discussion, and particular phases within it, deserve a special study. For my purpose here, however, it is enough to recall the main features of three of those phases. The first is associated with the name of P Vinogradoff. For him, the problem lay in discovering the tenemental significance of manorial freehold. His investigation led him to the view that it was a relic of Anglo-Saxon freedom. In short, the social and economic questions which interest us did not exist for him at all. The second phase of the debate is associated with the names of F M Stenton, D C Douglas, and others, who extended the area of observation into the north-east and eastern England. The centre of their historical interests, however, remained on the whole the same as that formulated by Vinogradoff.

Finally, in the third phase, as is well known, the classical theory of the English manor was demolished as a result of the studies of E A Kosminsky. He investigated the proportion of freehold land in the tenemental structure of the manor, and the numbers and proportion of freehold compared with villein tenants. To me, however, the core of the problem lies not in the formal counting of the numbers of manorial freeholders, but more particularly in discovering their socio-economic identity. To what class of people did such freehold land belong?

I

Answering this question, of course, is among the most arduous tasks of any connected with the problem of freehold. Moreover, despite all the toil and care given to the investigation, the results will always leave a residue of insoluble problems or doubtful hypotheses. Nevertheless, that is no reason for omitting the attempt. In order

4 For an earlier discussion of this question, in English, see M A Barg, 'The Genesis of Peasant Freehold in the Midlands', in Produttività e Tecnologie, Firenze, 1981, 123-49.
to make such an analysis, two preconditions are necessary: first, it is necessary to have a large quantity of data; and secondly one must have information on the social status of those holding peasant-sized freeholds. The first of these preconditions is met by the printed Hundred Rolls of 1279. The second is satisfactorily met only in the case of ecclesiastical holdings. On the holdings of laymen, the Hundred Rolls seldom give any clue to the social status of tenants. Moreover, if a manorial lord appeared as a smallholder in a neighbouring manor, the survey generally neglected to add his correct title of dominus, which would have been of great value for our purpose. Very rarely, and only in exceptional cases, do we find in our sources indications of the social function of small freeholders that would permit any judgement about their social status. Rare examples are senescalius, bailivus, attornatus, armigerus, and forestarius (steward, bailiff, attorney, esquire, and forester).5

In consequence, the only possible way of gauging the social status of freeholders is by identifying by name and surname (or nickname) all the freeholders listed in both volumes of the Hundred Rolls, including those appearing in the first volume which are taken from surveys of earlier years. In this way, we may establish the social status of peasant freeholders by the only criterion available to us, namely the quantity of land in their possession. We can then assign an individual freeholder to a particular social class according to the aggregate size of his holding, not in one manor, but in all the manors recorded in the Hundred Rolls.

It is, of course, clear that in going beyond the confines of one manor or hundred, one meets complications and runs the risk of making many mistakes. The accuracy of this kind of research depends primarily on the stability of personal names and nicknames at this period. Regrettably, it must be said that this stability is very low. The surname or nickname (cognomen) of the freeholder, which is our principal aid in identifying persons precisely, proves very often to be fickle, changeable, or, not uncommonly, is absent altogether. In the last named case, the survey says ‘John, son of John’, which almost totally rules out the possibility of comparing this manorial tenant with others recorded in the same terms on other estates. The same difficulty recurs in cases where the survey states Petrus Faber, Pistor, or Taylor, in which cases the occupations of smith, baker, or tailor are too common to allow positive identification. Equally poorly identified are the female tenants listed as: Margeria relicta [widow], Christina uxor [wife], soror [sister], etc.6 But the most important obstacle is the fact that surnames in the thirteenth century were far from settled; father and son, and brothers too, very often had different surnames. Thus on one page we find William Scriptor, and on a nearby page William Cancellarius.7 In another example, the father is recorded as Robertus Witham, but his son as Robertus de Swaleclive.8 Finally, the number of potential mistakes in the identification of personal names increases through the negligence of the compilers of the surveys; in writing the same surname they indulged in the most unexpected variations. Thus, for example, the surname of Phillip Mimecan could be written Mincan and Minecan.9 John Flexleye could also be spelled as Flexneye.10 Robert Freman could be both Fiman, and Frankefin.11 Examples of such inconsistencies on the part of the surveys in spelling surnames could be multiplied many times, and to these must be added the errors and mistranscriptions of the editors of the printed volumes.

1 Rotuli Hundredorum (hereafter RH), 2 vols., Record Commission, 1810-1818, II, 721, 723, 728, 731, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739.
2 RH, II, 917-1101.
3 RH, II, 868, 870.
4 RH, II, 708.
5 RH, II, 720-1.
6 RH, II, 703.
7 RH, II, 709.
It should also be pointed out, however, that although by broadening the territorial extent of these observations and the time span, we increase the possibility of some errors, we may help to avoid others. To demonstrate this, a few examples will serve. William Burton, a freeholder in a vill of the same name, could easily be taken for a peasant as he had two holdings of 0.5 virgates each. But in the survey of 1275–6 we read the following: *Willhelmus de Burton, ballivus comitis Warren* [bailiff of the Earl Warenne]. Richard de Lodelawe, if we judge by the size of his freehold in the vill of Fifield, was a peasant, for he held there one virgate of land. But in the inquisition of 1254–5 he is mentioned as *Ricardus, canonicus de Lodelowe* (canon of Ludlow).

The social status of John Levernon, who is recorded in the manor of Abbots Ripton as a tenant of 22 acres of freehold land, would also be regarded as that of a peasant if we did not consult the inquisition of 1254–5, where we read *Johannes de Vernon quondam vicecomes* [formerly sheriff]. Similarly, William Passelewe, seemingly a modest freeholder in Cambridgeshire and Oxfordshire, emerges in a new light if we identify him with William Passelewe in Buckinghamshire, and with the person named in an inquisition of 1274–5 in Northamptonshire, where we read of *Willelmus Passeleu, senescallus comitis Gloucestrie* [steward of the Earl of Gloucester].

As a result of comparing the personal names of all the manorial freeholders recorded in the Hundred Rolls of 1279, some general principles were elaborated, on which the present study is based.

1 If a particular surname (nickname) was found to be geographically widespread, as, for example, in the case of Parker, Page, Russell, and so on, in the absence of additional information, the area in which that name was regarded as belonging to one and the same person was defined more narrowly. And in reverse, if a personal name was rare and picturesque, more latitude was given, when the name recurred in places comparatively remote from one another, for regarding its bearers as one and the same person.

2 In cases where the surname was derived from the name of a vill or manor, its bearers were considered to be one and the same person only if the name of the vill or manor was not repeated within the area described in the printed Hundred Rolls of 1279.

3 A surname or nickname derived from a trade gave no grounds (unless complemented by additional data) for going beyond the confines of one manor and claiming two identical names as belonging to the same person.

4 Finally, a surname or nickname was considered as belonging to one and the same person if, in different hundreds and counties, it featured in company with the same associates, such as subtenants, family members, etc. Thus, Ralph Passelewe, a tenant of a knight’s fee in the vill of Biddenham, Beds., was identified with a small freeholder of the same name and surname in the vill of Stevington, Beds., on the grounds that in both cases he was accompanied by one and the same person, namely Nicolas Passelewe. In the Hundred Rolls of 1279 many such pairs appear.

II

As the result of prolonged study, not only of the two volumes of the Hundred Rolls but also of more or less contemporary records, namely, *Placita de Quo Warranto*, *Testa de Nevill*, and printed rolls of royal and manorial courts, it has been possible to

10 RH, II, 327, 331.
THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF MANORIAL FREEHOLDERS

subdivide the socially faceless mass of manorial freeholders into four groups: gentry, ecclesiastics, craftsmen and tradesmen, and peasants. It should be stressed that in fixing the borderline between peasants and gentry, if it could not be defined in any other way, I followed the rule laid down by Kosminsky in his statistics, namely, that the holder of one hide (four times thirty acres) represented a member of the gentry. Only in Cambridgeshire was the borderline modified to half a hide (60 acres) in view of the degree of fragmentation shown to have occurred to peasant holdings in that county. Even in this case, however, 60 acres proved to be four times larger than the typical peasant holding in this area.

The results of these calculations are given in Table I. The criteria used to arrive at them means that the resulting numbers are minima. But even so, the figures tend to indicate that in three counties, Oxfordshire, Huntingdonshire, and Buckinghamshire, more than half the freehold land contained in the Hundred Rolls was in the possession of men and women who were not peasants. In Bedfordshire freehold land thus held amounted to one-third of the total area, in Cambridgeshire it amounted to 28 per cent. Altogether within the area comprised in the printed Hundred Rolls, almost half of manorial freehold land was in the tenure of non-peasants.

In general, the tabulated analysis reveals a major feature of the social distribution of peasant freehold: the more highly manorialized the region, the less such freehold had in common with recognizable peasant landholdings. Of considerable interest is the distribution of the non-peasant share of manorial freehold land. The lion's portion belonged to laymen, but its exact size varied greatly between counties; it fluctuated between two-thirds of the whole in Oxfordshire, and two-fifths in Buckinghamshire on the one hand, and a fifth in Bedfordshire, and less than one-sixth in Cambridgeshire on the other. Taking all the data together, the layman's share was close to 30 per cent of all freehold land described in the Hundred Rolls, and close to 55 per cent of the freehold land held by the non-peasant classes. The church's share was greatest in Buckinghamshire, where it amounted to 41 per cent of all non-peasant freehold, in Huntingdonshire where it represented about 33 per cent, and in Oxfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Bedfordshire, where it occupied nearly 30 per cent. On the whole, within the area studied, laymen held nearly one-third of all the freehold land belonging to non-peasants.

Finally, it is worth noting that urban elements (artisans and merchants) and rural craftsmen and traders among manorial freeholders have hitherto been underestimated. It has to be stressed, of course, that in these calculations they represent a much smaller percentage than in actuality, since in many cases small freeholders with surnames like Smith, Faber, Taylor, etc., were not counted as 'urban' elements. Nevertheless, in Oxfordshire 12 per cent of the share of peasant freehold belonged to this group, in Buckinghamshire and Cambridgeshire nearly a fifth, and in Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire it fluctuated around a tenth. The central significance of this social fact lies not so much in the penetration into the village of tradesmen and craftsmen from neighbouring towns as in the crystallization of this group inside the village community. In this connection, suffice it to say that the truly peasant type of freehold offered the most favourable arena for displaying the process of the social division of labour.

No matter how critical an attitude we adopt to the calculations made above concerning the distribution of manorial freehold between different social groups, the figures reveal a pattern which is strongly correlated with the degree of manorialization in each given area.

III

We may now turn to the results of our calculations, approaching the questions posed here from a somewhat different angle.


112

THE AGRICULTURAL HISTORY REVIEW

TABLE I

The social distribution of manorial freehold
(the RH 1279 data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County/Hundred</th>
<th>Registered freehold, virgates</th>
<th>Including ones not in the possession of peasants Virgates %</th>
<th>as property of temporal lords Virgates %</th>
<th>Of which as church property Virgates %</th>
<th>as property of trade and craft elements Virgates %</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Buckinghamshire</td>
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<tr>
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<td>43.3</td>
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Stodden

Willey

Total

Buckinghamshire

Cambridgeshire

Total

Oxfordshire

Bedfordshire

Huntingdonshire

I12
What pattern of manorial freehold emerges if we rank all manors possessing such tenure in descending order according to the share held by non-peasants (see Table II)? Among 545 manors surveyed in four counties, no peasant-sized freeholds proved to be held by peasants in 318 manors, or about one-fifth of the total. If we consider the manors in which the share of non-peasants in peasant-sized freeholds exceeded 50 per cent, their number amounted to 318 or a little less than two-thirds of all the manors counted in Table II. On the other hand, the number of manors in which truly peasant freehold predominated (i.e. reached three-quarters of the area of manorial freehold) constituted 27.6 per cent of all the manors under review. Also the regularity already mentioned recurs: the higher the level of manorialization in each particular region, the less often do true peasants prove to be the freeholders, and, in consequence, the greater was the share of non-peasants. Thus, the proportion of manors in which all peasant-sized freehold was in the hands of non-peasants was at a maximum in Huntingdonshire with 30.5 per cent. Correspondingly, the proportion of manors in the same county in which all peasant-sized freehold was in the possession of true peasant holders represented the minimum of 13.7 per cent.

Cambridgeshire is not included in this Table because manorial freehold was here so complicated in its structure, that trying to arrange the relevant data under individual manors becomes an impossible exercise, giving unreliable statistical results. In Bedfordshire the results are the reverse of those in Huntingdonshire, namely, 1.4 per cent of manors showed all freehold land in the possession of non-peasants, and 20.4 per cent of manors showed it in the possession of true peasants.

The fact established above that almost half the area of manorial freehold described in the Hundred Rolls of 1279 was held by non-peasants demands that we answer the further question, as important as it is difficult. In what way did these landholders, who were not as a rule cultivators of their land, make economic use of their freehold tenements? Often they were dispersed over many manors, but the surveys generally do not tell us the names of the under-tenants, who were the direct tillers of the land. Nevertheless the presence of subtenants is confirmed by the fact that, in many cases, manorial freehold is described in whole virgates, i.e. rounded blocks of land which look highly artificial when compared with the other cases where the surveyor recorded not the legal holders of freehold but the actual cultivator. We may compare two examples:

**Vill of Mongewell, Oxon.**

Galfridus Engleys .......................... 1 virgate
Johannes de la Denne ......................... 1 virgate
Walterus de Esthall ........................ 1 virgate
Iohanes Burwefeld ......................... 2.5 virgate
Rector ecclesie .......................... 2 virgate
Thomas de Wyc ............................ 1 carucate

**Vill of Little Paxton, Hunts.**

Prior de Bissemede ........................ 10a. libere [freely]
2 subtenants hold ...................................
10a. in villenagio [in villeinage]

Caterina Fin ................................. 7a. libere
1 subtenant .................................. 7a. in villenagio
Willelmus le Parkere ......................... 7a. libere
1 subtenant .................................. 7a. in villenagio
Rob. de Bedeford ............................. 7a. libere
1 subtenant .................................. 7a. in villenagio
Ric. de Alkmundebir ......................... 10a. libere
1 subtenant .................................. 10a. in villenagio

Similar examples are abundant in the Hundred Rolls. Let us note only one further entry: Petronilla de la Le habet ...4v... dictas quatuor virgatas terre tenentur de eadem Petronilla in villenagio. Many more such
### TABLE II

**Distribution of manorial estates by the share of non-peasant social groups in the ‘peasant-like’ freehold**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County/Hundred</th>
<th>The total number of manors where the non-peasant social elements possess</th>
<th>All the freehold in possession of peasants</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The number of manors</td>
<td>100% of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of</td>
<td>the intra-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxfordshire</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wootton</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chadlington</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banbury</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulington</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langtree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewknor</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyerton</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thame</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ploughley</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bampton</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(20.0%)</td>
<td>(8.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedfordshire</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willey</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(17.1%)</td>
<td>(1.4%)</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Hirstingdon</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leightonstone</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(30.5%)</td>
<td>(10.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckinghamshire</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muta</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mursley</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stodfold</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(21.3%)</td>
<td>(11.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For all the material</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(21.6%)</td>
<td>(8.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF MANORIAL FREEHOLDERS

examples exist in this material of the leasing of parcels of freehold (mainly for a term of years) and of tenements let at the will of the freeholder.

IV
From all this we arrive at two conclusions. First, the small amount of manorial freehold, emerging in the regions, where a relatively high degree of manorialization had been attained, reflected the disintegration of the old feudal landed estates, and constituted at the time that the Hundred Rolls were being compiled in 1279 the building blocks for feudal estates of a new type — estates which were dispersed, heterogeneous in their tenemental and economic structure, more mobile and fluid in their boundaries, and, for these reasons, difficult to identify. We are witnessing here a process that was under way at the very heart of the old Anglo-Norman feudal estate, the results of which would duly appear in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the structure of feudal estates of a new generation, promoting new rent relations in the English village. Secondly, it does not follow from this that manorial freehold, as an important element in the English village, disappeared. On the contrary, it deserves more attentive study, and a more sensitive assessment.

See note 4 above.
The Later Parliamentary Enclosures of South Wales

By JOHN CHAPMAN

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.

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

4 113 out of 227 enclosures.
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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. However, there appears to be no evidence...
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 Llancwrws, 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 5 1/2 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

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.

12 PRO, MAF 25/8.
13 23,791 acres excluding the Undy enclosure, for which most information is missing.
### TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish or Area</th>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Award</th>
<th>Total Area</th>
<th>Area Awarded</th>
<th>Area Sold</th>
<th>No of Allottees</th>
<th>No of Buyers</th>
</tr>
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<td><strong>BRECONSHIRE</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Battle</td>
<td>1860</td>
<td>1862</td>
<td>406.26</td>
<td>406.26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Bronllys</td>
<td>1860</td>
<td>1863</td>
<td>116.68</td>
<td>103.59</td>
<td>13.09</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>Cantref</td>
<td>1856</td>
<td>1858</td>
<td>20.15</td>
<td>20.15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Cathedine</td>
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<td>1861</td>
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<td>1863</td>
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<td>108.94</td>
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<td>Henl糼</td>
<td>1855</td>
<td>1857</td>
<td>105.79</td>
<td>105.79</td>
<td>18.69</td>
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<td>1865</td>
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<td>720.08</td>
<td>57.79</td>
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<td>1862</td>
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<td>211.54</td>
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<td>50.66</td>
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<td>1872</td>
<td>1118.48</td>
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<td>1857</td>
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<td>1869</td>
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<td>3350.60</td>
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*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. 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. 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. 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. 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.

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

18 Chapman, op cit, 1972.
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, 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. 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. 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. By 1845 it had become common practice, especially where extensive areas of

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\[^{12}\text{Hunt, op cit, 1939.}\]

\[^{13}\text{Including joint owners as a 'single individual', except where the award specifically subdivides the allotment.}\]
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, Whiston (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 rightowners 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

27W 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. 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. 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. Lot, at Pencarreg (Carmarthenshire), went for a mere 15s 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 7½ 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
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 Llandew (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.10

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.11 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.

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,12 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.13 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

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

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.

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.

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25 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.

Horses and Equine Improvement in the Economy of Modern Wales

By R J MOORE-COLYER

Abstract
This article attempts to review the importance of the horse to the economy of modern Wales and in considering the various regional types, provides some indication of the efforts made towards equine improvement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries both by the various agricultural organizations and officially-sponsored bodies. The introduction of English breeds at the expense of the genetic improvement of local stock, the economic uncertainty of horsebreeding, the unwillingness of smaller farmers to pay realistic stud fees and an obsession with the improvement of male at the expense of female lines, restricted the extent of improvements of both saddle and draught animals. By the time organizations like the RASE, the Hunters' Improvement Society and the Royal Commission on Horsebreeding had begun to make some impact, the urban horse in Wales and elsewhere was sinking into decline. The horse, nevertheless, remained the principal power unit on Welsh farms until the end of the Second World War.

As Celia Fiennes bumped and jolted her way across England and Wales in the last decade of the seventeenth century, an odyssey she recommended to all and sundry as a cure for the vapours and for laziness, she testified to the absolute importance of horses in providing the motive power fuelling the production and distribution side of the developing economy. Horses were everywhere and, if Gregory King was right, in the order of 1.2 million equines of various descriptions laboured throughout the land. Miss Fiennes, with her unquenchable thirst for facts, found horses operating pumps in the coal-mines of Flint, carting corn in Devonshire, shifting lime and dung in the Lake District, and hauling cloth in Exeter, among a multitude of other tasks. In many parts of England, and along the eastern fringes of Wales, considerable advances were being made in road infrastructure, enabling the development of a network of public carrying services and stimulating improvements in agricultural transport so that a bewildering variety of regional carts and waggons came into being. John Taylor's The Carriers' Cosmography of 1637 had identified well-established long distance haulage routes linking the provinces with London and as the country carrying trade developed, so remote villages became more closely associated with contiguous country towns and thereby with the capital.

Yet in the more remote reaches of the realm, age-old transport methods persisted. If Elizabeth I's progresses around the country required the services of no less than four hundred cart teams (a fact which must have appalled her hosts), the vast majority of agricultural and manufactured articles from the uplands of England and most of Wales continued to be transported by packhorses as had been the case in medieval times. In a region where topography and road conditions were unsuited to large wheeled vehicles, the teams of packhorses traversing...
the ubiquitous packhorse ways and packhorse bridges were valuable commodities which owners were careful to maintain in good order without undue stress or overwork. The organization and operation of the packhorse train varied little from the reign of Edward I until well into the nineteenth century when packhorse haulage was still widely used in Wales. Led by one sagacious animal equipped with a set of bells to give warning of its approach along the narrow lanes, the packhorse train comprised between six and thirty animals and since each carried from two to four hundredweights depending on its size, substantial volumes could be reliably and efficiently transported. The general dealer, the builder, the timber merchant, the lead mine operator and even the undertaker made extensive use of the packhorse or the horse litter in both the uplands and lowlands of Wales. When the farmer occupying the remote holding of Nantstalwyn near Abergwesyn, Brecknockshire was poisoned by his servants in 1770 his corpse was conveyed to Abergwesyn churchyard by horse litter, supposedly drawn by his own bay gelding which had previously carried him to church each Sunday. If packhorse trains and other forms of non-wheeled transport were used primarily for the haulage of merchandise, their owners were quite prepared to carry passengers, and many a stalwart sprig of the Welsh gentry was deposited at Shrewsbury School after what must have been an extremely uncomfortable journey on the back of a packhorse.

In essence, pre-nineteenth-century travellers in Wales managing to avoid the packhorse, or a ponderous and backbreaking journey by ox-cart, either bought their own saddle horse or hired one. The records of the borough of Haverfordwest frequently identify payments by sixteenth-century officials for the hire of horses for borough business, while as late as 1801 the proprietors of the Brecon and Abergavenny Canal had recourse to hiring horses for carrying the accounts to meetings up and down South Wales. At much the same time the owners of the Hook Colliery in Pembrokeshire were attempting to curtail expenditure on horse hire for general coalfield work by exploring the possibility of taking on land to rear their own animals. This measure, they estimated, would save the enterprise £100 each year. Thoughts of economy were probably uppermost in the minds of the shareholders of the Montgomeryshire Canal who operated no less than forty-four complexes of waterside stables, haybarns and smithies to serve the horses dragging barges up the canal. Similar examples, illustrating the vital role of the horse in virtually every aspect of economic life, could be quoted ad infinitum, possibly culminating in a brief, but honourable, mention of the 15-hand pit pony ‘Star’ which recently retired after a career of almost two decades working in the noisome environs of the Llanelli sewage works.

Horses, of every size and shape, colour and conformation, nature and temperament, were bred, reared, broken and managed on the Welsh farm, and if horse breeding for draught and saddle purposes was a less important contributor to farm income than the production of ruminant livestock, it nevertheless constituted an important supplementary enterprise. In so doing it provided incidental benefits in the form of employment for saddlers, farriers, iron suppliers and coopers, not to mention

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6 G Lloyd, 'Flintshire Bridges', Flint Hist Soc Pubs 17, 1957, p 82. In The Woodlanders Thomas Hardy gives a vivid description of the timber merchant Melbury’s team decked out in their full regalia: ‘The horses wore their bells that day. There were sixteen to the team, carried on a frame above each animal’s shoulders, and tuned to scale, so as to form two octaves, running from the highest note on the right or off-side of the leader to the lowest on the left or near-side of the shaft-horse’. (Penguin Books edn. p 142).

7 Arch Camb, Ser IV, (3), 1858, p 111.


10 NLW, Owen and Colby 2276.


12 H Davies, Looking around Llanelli, Llanelli, 1985, p 123.
a legion of purveyors of curious equine medicines and a great many dealers in horses. Whether Welsh or English or a mixture of the two, the horse dealers formed part of an important social substratum whose members traded in horses of every description. Even before Defoe had commended the excellence of Welsh horses and noted their popularity in England, transborder trading had been common and hundreds, if not thousands of the small, sturdy animals from the border counties were annually traded by dealers in the fairs of Shrewsbury, Chester and elsewhere.13 Being a somewhat clannish fraternity with their own secret ways born of generations of orally-transmitted equine lore, the horse dealers (or ‘jockeys’) enjoyed a less than pristine reputation. The garrulous and witty William Harrison (who was probably one of the very few Elizabethan writers effectively to describe how common people viewed common events and occurrences) had no doubt whatsoever about horse dealers, maintaining that ‘... an honest-meaning man shall have very good luck among them if he be not deceived by some false trick or another ...’.14 And little changed over the next three hundred years so that the inimitable R S Surtees could still malign the generality of horse dealers by describing them as ‘... dirty shirred, sloggering, baggy-breeched, slangey-gaitered fellows, with the word “gin” indelibly printed on their faces’.15 However much the dealer may have been distrusted, and in the vast majority of cases quite unjustifiably so, his role was of major significance in the development of trade both locally and nationally.

Insofar as the gentry required horses for riding on day-to-day business and for drawing their carriages, they were active contributors to the farm economy and the ancillary equine trades. Before 1560 there was hardly a coach to be seen in Britain, yet by the end of Elizabeth’s reign, during which British coachmakers had begun to copy Hungarian and Bohemian models, most country houses of significance maintained a coach of one description or another.16 A coach became the supreme symbol of status and amour-propre, and regardless of the condition of the roads and the discomfort involved in wheeled travel before the invention of the leaf spring, a gentleman moving from his Welsh fastness to his London home would generally do so in his coach. The Herberths of Chirbury, for generations interested in horsebreeding, regularly bred, bought and sold coach horses in the seventeenth century, and when Lord Herbert discovered £47 which he had thought he had lost in the house at Lymore, he immediately went out to buy ‘six black coach mares’.17 Travelling frequently to London and Oxford, the Myddletons of Chirk, anxious to be well turned-out, equipped themselves with part-bred Arab horses to draw the family coach, which was built in London in 1719.18 As time went by everyone who was anyone had his coach built to his own specifications, panelled with varnished mahogany, upholstered in the finest leather, and emblazoned with arms, crests and coronets according to the owner’s status. The Earls of Powys, who invariably travelled in the grand manner, incurred expenditure amounting to several hundreds of pounds annually for renovation of their various carriages, phaetons and gigs, and in 1785 the Earl bought a new coach from the London builders Wright Lukin and Company, receiving, in part exchange, £161 10s for an old coach, a vis-à-vis and a phaeton.19 On a rather more

14 Edelen, op cit, p 17.
15 R S Surtees, Mr Sponge’s Sporting Tour, Everyman edn, p 10.
16 Yet there had been knights, and lords, and gentlemen’, said Mistress Quickly ‘with their coaches – I warrant you, coach after coach’. Merry Wives of Windsor II, ii 60.
17 W J Smith, ed, Herbert Correspondence, Cardiff, 1963, p 364.
18 NLW, Chirk E 1249.
19 NLW, Powys Castle 2099-6.
modest scale, the stable inventory for Nanteos in Cardiganshire reveals that in 1865 family travelling facilities included one open carriage, two Broughams, three dog carts, a pony carriage, a clarence, a chariot, and a basket cart; not to mention four Bath chairs for Colonel Powell. The five carriage horses also mentioned in the Nanteos inventory may well have been Irish Draught animals which, by the early nineteenth century, were being regularly shipped from Wexford to Hobbs Point in Pembrokeshire for use as carriage horses. Indeed, Irish horses crossed with local animals to produce saddle horses had probably been used by the gentry for generations in view of the well-established equine trade between the south of Ireland and Milford Haven from the sixteenth century.

I

Since the so-called laws of Hywel Dda had set the value of a destrier (war-horse) at £1, a palfrey at 60d, a sumpter at 40d and a wild horse at 40d, horses had been valued items in the Principality. Nevertheless in Hywel’s time, and for centuries beyond, oxen formed the main source of tractive power on the farm and it was not until the seventeenth century that the horse, with its greater speed and flexibility, came to be used with increasing frequency as a farm draught animal. It was the expanding demand for horses both for farm and commercial purposes that prompted George Owen of Henllys to suggest that whatever the deficiencies of horses in Pembrokeshire (‘more by negligence of gentlemen than from anie other urgent cause’) men might well keep a stud of breeding mares which, ‘... yeldeth more profitt than anie other Cattle of that number, and of like chardge’. But the increased use of horses by no means brought about the eclipse of the ox. Horses came to be preferred for long-distance haulage, harrowing and other light draught farm tasks, yet the ox, docile and cheap to maintain, remained firmly yoked to the plough. As late as the 1790s oxen were still used for ploughing in Carmarthenshire, Glamorgan and Pembrokeshire, either solely or in combination with a horse team. In the latter county both species worked together in carrying coal to the coast, while in Radnorshire, whatever the recognized advantages of oxen, farms were obliged to keep horses to undertake the long-distance chore of hauling culm and limestone to the holding.

According to the Report of the Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire of 1896, ‘The love of horseflesh is a characteristic of the race’. Yet we have virtually no account of the regional varieties of horses in Wales before the mid- to late eighteenth century. Between Giraldus Cambrensis’ remarks that the Welsh rode into battle on ‘swift mettlesome horses’ and the Reports of the Board of Agriculture’s surveyors in the 1790s, there is little critical comment of real value.

North Wales and Montgomeryshire

Richard Myddleton of Chirk was a man of ample proportions. In 1725 his agent, David Williams, was sent off to scour Anglesey and Caernarvonshire for a suitable mount for his master, only to return with the news that the horses ‘in this upper country are too low and few good and handsome’.

References:
20 NLW, Nanteos (unnumbered).
21 NLW, Dolaucothi L 4246.
25 NLW, Chirk E 626.
Conformational inadequacy and smallness of stature had long been a feature of the horse population of North Wales. Commissioners of Array operating on behalf of the Council in the Marches of Wales in the late sixteenth century had consistently reported 'default and lack of horses and geldings'. On Anglesey, lamented the local sheriff as the Spanish Armada sailed towards Britain, '... founde we no geldings at all meete for the s'vice of her ma'tie', and again in 1660 William Mostyn, Archdeacon of Bangor, held that the northern region of the Principality 'does not produce many horses of the stature required'.

To eighteenth- and nineteenth-century observers, fitness for draught and saddle purposes were the principal criteria in judging horseflesh, and however much they might value the hardiness of the North Wales pony, they universally condemned its lack of size and scope, so that even on the thin soils of Anglesey three to five horses in line astern were required for shallow ploughing. If lack of judicious selection within the native breeds had been largely responsible for the general decline in size, preventing Flintshire packhorses engaged in hauling coal to Chester from carrying more than one hundredweight apiece, unsatisfactory management practices had aggravated the situation.

Promiscuous breeding among the hill ponies of Merioneth had led inexorably to 'deformity and further diminution in size', while the tradition of putting horses to hard labour at two years old was prejudicial to their subsequent growth. On Anglesey, inadequate fences and walls meant that horses had to be hobbled from a very early age and hence, '... their natural gait and shape must necessarily be changed... into awkwardness and deformity'.

Contemporary pundits, ignoring the importance of selection within local types to exploit local environmental conditions, steadfastly believed that the panacea for these evils was to introduce large, improved English stock. In Flintshire, explained Kay, the gentry and 'better sort of farmers' had brought in English horses of between 15 and 16 hands. In neighbouring Caernarvonshire, however, where men had introduced Thoroughbred blood in the hope of breeding hunters out of local animals, they had succeeded only in producing animals suited neither to draught nor saddle use.

Attempts to convert the Welsh mountain pony into a 15-hand animal, originally conceived in the sixteenth century and long since abandoned, were fundamentally misguided. The nutritional regime prevailing on the upland farm was simply unsuited to sustaining large horses which, incidentally, would have been of little value in working such farms. With careful husbandry and management, native animals could have been produced to a size commensurate with their genetic capacity, and doubtless this occurred on some farms. Indeed, had crossing with English stock taken place to anything like the extent suggested by the Board of Agriculture's reporters, the tough hill pony, capable of sustaining a hard day's work on a modest diet, would have been doomed.

Montgomeryshire stands alone in the context of the history of horsebreeding in Wales. The native ponies, for centuries known as 'merlins', ran virtually wild on the hills until they were rounded up at three years old, broken, and sold in the periodic local fairs whence many found their way to the coal-mines of south Wales, while others, '... unrivalled in the agility with which they climb the slippery ascents of the...
mountains’, hauled wool and cloth in the border towns. Although most wild and semi-wild herds were confined to the upland country bordering the Berwyns by the 1850s, they continued to provide a steady supply of pit ponies for the burgeoning coalfields.33

The lowlands of Montgomeryshire played host to an entirely different class of horses. A number of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers drew attention to the local type, generally between 15 and 16 hands and black or bay in colour, which, if too light of bone for ploughing, was much prized for waggon and carriage work as far afield as Liverpool and Manchester.34 Despite generations of outbreeding, the heavy Montgomeryshire animals had probably originated from the royal stud at Caersws, established in the mid-sixteenth century with the object of breeding large, tractable horses for military purposes under the terms of Henry VIII’s various legislative measures.35 Around 1540 it had been proposed that the park of Caersws, together with the farms of Penprise, be reserved and fenced for the King’s use, a task which could be accomplished at little cost since there was ‘a great plenty of oke’.36 The officers drawing up the proposal outlined arrangements for the maintenance of 100 mares and 10 stallions of suitable size in the newly fenced park, and set out detailed instructions for the dispersal of their progeny. Like all emparkments the Caersws project did not proceed uncontested, with men of the mettle of the chronicler Oliver Mathews remonstrating as they might, locals and others could not prevent the venture from going ahead, and when Elizabeth I granted the manor of Arwystli to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester in 1571, the Caersws stud was in operation. Significantly, Dudley’s predecessor was William, Earl of Pembroke, Master of the Horse, who had probably held Arwystli on condition that he maintain the royal breeding stock.37 The enthusiasm with which Dudley’s henchmen discharged their duty is open to question since William Harrison was prompted to note in 1577 that however successful the King’s ‘noble studdery’ had been in the past, ‘the officers, waxing weary, procured a mixed brood of bastard races, whereby his good purpose came to little effect’.38 Nevertheless, when the Montgomeryshire District Entire Horse Association set about improving local draught horses in the later nineteenth century, they were working with animals directly and collateral descended from the royal foundation stock, which had steadily improved on the lush pastures and heavy soils of lowland Montgomeryshire.

South Wales

From the horsebreeding standpoint, South Wales shared many of the drawbacks of the northern counties. Farms were predominantly small, so that in most cases their occupiers could not afford to devote much attention to the exacting and time-consuming business of horsebreeding, preferring instead to direct most of their efforts towards the production of cattle and sheep. Setting aside the usual problem of ignorance and indifference to the importance of selective breeding, the fact that ruminant stock took priority meant that nutritional provision for horses was, at the very least, basic, and often limited to the poorest hay, barley straw, chaff, and gorse. Even so, most

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34 Davies, (North Wales), op cit, p 335; T Rowlandson, ‘The Agriculture of North Wales’, JRAE, Ser ix, 7, 1846, p 582.
35 27 Hen. VIII, c. 6, 1536; 31 Hen. VIII, c. 13, 1540. Details of this legislation are set out in R J Moore-Colyer, ‘Horse Supply and the British Cavalry; a review, 1066–1900’ (forthcoming, Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research).
36 State Papers (Domestic), Hen. VIII, vol VII, 1574.
37 Anon, MS Coll, XVI, 1883, p 183.
38 Calendar of Letters Patent, 1571.
39 Edelen, op cit, p 48.
farmers kept some horses for farm work, more especially in localities where there was a ready demand for pack animals to carry coal from the newly-sunk pits to the shipping banks. In Llandeilo-Talybont (Glamorgan), for example, probate material for 1603 reveals that three-quarters of farmers bequeathing less than £20 kept between three and seven horses, typically owning 'two labouring horses, three mares and a colt'. 40

By the middle of the eighteenth century, many larger farmers in south Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Glamorgan became interested in producing crosses out of local horses by heavy draught stallions from Herefordshire which travelled the area in the breeding season. 41 Concurrently Suffolk Punch stallions were working in Pembrokeshire to breed highly-favoured draught animals from mares of the old Pembrokeshire breed, predominantly a heavy-boned type of around 14 hands. Unfortunately, despite landlords' efforts to encourage their tenants by obtaining quality stallions for their use at subsidized stud fees, most preferred to make their own arrangements, which generally amounted to having a mare covered by any available sire provided his service fee were sufficiently low. The situation had changed very little by the end of the following century and the Report of the Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire could not avoid the conclusion that the general run of farmers completely disregarded the provenance, suitability or soundness of stallions. 42

Whereas standards of equine husbandry in Wales had steadily improved during the nineteenth century, genetic improvement of the heavier draught animal had lagged behind that of the saddle horse. As early as 1770 numerous Thoroughbred stallions were finding their way to Glamorgan and Pembrokeshire where they covered local mares to produce hunters for the English shires. Even full-blooded Arabs had been imported, prompting Charles Hassall to observe with his customary sourness that their progeny out of local mares were '... a miserable race of undersized feeble animals, that were not fit for any purpose whatsoever'. 43 However great may have been the financial benefit to individuals of producing hunters by Thoroughbred stallions out of strong, big-boned and active mares, the general effect on the Welsh draught horse was deleterious, more particularly when part-bred colts were themselves raised as stallions for breeding. 44 Thus, wrote the distinguished agriculturalist Clare Sewell Read in 1849, 'The old Welsh punch is much degenerated by injudicious crosses with high-bred animals, which makes them too light and delicate'. 45

This was a fundamental flaw in breeding policy. Where farmers were interested merely in producing Thoroughbred crosses they pursued what amounted to an almost blind faith in sire lines, and as they failed to improve female lines by selective breeding for conformation, size and action, the quality of native draught stock was bound to suffer, to the considerable advantage of Clydesdale breeders from Scotland and the north of England whose stock found a ready market in South Wales. 46 Accordingly, '... it is impossible to expect to breed valuable

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41 Hassall (Carmarthenshire), op cit, p 18.
43 Hassall (Pembrokeshire), op cit, p 49.
46 RCLWM, Report, p 742. The relative success of Scots breeders of Clydesdales probably lay in the stimulus provided by the lucrative urban markets in the industrial zone of south-west Scotland. The Cleveland, also imported into Wales, was improved in response to the demand for both medium weight agricultural horses and hunters in the north-east of England.
horses from the undersized ill-shaped mares that are generally considered good to breed from, when they are unfit for any other purposes. Only by giving careful attention to improving the female side of the breeding equation and upgrading the environmental conditions under which young stock were kept might the equine profits of farmers be increased, an achievement which could be realized, maintained the Land Commission, 'at small cost'.

If the Land Commissioners reproached South Wales farmers for their inattention to the niceties of horsebreeding, they found little to complain of in Cardiganshire, home of the celebrated Welsh Cob. The foothills of the Mynydd Bach in mid-Cardiganshire had become the established base for the breed which had originally derived from a weight-carrying packhorse and subsequently developed into a versatile multi-purpose animal.

The reports in local newspapers of the numerous horse shows held in Cardiganshire and the adjoining counties in the later decades of the nineteenth century indicate, both in their length and detail, the widespread interest of the community in equine matters. The Newcastle Emlyn Entire Horse Show of April 1891 held, like other shows, at the beginning of the breeding season, attracted 'at least a thousand persons' and, 'at the conclusion of the show horses trotted up on the upper Cardigan road, attracting an immense number of spectators'. Even allowing for journalistic hyperbole, these shows were clearly events of considerable local importance both to those contemplating hiring the services of a stallion and to others who merely wished to pit their critical faculties against those of the judges. On this, and other occasions in the 1880s and 1890s, the small Thoroughbred class and the heavy horse classes were dominated by gentry-owned stallions, whereas the cob classes were almost entirely the preserve of substantial tenant breeders. If the obsession with using the cheapest available sire had coarsened the cob type in earlier years, the reporter in The Cardigan and Teifside Advertiser was pleased to note that in 1891 at least, ‘... blood combined with strength and finer forms was the order of the day’. There were, however, those who believed that repeated injections of Hackney and, more particularly, Thoroughbred blood, had resulted in excessive fineness of bone with the result that observers at the Newcastle Emlyn Show of 1900 were moved to compare the qualities of cobs in the 1870s with contemporaries and to conclude that '... it is regrettable that this valuable and most useful class of horses should degenerate'.

This problem was of major concern to the army remount officers attending horse shows in Cardiganshire and other cob-breeding areas of the Principality in the decade preceding the Great War. In his address to the guests at the dinner held at the close of the 1910 Teifside Horse Show, Major Ferrers of the Remount Department caused some unease when he criticized the breeders of cobs for allowing an excess of Hackney genes in their bloodlines. After all, he observed, a man riding a Hackney ‘would get hold of the best cure possible for a torpid liver’. Other speakers responded by suggesting that not only was the Army’s offer of a £7 premium to owners of cob sires suited to remount breeding derisory, but that the price paid by the War Office was far too low to encourage farmers to breed the heavier type of horse required. Besides, commented someone darkly, such was the inexorable trend towards the motor car that there was little future in horsebreeding, ‘... and only a few that were afraid of them would adhere to horse locomotion’. The following year the Remount Department

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47 Ibid., pp 744-5.
48 Idem, p 743.
was represented by one Colonel Bridges who pronounced that horses in the cob classes were ‘somewhat short of the type required’, and suggested that it might be helpful if the Army were to send into Cardiganshire ‘examples’ of ideal officers’ chargers, artillery horses, mounted infantry animals and the like for the benefit of breeders. As he descanted on the same theme in 1912, Bridges provided no indication as to whether the ‘examples’ had been despatched. Comparing the Welsh Cobs with the thick-set animals regularly imported from Ireland, he noted that for military purposes the former were still too light of bone to carry a heavily-equipped rider and to withstand what he described as ‘a good deal of rattling about’. In so doing he conceded the point that the fixed price paid by the Army for remounts was hardly an incentive to farmers to go to the time, effort and expense of producing the ideal military saddle horse.

Breeders of Welsh Cobs and ponies had long been aware that they were operating in an environment devoid of any centrally-organized effort either to maintain type and quality or to set guidelines for future development. If the creaming off of the best examples of the breed for Crimea service had led to some deterioration, infusions of high-stepping Hackney blood in the 1870s had supplemented the Thoroughbred (or even Arab) genes introduced at an earlier stage of breed development. If the overall improvement of the breed and the establishment of a Stud Book, the Society built upon the sterling efforts of the Cardiganshire Horse Show Association to ensure that the Welsh Cob would develop into the animal with those qualities of courage, strength and resolution for which it is justly celebrated today.

II

Since classical times the breeding of horses had been the subject of much vigorous debate regarding the relative contributions of heredity and environment to the performance and quality of a foal. The notion that purity of blood transcended any other consideration in the achievement of the equine ideal was forcefully argued in the sixteenth century by the influential and prolific Gervase Markham, whose views were widely accepted. Markham’s near contemporary, Nicholas Morgan, in supporting the former’s thesis, contributed further to the debate by venturing to suggest that there had been a general deterioration in equine quality since God had placed the perfect prototype in the Garden of Eden. Despite William Osmer’s total rejection of any consideration of ‘blood’ and pedigree in favour of the idea that the performance of horses was in essence a function of ‘the mechanisms of their parts’, few eighteenth-century contemporaries were prepared to accept that form was necessarily related to function. The mystical notion of ‘blood’ continued to hold centre stage, and two years after Osmer’s ‘Dissertation’ appeared, Richard Wall countered his arguments with the view that little of any value could be expected from the union of any but
With the notable exception of breeders of Thoroughbred racing animals, the generality of nineteenth-century British horse-breeders continued to pay scant regard to the selection of females, and since traditional lore held that the stallion had a stronger influence on the organization of the progeny than the mare, the latter was regarded as little more than a vessel to sustain the growth of the equine foetus. Understanding of the respective roles of the sexes in heredity was extremely limited. Even among the more distinguished agricultural writers prepared to concede some role to the female, there were those who held that the stallion contributed locomotive powers to the offspring, and the mare its digestive system, while the central nervous and brain systems derived from both parents in equal proportions. It came, then, as no surprise to most observers that the majority of brood mares were drawn from the ranks of the ancient, over-worked, and broken-winded, and used for breeding when ‘old age or injury rendered them worth little for it’. One mid-Victorian equine expert went so far as to aver that indifference to the selection of mares was responsible for the ‘deformed and the misshapen dwarfs which are now ruining the once-prized native breed of English horses’. The deep concern of the pundits at what they considered to be the ignorance of farmers/breeders was based upon the perception of a decline in the quality of British hunter/hackney horses and thus, more importantly, of animals suited to the requirements of the cavalry.

Securing sufficient cavalry remounts had been a continuing problem since the Napoleonic Wars and unlike several continental powers, British governments had taken little official action to maintain momentum in the production of part-bred cavalry horses, with the result that horse supply for the Crimean campaign had been

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f R Wall, Dissertation on the breeding of Horses upon Philosophical and Experimental Principles, 1758 passim. This subject is discussed at considerable length in N Russell, Like Engendering Like; Heredity and Animal Breeding in Early Modern England, Cambridge, 1986.
6 J Lawrence, The History and Delineation of the Horse, Albion, 1809, pp 235–3.
left entirely to the combined spirits of free enterprise and patriotism, with predictably disastrous consequences. Action, it was felt, had to be taken to remove at least some of the uncertainty from the remount market, and more assiduous attention to the production of quality animals would go a long way towards achieving this objective. But advocates of a more rational approach to breeding conveniently (or so it seems) neglected any consideration of the economics of the English and Welsh farms on which these horses were to be produced. Horsebreeding, after all, was a chancy business and even if a farmer succeeded in producing a potentially valuable hunter, he would have to maintain that animal on his farm for three or four years before it was marketable, during which time it would absorb a good deal of food, time and effort. Little wonder then, that in most of the livestock regions of Britain, cattle and sheep had first call on the skills and attention of the farmers with horsebreeding remaining something of a backwater of low priority. 

Depressed agricultural conditions in the 1820s and 1830s prompted many farmers to part with their best brood females, besides which a buoyant market for saddle mares, consequent on the growing fashion for gentlemen to ride mares as well as geldings, meant that the pool of young breeding stock began to shrink. This situation continued to give rise to concern throughout the century and was to be exacerbated in the depression of the 1880s and 1890s, when the need for economy forced many farmers to abandon the hunting field and to sell off their best mares to foreign buyers or even London cabmen. Henceforth the comfortable image of the sturdy British farmer riding to market on his hack or cob was a thing of the past as farmers came increasingly to travel for business on the railways. 

Cavalry remount officers or well-heeled hunting men were looking essentially for horses of sound constitution capable of carrying weight with endurance and speed. Such animals were normally produced from part-bred or pure cob type mares covered by a Thoroughbred stallion, care being taken to ensure that the dam carried sufficient bone to ensure that the offspring was not 'overfine'. Basically a simple procedure, hunter breeding was fraught with problems. To begin with, the farmer, were he in the weald of Kent or the uplands of Cardiganshire, required the services of a suitable Thoroughbred sire, usually obtained by arrangement with the owner of one of the numerous stallions travelling the counties in the breeding season. Because most of the better Thoroughbred males remained at stud to cover mares for the turf, their travelling brethren were rarely of the same quality, often lacking in bone and substance, and by no means guaranteed free of hereditary defects. This apart, few farmers bothered to check the recorded performance of the sire’s progeny in the Sporting Calendar or Stud Book, while they frequently ignored conformational defects so long as the services of these ‘flashy-looking pampered stallions’ could be obtained cheaply. The prevailing, and misconceived, view that a potentially valuable foal could be obtained from the union of a very ordinary mare and a run-of-the-mill Thoroughbred sire was roundly condemned as ‘... a national loss as well as a national disgrace to a country hitherto famed all over the world for its breed of horses’.

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65 See R J Moore-Colyer, ‘Horse Supply and the British Cavalry; a review, 1066-1900’.
70 Burke, op cit, p 510.
Something had to be done. The government, alarmed at the extraordinary efficiency of German cavalry mobilization in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–71, and concerned that the bulk of the horses used on the British army’s autumn manoeuvres of 1872 were imported from Europe, established a House of Lords Committee under the chairmanship of Lord Rosebery to review the overall situation. In attributing the scarcity of cavalry horses to a combination of exports overseas, home demand from an increasingly affluent population, and the relative profitability of cattle and sheep on British farms, the Committee was able to come up with few recommendations. For all the voluminous evidence at its disposal, including positive ideas for establishing government studs along French lines, the Report of Rosebery’s committee did little more than to suggest that the government might intervene by helping to subsidize stud fees, and to commend the local agricultural societies and farmers’ clubs for their efforts towards equine improvement. Cardiganshire horsemen were singled out for particular praise, which probably came as something of a surprise in view of the traditional association of that county with agrarian inertia. Nevertheless the Committee lauded ‘... the simple and successful regulations of the Cardiganshire Agricultural Association which, with some modifications, might serve as a useful model for other societies’.71

With admirable, if occasionally misguided zeal, the various county agricultural societies in Wales had been actively promoting the breeding of horses since the closing decade of the eighteenth century. Meeting in the Golden Lion Hotel in Brecon where ‘very good stalls for upwards of 50 horses’ were available, the Brecknockshire Agricultural Society agreed in 1789 to offer a premium to the breeder of the best stallion of between four and six years old capable of carrying sixteen stones weight. The premium was to be awarded on the strict understanding that the stallion remained in the county for twelve months to cover mares at 1 guinea per head, although it was not made clear by the Society whether it was the intention to sponsor sires suited to producing saddle, pack, or draught animals.72 As time went by, premiums came to be offered for more specific purposes. In 1791, for example, that select group of gentlemen meeting in the Bedford and Gray’s Inn coffee-houses and calling themselves ‘The Radnorshire Society’, advertised a premium of 20 guineas to the man producing the best cart stallion in the Presteigne, Knighton and Radnor districts, preference in this case being given to the Suffolk Punch breed.73 The latter was also actively promoted by other societies in the southern and eastern counties of Wales. The Brecknockshire Society, besides awarding a premium for Suffolk Punch stallions in 1810, concurrently offered a price of 10 guineas to any suitably qualified man prepared to live in Brecon for a year and to instruct the locals in the art of horse breaking.74 By the early 1800s interest in improving draught horses was extended to other equine classes. Premia and silver cups were on offer to owners of brood mares (particularly non-Thoroughbred dams in foal to Thoroughbreds), and breeders of nags, ponies and, with heavy emphasis, Thoroughbred stallions. In sponsoring breeders, both agricultural societies and private individuals were keen to promote local initiative so that when Walter Maybery and Major Gwyn Holford offered silver cups to owners of quality brood mares in 1840 it was specified that these be residents of Brecknockshire.75

72 NLW, 22416 C.
73 Edmunds, 1956, op cit, p 104.
74 NLW, Penpont Supp 1409.
That the hunter/hackney class was pre-eminent among the numerous horse classes at the agricultural shows held by the local societies reflected the role of the Thoroughbred stallion as the sire of weight-carrying offspring. Accordingly the gentry were encouraged to purchase blood horses and to foster their widespread use, while societies in Cardiganshire and Glamorgan were actively sponsoring Thoroughbred stallions in the 1830s and 1840s. The promotion of Thoroughbred blood and the breeding of hunter-type horses suggest that serious horsebreeding in Wales before the mid-nineteenth century was essentially the preserve of the gentry and more substantial farmers, a fact clearly underlined by the published lists of winners of premia and silver cups offered by the county agricultural societies. The average working farmer with his cobs and ponies could scarcely afford to bother with the pursuit of premia even if he had the time to do so. In so far as he was at all impressed by the activities of the county societies, he was much more likely to take an interest in the financial incentives which they offered towards the improvement of sheep, cattle and turnips, farm products of more immediate relevance to earning his daily bread and securing his future well-being.

With the increasing democratization of the county societies and the growth of local farmers’ clubs from the 1850s onwards, farmers themselves became more closely involved with horse improvement, and of the various premia on offer, a growing proportion were directed specifically towards tenants’ horses. Typically, when the Pembrokeshire Farmers’ Club met at Haverfordwest in September 1885 it agreed that among the annual prizes to be distributed would be one for the best four-year-old colt or filly hurdler, the bona fide property of a tenant farmer. Whereas farmers’ clubs, masters of foxhounds and the remnants of the earlier county societies continued their attempts to encourage hunter breeding, the farmers’ clubs in particular became increasingly concerned with the promotion of draught horses.

This they hoped to achieve by introducing the Shire Horse (for which a Stud Book was opened in 1878), in much the same way as the promoters of the Suffolk Punch generations earlier. It had long been the practice for landlords to hire draught sires for the use of their tenants at nominal stud fees, but from the 1870s onwards this practice began to wane as groups of tenants came to organize their own affairs. Sir Arthur Stepney and Lord Cawdor may well have won prizes from the Royal Agricultural Society for their importation of Clydesdale stallions to Glamorgan and Carmarthenshire, but it was the combined efforts of the more substantial tenant farmers that were to have the most significant impact on draught horse quality in the long term. By the 1880s farmers’ groups in Anglesey and Pembrokeshire were hiring prize-winning Shire stallions for service in their respective counties, while the Carmarthenshire Shire Horse Society purchased the distinguished stallion ‘Rosano’ for 500 guineas in 1893. ‘Rosano’ plodded his way down the highways and byways of Carmarthenshire, covering members’ mares at nominal fees and those of non-members at relatively modest cost. In like manner the Welshpool Entire Horse Association ensured that members had access to the finest possible blood when they hired ‘Vulcan’, winner of the London Shire Horse Show of 1889 and 1891. Costing the Association 1000 guineas for the 1894 season, ‘Vulcan’ covered 100 mares at 10 guineas each, as did ‘Bury Victor Chief’ another London champion winner which they hired for 800 guineas the following year. The clear success of this

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76 NLW, 15507 D; NLW, Lucas, 1239.
78 NLW, Picton Castle 4505.
enterprise was reflected in the high prices which members were able to obtain for colts and fillies bred by these champion sires from home-produced mares.\(^{79}\)

In like manner the landowners and larger farmers of Cardiganshire sought to improve the quality of draught horses in the county. Recognizing, as did their colleagues elsewhere, that overall draught efficiency would be enhanced if two heavier animals could replace three lighter beasts between the shafts, they looked beyond the county for appropriate sires.\(^{80}\) With this objective, and that of reducing the incidence of inbreeding, the Cardiganshire Horse Show Association, established in 1872, brought in numerous Clydesdale stallions which travelled the county and dominated the heavy classes in local shows for the remainder of the century.\(^{81}\) After merging with the Cardiganshire Agricultural Society in 1877, the Show Association began to offer annual premiums of £50 to owners of travelling stallions suited to covering local mares for producing potential draught offspring. Besides being inadequate to attract the best stallions, the success of this premium scheme foundered on the unwillingness of smaller farmers (for whose benefit it was intended) to pay the stud fees demanded, although these were set at very modest levels.\(^{82}\) Once again those 'dormant and unappreciative' farmers, to quote one local newspaper, failed to respond, preferring instead to persist with the native breeds whose services could be obtained for almost negligible fees.\(^{83}\)

Whatever the successes or otherwise attained by draught horse breeders in Wales and beyond, the improvement of the hunter/cavalry mount remained the principal focus of attention in the closing years of the nineteenth century. Vague exhortations to 'patriotism' in the columns of the *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society* and elsewhere had not, it seems, stimulated any real improvement in the overall quality of the six thousand or so Thoroughbred sires travelling the country each breeding season. However, the stallion premium schemes established in 1885 by the Hunters' Improvement Society and the Royal Agricultural Society were soon to be supplemented by inputs from the government-sponsored Royal Commission on Horsebreeding. The Commission, whose membership included the Duke of Portland, Master of the Horse, and the Earl of Coventry, Master of the Buckhounds, was mandated first and foremost to devise means of upgrading the quality of saddle horses sired by Thoroughbred stallions on part-bred or light draught mares. With the aid of a very modest Parliamentary grant, together with cash derived from the Queen's Plate (originally applied to promoting prizes at race meetings) the Commission established its own stallion premium scheme. By comparison with the annual sums of £308,000 and £237,000 committed by the French and Hungarian governments to horsebreeding enterprises, the funds available to the Commission were paltry in the extreme, being limited to £5000 per year. Nevertheless the Commission was initially able to award yearly premiums of £200 for 30 stallions though this was reduced to £150 with the withdrawal of a supplementary grant from the Royal Agricultural Society in 1892. The objective of the premium scheme was to enable owners of premium Thoroughbred stallions to offer the services of their animals to farmer/breeders at subsidized stud fees, thereby to disperse the genes of outstanding sires more widely than hitherto. In this way, pointed out Lord Ribbesdale, one of the Commission's chairmen, the efforts of private enterprise in hunter improvement would be effectively complemented.\(^{84}\)

\(^{80}\) J Gibson, *The Agriculture of Wales*, Aberystwyth, 1879, p 123.
\(^{81}\) Cardigan and Teifi-side Advertiser, 1 May, 1891.
\(^{82}\) Cambrian News, 6 May, 1881.
\(^{83}\) Cardigan and Teifi-side Advertiser, 4 May, 1900.
\(^{84}\) Ribbesdale, *op cit*, p 289.
Stallion owners were invited to enter animals at the Commission's annual shows, held at the Royal Agricultural Hall in London variously in conjunction with the Royal Agricultural Society, the Hunters' Improvement Society and the Hackney Horse Society. Entrants, usually more than one hundred each year, including prize-winners from Lord Tredegar (1893 and 1899) and J C Harford of Falcondale (1893), were subject to rigorous examination as to pedigree, conformation and soundness. Anxious to root out the various hereditary conditions linked to unsoundness, the Commission's veterinary inspectors were pleased to note in 1899 that although a significant number of stallions were still being rejected on veterinary grounds, the situation had improved since their first report ten years before. Moreover they had been agreeably impressed by the enthusiasm of breeders for the veterinary inspection procedures. Successful premium stallions were eventually dispersed to cover mares in various parts of the country under the strict supervision of the Commission's district committees. South Wales was supplied with four premium stallions each year, including Lord Tredegar's 'Molynno' and Lewis Shirley's 'Alvin', while a further three stallions travelled the northern counties.

In general the commissioners were heartened by the performance of the progeny of premium stallions when exhibited alongside the offspring of comparable sires at the various local agricultural shows. Yet, like many owners of mares who urged an increase in the number of premium travelling stallions, they were only too aware that the limited funds at their disposal precluded them from having any major impact, and they could but hope that stallion breeders would be spurred on by their example. Similarly, the commissioners had hoped to be able to persuade Masters of Foxhounds and Hunt Secretaries to offer prizes to owners of brood mares in foal to premium stallions, so stimulating improvement in female lines. A circular letter outlining this proposal yielded all manner of expressions of goodwill, but little in the way of action as successive Masters and Secretaries complained that their coffers were empty.

The continuing work of the Royal Commission on Horsebreeding, complemented by the efforts of breed societies to limit the spread of transmissible equine diseases, eventually prompted the government—with some reluctance—to enter the horsebreeding arena. Under the terms of the Commons Act (1908), graziers on common land were given the right to form local associations to exclude all non-premium stallions of any breed from the commons, so as to remove '... the sires and dams of scallywags of every variety'. Shortly afterwards the Board of Agriculture began to award premiums for non-Thoroughbred stallions in an attempt to promote the improvement of native ponies and cobs. This measure was enthusiastically welcomed by the Welsh Pony and Cob Society and other bodies concerned with native breeds, which eventually came to administer the government premium scheme themselves. The pioneering work of the Royal Commission had highlighted the importance of careful veterinary inspection of travelling stallions, whatever their breed, and the Horse Breeding Act of 1918 and subsequent regulations stipulated that no stallion could move from its home base to stand for public service unless it were licensed free of contagious diseases and conformational defects by the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Welshmen had featured prominently among those breeders calling for an expansion in the Thoroughbred-promoting activities of the Royal Commission on Horsebreeding. Of greater significance,
however, was their keenness to support local stallion-hiring associations, especially when these associations became eligible for grant aid in 1913 when the government set in motion its scheme for subsidizing the improvement of the nation’s stock of draught horses. Even if arable production had declined since the 1870s and the primary emphasis had shifted to pastoral farming, demand for horse labour was maintained and even increased. The high peak of the pastoral farmer’s year, the hay harvest, necessitated keeping a certain minimum number of horses to operate the mowers, turners, tedders, hay-grabs, and other mechanical contrivances which had largely displaced land labour. Similarly, on those farms where arable crops continued to be grown, a core working group of horses would be required. Technical developments leading to the availability of shallow-draught ploughs and more effective cultivation equipment had reduced the number of operations required to produce a seed-bed, yet any means whereby the power-generating capacity of the horse was increased would be to the farmer’s advantage. If horses were more powerful, fewer of them would be required for the primary cultivation of arable land and the heavier tasks on pastoral farms, thereby releasing grassland for the use of profitable ruminant livestock.

Ironically, the steady improvement in the quality of both saddle and draught horses in the later nineteenth century and the early decades of the present century was paralleled by advances in other forms of traction and transportation. Although the urban horse population had expanded dramatically, so that by the late 1890s it exceeded the equine population on farms, the development of the internal combustion engine left little doubt in the minds of enthusiasts that the horse had had its day. Against the attempts of equestrian diehards to forestall it, the rate of change from horse to motorized transport in the towns was extremely dramatic and much applauded by those concerned with the growing congestion of urban centres. The streets of London in 1903 were host to 3625 horse-drawn omnibuses and 13 motor buses; but within ten years the situation was entirely reversed and the capital supported 3522 motor buses and a mere 142 horse buses. The cut-back in urban horses inevitably affected the agricultural sector, especially in horsebreeding areas of the country. Besides reducing demand for saddle and light draught animals bred in Wales and elsewhere, the contraction of the urban horse market probably influenced local agricultural prosperity in the sense that urban demand for hay, straw, and cereal grains would have tended to decline. Yet, on the farms themselves horses remained of major significance, exemplified by the fact that the government had to release 60,000 Army horses to assist in gathering the 1918 harvest.

Aside from their unwillingness to invest capital at a time of agricultural depression, farmers were suspicious of the reliability of the early mass-produced tractors which required a good deal of maintenance and carried heavy annual depreciation costs. Forever cautious, they were sceptical of sinking money into a machine whose daily running costs were double those of a pair of horses, and if tractor numbers in the country as a whole had reached 16,000 by 1930, there still remained almost 650,000 working horses. In Wales and the western parts of Britain the horse retained its dominant role as a farm power unit until World War II and even then many farmers

93 Idem, p 60.
adopting the tractor hedged their bets by retaining a nucleus of working horses. In so doing they ensured the preservation of the numerous and often arcane traditional skills which would serve them well in the equestrian renaissance of the later twentieth century.

APPENDIX I
Horse Numbers in Wales, 1870–1955

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Used solely for purposes of agriculture</th>
<th>Unbroken horses of any age and mares for breeding</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>77278</td>
<td>48702</td>
<td>125980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>75725</td>
<td>59445</td>
<td>135170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>78602</td>
<td>67169</td>
<td>145771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>77847</td>
<td>73642</td>
<td>131489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>81119</td>
<td>74216</td>
<td>155335</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Year | Horses for breeding | Stallions Unbroken | Unbroken | Others | Total |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>99569</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21881</td>
<td>45654</td>
<td>167104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>98747</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23176</td>
<td>44710</td>
<td>166457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>103453</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25187</td>
<td>47592</td>
<td>176232</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>105315</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>22882</td>
<td>45399</td>
<td>170196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>79520</td>
<td>1413</td>
<td>20333</td>
<td>36074</td>
<td>24719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>89474</td>
<td>1218</td>
<td>20574</td>
<td>38498</td>
<td>25925</td>
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<td>1925</td>
<td>86285</td>
<td>1147</td>
<td>10459</td>
<td>24441</td>
<td>25082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>78534</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>8954</td>
<td>16484</td>
<td>20163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>73174</td>
<td>1134</td>
<td>10912</td>
<td>15846</td>
<td>16522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>72033</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>10570</td>
<td>20059</td>
<td>17396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>61644</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>7054</td>
<td>13619</td>
<td>17643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>41036</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>2314</td>
<td>6719</td>
<td>10752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>17298</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>14328</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The figures relate to the position in June of each year.

APPENDIX II

The figures below, derived from the Census Returns, provide statistical details of four categories of tradesmen associated with the horse industry. Since many blacksmiths and coachbuilders returned in the census worked in the extractive industries of South Wales, figures for five 'rural' counties are included for comparison.

Wales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Blacksmiths</th>
<th>Coachmakers</th>
<th>Farriers/ Veterinary Surgeons</th>
<th>Saddlers/ Harness Makers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>5547</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>6145</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>7789</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>7801</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>7826</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>8571</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>929</td>
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<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>9012</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>9070</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>3473</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 No returns for Glamorgan.

Counties of Cardigan, Caernarfon, Merioneth, Montgomery and Radnor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Blacksmiths</th>
<th>Coachmakers</th>
<th>Farriers/ Veterinary Surgeons</th>
<th>Saddlers/ Harness Makers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>1346</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>2026</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>256</td>
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<td>1881</td>
<td>1892</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>264</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1718</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>1479</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1339</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>141</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Twentieth-Century Farm Servants:
The Horselads of the East Riding of Yorkshire

By STEPHEN CAUNCE

Abstract
By the 1920s, the East Riding of Yorkshire was the last arable county in England where the hiring of single youths on yearly contracts as living-in farm servants was unquestioned and universal. Mostly by oral history it has been possible to analyse this traditional way of life in depth, and particularly to get the servants' own views on it. As a very practical way of running a horse-powered farm, it offered distinct economic advantages to both farmer and servant as long as labour was relatively short. It also preserved many pre-industrial attitudes to work and management, and was integrated into the wider life of the community. This study of adaptation to change shows that mechanization did not require a break with the past, and that the degraded position of nineteenth-century servants in the south is no guide to the way the system had run before the labour market collapsed there.

Until the nineteenth century, the wage-earning farm labour force of much of England contained large numbers of farm servants as well as day labourers. In recent years both agricultural and demographic historians have become increasingly aware that this division was not just a matter of different ways of hiring workers. If we exclude the far northern counties, English farm servants were overwhelmingly unmarried, young, and resident in their employers' houses. The hiring of servants radically reshaped the households of those involved in the system and was a determining factor in creating the typical pre-industrial pattern of delayed marriage. It provided a purpose-built bridge from childhood to adulthood, exactly tailored for a society built around families rather than individuals. It gave farmers a wholly reliable core around which to shape their labour force according to the needs of the seasons, at a time when many adults did not wish to be committed to full-time work.

Little detailed work has been done on investigating this group,¹ and surviving seventeenth- and eighteenth-century documents do not make it easy to discover very much about their lives.

This is especially true of the arable counties of England, where few servants were hired after the middle of the last century. In the south-east, indeed, they are found only in localized pockets after the Napoleonic Wars. It is rarely realized that in the East Riding of Yorkshire and the neighbouring parts of surrounding counties, the system continued to flourish well into this century. Many people still alive today began work as farm servants, with a few being hired as late as the 1950s.² Servants continued to be generally hired throughout the north in fact, but the East Riding was the only arable county to continue hiring single farm servants as a universal and essential element of its labour force,³ and its entire rural society was distinguished by it. With one foot firmly in the high-wage north, and the other just as firmly in the


² Megginson, Mud on my Doorstep, Beverley, 1987, pp 59–60.
³ The system was not, of course, confined within exact county boundaries, but its coverage extended into neighbouring counties rather than including them. Its universality quickly diminished outside the county.
arable east, as Map 1 shows, a unique overlap existed here. As late as the 1920s, up to half the workers on farms were servants. Most working-class boys had no other expectation than that of spending their adolescent years in farmhouses. The personal testimony of these survivors, supplemented and confirmed by newspaper reports and more conventional sources, allows a remarkably whole and human picture of the system to be put together.

Because there was this remarkable continuity between the distant and recent past in the county, many of the most distinctive features of early modern servantry could still be seen in action in this century. More importantly, their underlying rationale can be recovered and we can see why some puzzling and even, on the surface, obnoxious aspects of the system evolved into the form they did. It could be argued that the very fact of survival marked the area out as distinctive, but it can be proved that the East Riding felt all the forces that led to wholesale abandonment elsewhere. It was the county’s position on the fringe of the industrial north, and its own potential for taking advantage of the opportunities this offered to farming, that kept the system alive and dynamic. There was a continuing need for servants due to the high demand for labour within the county. In contrast, many servants further south, and they are known to have existed in some localities well into the nineteenth century, can be shown to have survived as mere victims of the exploitation of certain features of their contracts. This manifestly distorted the way the system worked, leaving men like Joseph Arch deeply hostile because of the near slavery that it could produce. The East Riding system, in contrast, depended on the mutual willingness of farmers and servants to be bound by the traditional constraints of yearly hiring, right to the end. Both sides had rights and duties, where further south the system survived mainly as a prison for those workers who could not escape, because of a labour surplus that left them powerless.

The system largely collapsed in the 1930s, and the reasons for its sudden decline from automatic acceptance to a fragmented and increasingly incoherent relic of a past era are worthy of study. They cast light on the general abandonment a century before, for both took place in the atmosphere of a post-war depression and a rising tide of rural unemployment. They also allow us to study an essentially pre-industrial system in direct conflict with twentieth-century consumerism and individuality. The use of oral history to examine a vanished rural way of life inevitably suggests an involvement with folklore which may cause some historians to doubt the value of the conclusions. However, if we look behind the label and see it as an exercise in unravelling a sub-culture where social and economic spheres have no clear boundaries, we can come to see more clearly the role of customary methods of organization in maintaining a practical way of life, avoiding the trap of looking only at those customs which stand out precisely because they have outlived their original purpose and now survive only

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4 Girls were also hired to live in, but with significant differences. There is no room to discuss their experiences here.
5 The oral evidence consists of twenty-nine tapes, together with a small number of records of untaped interviews, collected from twenty-six people who took part in the farm servant system in their youth. They were recorded between 1973 and 1975 for my PhD thesis, ‘Farming with Horses in the East Riding of Yorkshire: Some Aspects of Recent Agricultural History’, (unpublished, Leeds University, 1986). A slightly shortened version was published, as Amongst Farm Horses: The Horselads of East Yorkshire, Stroud, 1991, and details on the contributors will be found there. Considerations of length preclude any extensive use of direct quotation in this article, but the whole direction of my conclusions was determined by the oral evidence. Specific points are supported by reference to the tape number and side in the author’s collection. The tapes will soon be lodged with the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language at Sheffield University.

7 See, for instance, Arch’s statements in Evidence to the Rich Commission, PP 1882, XIV pp 127–8, q 60, 227 and p 140, q 60, 564.
Mostly small farms, few horsemen. Many employees live in on six months contracts.

Most workers are hinds who work horses if required. Few live in, but married men are hired on yearly contracts, and single men on six monthly ones.

Horses are looked after by farm servants under the East Riding system.

Some animal minders live in, but they are paid weekly.

Virtually no living in, excepting a few on the northern fringe, mainly in Nottinghamshire, where a few are paid yearly.

High wage counties
Arable counties

(3.0) Percentage of farmworkers living in and paid yearly
(1.5) Percentage of farmworkers living in and paid weekly
(n) Negligible numbers, but higher than zero, for either category
as rituals. There was never any question in the descriptions of this system but that it was there to do a job: to get the farm horses fed, cared for, and worked at a profit for the farmers.

Male East Riding servants were all hired on yearly contracts to live in, receiving board and lodging as a substantial part of their wages. Apart from a few bachelors and widowers, they were therefore boys and young, single men. They entered service on leaving school, usually aged thirteen, and at this point their keep formed virtually the whole of their wage. They gave it up on marriage in their middle or late twenties and then usually took jobs as farm labourers, on terms little different to any contemporary manual worker's, or else left farming altogether. The only alternative within farming was to become one of the married shepherds, beastmen, or foremen, who were in charge of the sheep, cattle, and horses respectively. Shepherds and beastmen would have worked with sheep and cattle before marriage and they might now have sole charge of the animals in their care, for they were specialists. The foreman, on the other hand, was responsible for everything else on the farm and so, despite being head horseman, he was only able to exercise a supervisory responsibility over the horses in normal times. The bulk of the servants were employed to work under him, caring for four horses each, or six with another servant to help them. To use them in this way, mostly as horselads (as they were known), but also as single shepherds and beastmen, as their assistants, and in a few cases as single farm foremen, was logical because their contracts made them available for the regular long hours that caring for animals required, and for any emergencies that might arise.

With over 26,000 agricultural horses and brood mares in the county before 1914, large numbers of horselads were required, especially compared to the more pastoral counties of the rest of the north. There most servants were hired in ones and twos onto family farms, but the East Riding was a county dominated by large farms. In 1919, 37 per cent were over 300 acres, 11 per cent more than the national average and one of the highest figures for arable counties. Wolds farms, on the range of chalk hills that cuts the county in two, were the largest and commonly contained between 500 and 1000 acres. Here the lads formed substantial groups, sometimes numbering over a dozen.

The labourers, in contrast, hadn't much to do with the horses . . . They got their orders every morning: "Well, they want some help in the sheepfold," or, "You help the beastman," or otherwise they'd send them to hedge," recalled Mr Johnson. They were set to work at anything which was presssing, including fieldwork that did not require horses. Most farms hired enough horselads to manage all the horsework even at peak times like ploughing, so there was no need for labourers to take horses unless a lad was ill or they themselves needed one, to cart away hedging refuse for instance. There was however no question of them being less skilled than the horselads, for they would all have been horselads themselves. In 1919 an official investigator, concerned that the title might mislead his readers, explained

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8 E Gutch, Examples of Printed Folk-lore Concerning the East Riding of Yorkshire, 1911, County Folklore Series, vol 6, contains a comment in the preface on the sparsity of obvious folk material in the county.
9 For the youngest boys, most of their pay was in kind, with only a few pounds in cash. For the eldest, they themselves regarded it as an equal division, taking one year with another.
10 Despite an official school leaving age of fourteen, anyone who passed an examination could leave a year earlier, and a variant of the half-time system could allow a further three months' reduction in the age. Tape 5/2 and see E and R Frow, A Survey of the Half-Time System in Education, Manchester, 1970.
11 tape 5/1.
that, 'in the East Riding the ordinary labourer is a highly-skilled man, who can do any work on a farm... He comes really in the class of "First Class Agricultural Labourer"... [and] is considered to compare favourably with any farmworker.'

Harvest was virtually the only time the two groups merged together, so distinctive were their separate functions. Each farmer could therefore fine tune his labour force to his own particular requirements by a careful consideration of costs, experience, ability, strength, and convenience. Boys could be hired very cheaply, but they lacked strength and skill. A top horselad's wage, generally reckoned to be paid half in cash and half in board and lodging, was comparable to a labourer's, and while an older labourer might not have a youngster's speed and strength, his experience and skill could counterbalance this. It was common for servants of all types to equal the number of labourers.

The 1911 Census figures clearly reflect this idiosyncratic system, even though they are distorted by an assumption that labourers were a residual group beneath a skilled élite of horsemen, shepherds, and cowmen. 3954 horsemen were returned, but younger horselads with mixed duties were certainly included among the 6499 not distinguished, as were the substantial number of casual labourers who preferred to work regularly for no-one. Figure 1 compares the age structures of both groups for counties selected to represent different farming regions and social systems, and in all cases any statistical tendency to distortion would mask differences between counties, not exaggerate them. Taking the age of twenty-five as the nearest approximation to the age of marriage that the figures will allow, the East Riding had by far the fewest single labourers and the county's horsemen are clearly shown to be the youngest. The contrast is greatest with Suffolk, the county with the most similar agriculture. An East Riding horseman was most likely to be seventeen in 1911 and only 15 per cent were over twenty-five, but in Suffolk he would be between twenty-five and thirty-four, and only 19 per cent were below twenty-five years old.

The effects can also be seen in Map 2, based on a 1907 Board of Trade enquiry into farm wages, which found that a greater East Riding, which here included the other two Yorkshire ridings, Derbyshire, and parts of northern Lincolnshire, was the only area of England paying horsemen less than labourers. Horsemen usually received a premium rate of pay because good horses were the backbone of the arable farm. They needed long hours of skilled attention quite apart from the hours put in in the fields. Here, however, boys sometimes went straight from school into caring for horses. Then, after building up experience for twelve years or more, they ceased to have anything to do with them. The key to this puzzling approach was the foreman. He provided the skills and long experience needed to care for sick horses, he foaled the mares, and then broke in the foals, and he kept a constant, if unobtrusive eye on the stables. The large farms all had foremen in this century, usually as a married hind living on the farm in a house provided for him. It might even be the old farmhouse where the farmer had moved into something better. The farms without foremen were usually the family farms, which existed in the county but which were also those without much hired labour. From a farmworker's point of view, Mr Baines said, 'They were pretty well-to-do, t'bosses, and you hardly

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17 See Fig 1 for source.
19 The figures in the relevant tables are gathered in five and ten year groups and in 1921, for instance, under 20 per cent of males were married before reaching twenty-five, but over 50 per cent were married by thirty, Census of England and Wales, Yorkshire, 1921, 1922, p 177.
Each bar represents 100% of those employed in each county, the divisions show the percentages in each age group, as indicated above the bars. A missing age group indicates that numbers were insignificant. The bars are aligned along the 25 year old mark to contrast the major division above and below that age.


FIGURE 1
The age distribution of horsemen and labourers on farms in selected counties of England, 1907
MAP 2
Pay differentials between horsemen and labourers on farms in England, 1907

KEY

- Horsemens receive 2s or more per week above labourers' earnings
- Horsemens receive 1s to 1s 11d per week above labourers' earnings
- Horsemens receive 1d to 11d per week above labourers' earnings
- Horsemens receive less than labourers

* no figures available

NB The northern counties' figures cannot be analysed in this manner.
Labourers' earnings include all forms of payment and are adjusted so that they are based on a standard week.

Source: Earnings and Hours, pp 6-13.
saw your bosses: very rare. Your foreman was your main man.19

The foreman often had to be a ‘good managing man’,20 as Mr Johnson confirmed:

One place I was at, the farmer lived . . . at Speeton which was about [twelve miles] off and he only really came once a month. Well, I’d use my own judgement, and then as regards cropping . . . we’d maybe have a bit of a talk . . . But the next place I was at . . . he used to tell me, like, and that was all there was about it . . . Then it was left to the foreman to do, see, like working and that.21

They had no control over the shepherds or the beastmen and they were expected to join in the work themselves when they were needed, so they were not farm managers. Their duties, however, including the control of the labourers, made them far more than head horsemen. If they were hinds, they boarded all the servants, including those who worked among the stock. They were paid by the farmer for doing so and acted as his proxy. The farm servants’ contracts ran from one Old Martinmas Day (23 November) to the next. They were unwritten and based on local custom, and no amount of notice could break them on either side. At the end of the year, unless a new contract had been agreed, both sides were automatically free to negotiate with anyone they liked. This usually happened at the hiring fairs which were held in all market towns, and in some smaller centres as well, as shown in Map 3. Bargains were sealed by the payment of a fastening penny or fest and once it had changed hands, ‘if you left during the year, well it was up to your employer whether he paid you any money or he didn’t. And he couldn’t get out of it because it was a contract’,22 said Mr Johnson. The entire contract had to be completed before any cash was due to be paid. Farmers often advanced small subs during the year, but there was no obligation to do so. If either side broke the contract, magistrates or judges had special powers to enforce it, or else set it aside, either in a police court or a county court. They could also award small damages to the injured party. These special hearings were swift, cheap, relatively informal, and could only be brought during the term of the broken contract. The servant could claim back wages earned up to a dispute if a farmer broke the contract, but a farmer could never recover his outlay on board and lodging.

Servants effectively sold their labour for a year at a time, in advance, and they were then at their employer’s disposal, within bounds set by reason and customary practice. They received no overtime, harvest money, or customary tips, but they were never put on piecework either, and their pay could not be varied because work was short, or even if they had an accident or became ill. Before 1914 their duties involved rising at four o’clock in the morning and either caring for or working the horse until about eight or nine in the evening, with little time off except that actually spent eating or dressing. The very term farm servant, or the common nickname of farmer’s joskin (a knee-band for tying trousers up), denotes a relationship much tighter than that between a labourer and an employer. They could be asked to work at any time of the day or night when circumstances demanded it. The only exception was Sunday, which was sacrosanct apart from the necessary care of the horses.

Servants generally worried more about the difficulty of leaving a job they did not like than any possibility of being sacked. Mr Fisher remembered that ‘you had to do summat daft, or summat like that. As long as you did somewhere near a day’s work . . . you couldn’t get away’.23 If they decided they had to leave they usually ran away, an evocative phrase in itself. If it happened within a week or so, most farmers tolerated

19 Tape 4/2. See also H L Day, Horses on the Farm, Beverley, 1981, pp 12–13
20 Yorkshire Herald, (York), 12 Nov 1910, supplement.
21 Tape 5/2.
22 Tape 6/2.
it as they lost little and most felt, like Mr Baines, that 'if you weren't suited and if the place didn't suit you neither, what the devil's good stopping? You'd be no use to nobody'. Where the courts were certain to be invoked was where a lad, usually a senior one, left late in the year over some real or imagined grievance. Coultas Vasey, for instance, seriously inconvenienced his employer by leaving just as harvest started and he had to go to court to seek the £13 6s 8d he was owed from his wage of £20.  

With no written contracts and with cases that rested largely on unprovable assertions, cases were decided according to local custom, verified by witnesses. Landlords and farmers usually presided in court, so their sympathy would normally be with the employer, and Coultas Vasey in fact lost his wages despite producing witnesses that he had left because of unreasonable behaviour by the farmer. There were many decisions in favour of servants, however, and the courts gave statutory backing to customary rights which enabled servants to strike better bargains than they could have otherwise. This even benefited the labourers as a climate of opinion was created that ensured them

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MAP 3
The East Riding and its vicinity, c1914

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24 Tape 4/1.
25 Malton Messenger, 10 Nov 1906, p 3. This report contains a complete exposition of the contemporary legal view of the contract.
regular upstanding wages every week of the year, unlike in the south where bad weather often meant no work and no money. There, such servants' contracts as persisted were often little better than slavery, and the courts were used to quell opposition, using clearly defined written agreements. These were drawn up by the farmers and removed all the servants' rights. In the East Riding, both sides had rights as well as duties, in practice as well as theory.

III
It is now time to consider how the system worked in practice: how all these bones were clothed with flesh. The results were often surprising, even paradoxical, and provide a view of it that could never have been deduced from the documents available to us without the oral testimony. The yearly bond, for instance, did not really belong in courts for all its legalistic nature. None of the people I spoke to had ever been taken to court, though a couple were threatened and one left the Riding to avoid a summons he believed would be issued. It really rested on mutual trust and its terms were historically open to informal change by general consent within this framework. This prevented it becoming an anachronism in districts where it was still a vital institution, and it also accounts for many of the divergences that arose between its various forms recorded in different counties, especially in the far north. There was a general sense of security that both helps explain and is perfectly illustrated by the mobility that farm servants were famous for. Mr Pridmore never stopped even two years on one farm on principle, and very few lads would stay more than three, however good the job. For the ambitious, moves brought greater experience, but they also expressed a youthful freedom servants knew would end on marriage. Mr Pridmore always intended to work on the railways when he was old enough, so his mobility had nothing to do with ambition. The majority of moves were made within a home territory, such as the northern Wolds, for instance. This was often co-extensive with the catchment area of the hiring fairs they used, though this is more a reflection of the fact that any market town serves a natural region than a causal factor in itself.

It was rare to cross from the Wolds to the lowlands, or vice versa, because the vastly different soils led to differing farming practices. Simple homesickness was a common cause of running away, and it was far more likely if a lad crossed these natural boundaries. Mr Easterby remembered one committed roamer from Beverley who went to Fimber on the high Wolds. The lads rose in the dark on the first day, it being December, and they were in the fields as dawn came. As they ploughed, he kept hoping for Beverley Minster's twin towers to appear from the gloom as a link with home, but they did not. At midday he hardly ate, and by bedtime he felt so ill he walked the fifteen miles home.

No stigma was attached to frequent job changes for it suited the farmers as well as the lads. As boys grew up they expected higher wages, so it was better for both sides if they moved on. This provided a strong disincentive for any farmer who might have wished to vary the way he ran his farm. Lads needed to be able to begin work on any farm with a minimum of acclimatization or they would be endlessly retraining. There is no evidence that the farmers' freedom to experiment with new crops or techniques was in any way inhibited, but it did cause a remarkable homogeneity of organization of the labour force on every farm. It was,

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27 Tape 5/3.
28 Mr Easterby, untaped interview record, p. 1.
moreover, a highly distinctive organization for the nature of the contract was such that servants could not be managed as the labourers, or most industrial workers, were.

Farmers had no power to dismiss except in extreme cases and no power to reduce or enhance wages, so by modern standards they were left in a peculiar position as employers. In addition, there was every likelihood that work would be disrupted by personal quarrels among these groups of adolescents, who had to spend most of a

![A horselad at Manor Farm, Thixendale. The distinctive dress of the horselads before 1914 is clearly visible, though it was not a uniform. He is wearing a raddy or raddy-doo hat, for instance, which could be pulled down over the ears in cold weather, but many lads preferred caps. If any one activity predominated in a horselad’s life, it was ploughing, especially for the middle ranks who were often called ploughlads. This was probably a spring ploughing, probably after a turnip crop used to feed the sheep that winter. The thin, flinty soil was easy to work and did not retain a clear furrow pattern as heavier soils did. The plough seems to be a JHB design, named after John Harvey Bell of West Lutton, which were light, single-furrow ploughs popular on this sort of Wold land. Taken late 1890s.

This is part of a large series I copied from Mr Walker. They were mostly taken on this farm, probably in the late 1890s when it was farmed by Messrs Cook and Taylor. It may be that they were the work of the farmer himself, for they were taken over a long period. Dr Colin Hayfield discovered the same set of photographs independently and after recovering a good deal of information about their subjects as part of his researches in the Wharram area, he published them as part of Thixendale Remembered, Spring Hill Publications, Arley, Warwickshire, 1985. I am grateful to him for allowing me to incorporate these details here.
On the Wolds all the ploughs on a farm were usually sent out to work together, one behind another, rather than each taking their own patch as was more common elsewhere. This was known as foxhunting and it could be an impressive sight, as here. Five teams are visible, and the first four are drawing double-furrow ploughs. If there are no more teams beyond the edge of the photograph, this group is therefore ploughing nine furrows on each run down the field. Taken near Bridlington, c1930.

The least lad (the youngest boy on the farm) in the stackyard at Manor Farm, Thixendale. His clothes are obviously hand-me-downs which would have to suffice until his wages were paid at the year-end, and perhaps even longer. His horse also has old harness on, and would itself be well past its prime. Taken late 1890s.
A three-horse team and a pole wagggon delivering corn in sacks at Burdale station on the Malton–Driffield line c1900. The railway was a vital part of the East Riding rural economy since local markets on the scale needed to absorb its production did not exist, and waggons were only economic for short hauls. The wide shelves that overhung the wheels to increase carrying capacity can be clearly seen. The use of a draught pole instead of shafts and the associated practice of the lad driving his team while riding the nearside horse, using a saddle and stirrups, was unique to the county.

year living in each other’s pockets. A highly distinctive approach to industrial relations therefore developed, with each lad being given a fixed place in a rigid hierarchy. This avoided any temptation to create one of their own by vying among themselves as the year progressed, and it set up a remarkably effective self-disciplinary structure. No room was left for disputes over who should have the best horses, or leave the stables first, or have the last wash in a morning. At the top came the waggoner\(^{29}\) or wag. Nominally, he was the second man after the foreman, so below him came the third lad or thirdy, fourther, fiver and so on. If any of them had assistants to allow them to care for six horses instead of the usual four, they came next in a new sequence of wag lad, thirdy lad, and so on. Below them, especially on a big farm, might come groom lads and box lads, hired to care for the blood horses and light horses respectively, a back-door lad who helped in the house as well as the fields, and a Tommy Out who acted as a general stand-in. Cowlam, a big farm of over 1100 acres, had an eighther, assistants and lesser lads, while small farms might have just the one. They called each other by their titles and everything a group of lads did together, they did in this order. Even their double beds were allocated without regard for personal preferences. Wag slept with thirdy, fourther with fiver, and so on.

To the teenagers the waggoner was often a heroic figure with the best horses, the best harness, and skills the others did not possess. Filled corn sacks, for instance, weighed sixteen to nineteen stones and had to be carried in and out of the granary with no

\(^{29}\) In the Vale of York the waggoner was rated first in the hierarchy, so here the lad under him was the second waggoner or seconder.
mechanical assistance. The waggoner was the only man who could be asked to undertake this job, which gave him a chance to display his strength for all to see. When he issued instructions, boys were expected to respond instantly, or a liberal helping of boot-toe was likely. Whenever a delivery or collection off the farm had to be made, he went, sometimes sitting up half the night to prepare the harness. The waggoner was normally the oldest and the ages of the rest conventionally reflected their positions, though a big lad, or a skilful one could advance ahead of his years at times.

The waggoner was expected to keep the others in line and if anyone had to intervene between him and another lad, or had to correct him over the state of the horses, he was failing in his task. This made it hard on the big Wolds farms sometimes, for with so many lads under him, some might well be bigger or older than him. It was also easier for someone antisocial to get hired here than elsewhere, for such farms had to be less choosy than smaller operations. He was not expected to back off from enforcing discipline physically if he had to, and this easily spilled over into bullying the youngest boys if he was that way inclined. On the other hand, no one was stuck at the bottom of the hierarchy for long, for marriage left vacancies every year at the top and everyone moved up as they got older. It took skill and hard work to become a waggoner, but it was something anyone could aim at.

The hiring fairs provided an excellent medium for transacting all these various individual bargains needed to keep the system functioning, and they did it with a minimum of difficulty and wasted time and effort. They were the obvious method of doing business in a pre-industrial world where transactions had to be face-to-face, but they had evolved into complex and specialized institutions with many non-economic functions besides their obvious role as a labour market. Much of the attention they have received in print has been critical and they deserve a much better press, in the north at least. At most East Riding centres there was not one fair but a series. The first was usually early in November and servants had a right to leave work to attend one of these first hirings, but only one. There were usually two more in the week following Old Martinmas Day, when all contracts terminated. This was the servants’ only prolonged holiday, stretching to a fortnight sometimes, so they could attend as many of these sessions as they could fit in.

First hirings often functioned as preliminary sessions allowing everyone to see how the market stood so that negotiations in Martinmas week could be conducted at realistic levels. No standard rate would emerge, however. Farmers with bad reputations found it hard to hire, while workers with a good name could play off several employers against each other. Table 1 shows the wages various grades were getting at several fairs in 1890, according to the newspapers. Even this may mislead, for a good workman could add substantially to his wage by bargaining for a big fest. Mr Fisher reckoned to add £1 to a yearly wage of £39 between the wars. In the East Riding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Wages per year (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Driffield</td>
<td>11 Nov</td>
<td>17–20 up to 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market</td>
<td>13 Nov</td>
<td>17–20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howden</td>
<td>19 Nov</td>
<td>15–17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarborough</td>
<td>21 Nov</td>
<td>16–18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York</td>
<td>25 Nov</td>
<td>14–19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarborough</td>
<td>28 Nov</td>
<td>15–18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Yorkshire Post, dates as given, pp 5, 3, 6, 3, respectively.

30 I have given a fuller account of the fairs in 'East Riding Hiring Fairs', Oral History, 3, no 2, 1975.
31 Tape 6/1.
there was usually a balance between lads and jobs on offer. Servants never refrained from shopping around in the fear that the first offer might also be the last one. Hirings have been portrayed as virtual slave auctions, and they might be exactly that in the south, but the public nature of the trading was intended as a typical pre-industrial protection for the individual against the machinations of those who might try to manipulate the market. No farmer controlled more than an insignificant percentage of the jobs on offer and no individual bargain could affect the overall level of wages. Both sides, moreover, usually had access to networks of acquaintances able to give information about the other party. Hirings, in other words, came very close to the classical economists' concept of the perfect market, and in the East Riding they functioned as such, even if elsewhere the overwhelming power of the farmers had destroyed the theory.

Servants and farmers both exploited the fairs' possibilities as a bargaining arena. Depending on supply and demand, inflation, the state of farms, and the prosperity of farmers, wage levels could fluctuate sharply from year to year around a long-term trend. At Howden in 1900 'there was not a very large attendance ... and little hiring was effected. Men held out for big wages', said one newspaper report, and others showed the reverse. A kind of individual collective bargaining took place, and it was backed up in a sense by a ritualized strike for all the servants went home in the Martinmas week and all work with horses ceased. Since all contracts had to be renegotiated whether lads stayed or moved, and since the 'strike' had a known duration, besides occurring at the quietest time of the farming year, an annual payround was maintained with a minimum of bad feeling. There was certainly no evidence of attempts by either side at collusion to evade the genuine nature of the bargaining. It is also interesting to note that in 1910 the newly created York Labour Exchange attended fairs across the Riding and transacted no business at all. The servants clearly saw no advantage in changing even to such a neutral, and free, service. This seems to be compelling evidence that they did not see public hiring as either a degrading experience or as one which reduced their wages.

This was not merely a randomly gathered group of workers: most of them were teenagers and a good number would still be in full-time education today. Leaving home at thirteen accelerated their passage to maturity, but they were still in transition from childhood to real adulthood. The servant system still seems to have been ideally suited to carrying them over this difficult time socially as well as economically, while harnessing both their energy and their freedom from family commitments in a very practical and effective way. It is possible to imagine the actual hiring of servants continuing without fairs, but the loss of other aspects of these gatherings would certainly have impoverished their way of life, perhaps even to the point where many would have opted out of it. The most mundane features of their lives had all been shaped and interlocked to create a remarkably integrated pattern, with even holidays and leisure fulfilling a clear role that made them much more than a chance to get away from work.

Hiring out particularly threatened to break up families even though it operated within a family framework, and by splitting up the rural population among many isolated farms, it also endangered the cohesion of communities. Holidays were usually tied

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22 See, for instance, T E Kebbel, The Agricultural Labourer, 1887, pp 91–3, or W Hasbach, A History of the English Agricultural Labourer, 1908, p 84.
23 Yorkshire Post (Leeds), 26 Nov 1900, p 7. See also 13 Nov 1906, p 9.
to festivals that helped to reinforce these ties, often in a ritual or ceremonial way to counteract this tendency. Plough Monday had once been a festival dedicated to the horses as a group within the community, when they paraded with a plough and collected money, enforcing recognition and even punishing those who had offended them by ploughing up their gardens. In this century it was almost defunct, perhaps a symbol that servantry had not stood still in the nineteenth century, but had had to adapt to a more capitalist style of farming where the village community was no longer the dominant force in rural life. The highpoints of servants' lives now lacked the obvious characteristics that attract folklorists, but they still fulfilled similar functions.

Martinmas had filled the gap left by the demise of Plough Monday and it focused on their role as hirelings, reflecting the new realities. It was a servant's only chance to take a few days away from farming and the towns filled with young people eager to have a good time at the funfair every hirings attracted, as well as those in search of a new job. They needed to do all their shopping for the next year of renewed isolation, and they had all their last year's pay in their pockets, less anything required to settle the debts they inevitably built up in a year without a cash income. They bought clothes and wooden chests to keep them in, watches, bicycles, presents for parents, and anything else they wanted. Some shopkeepers sold more in Martinmas week than they did in all the rest of the year, so this was an important contribution to the towns' economies. The mere fact of gathering together folk who were normally scattered around isolated farms was in itself important, allowing the community a rare chance to assert itself in a renewal of friendships and the visiting of relations, especially at the third hirings which many married people attended as well as servants. The pubs naturally shared in the spending spree and it was easy to drink too much and become involved in fights. This attracted a good deal of contemporary criticism, especially from the clergy, but the oral evidence makes it clear that not only was drunkenness far from universal, but the fights usually had a deeper significance. After a year on farms with the same company and little leisure, it is hard to see how some blowing off of steam could have been avoided in any case, but the fighting was in any case often a delayed settling of grievances that would otherwise have disrupted life and work on the farms. The hierarchy was remarkably successful at channelling and controlling tensions among these adolescents and young adults, but it could not eliminate them. Instead they were set on one side and settled once and for all off the farm before an audience. Even the police acquiesced in this, leaving combatants alone as long as they caused no general trouble.

Apart from Martinmas, most days off were spent in visiting village shows and feasts, all of which reunited the family ties stretched by hiring out. Leisure consisted of Sundays and a few hours in the evenings. Far from turning away from work in this limited time, they played and talked in the stables, and turned their horses into their hobby. In particular, pilfering forbidden delicacies for them from the outbuildings took great ingenuity and filled many hours. The ultimate aim was expressed in an invitation to Mr Brambles from a friend in the 1930s: "Have a look over ours on Sunday, just have a look at my hosses, lad, by God, they are fat! They do look well." . . . That was it... away you went and have a look at so-and-so's horses and see if

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17 Tape 17/I.
18 Caunce, op cit, 48–9.
19 Tape 17/I.
they were fatter than yours, and if their skins shone more. Great gangs of lads went from farm to farm on Sundays, checking horses and workmanship in this way, but their desire for fat horses would often conflict with real working efficiency. Mr Fisher was unequivocal from his experience as a lad and as a farmer in saying that farmers ‘wouldn’t give a toss for lads who did not steal food’. However, by making them ‘steal’ it rather than giving them free rein, the amounts involved were cut down and the lads were given a harmless way of filling time that otherwise might have hung heavily on them.

This is an age group which has always been a prime source of rebelliousness. Ann Kussmaul has said that in early modern times the hiring out of servants was consciously seen as a way of splitting up this rather anarchic group and delegating their control to the heads of the host households, who could manage them as small groups far more effectively than any alternative approach could have done. This pre-industrial rationale can still be seen at work in the East Riding in this century. Servants were still exchanging a natural family for an economic one which was usually better equipped to care for them in material terms. Whatever family nature the relationship may once have had, it had long since ended in a domestic sense, but the yearly bond was still in essence a quasi parent-child affair. Even though the farmers commonly discharged their parental duties to feed and house their servants through the hinds, they never attempted to evade the ultimate responsibility. In Cambridgeshire, foremen also boarded servants, but as lodgers who paid for their own keep out of board wages. Servants in the East Riding were still making the ancient bargain of surrendering their independence in return for security, a very different arrangement. They still retained the view that service was a worthwhile preparation for adult life, when independence would be regained by the simple act of setting up their own households.

The poor might have been driven into service by necessity, but it also attracted hinds’ and small farmers’ children, such as Mr Baines and Mr Jarvis. Dr Edward Smith found in 1864 that East Riding farm lads were better fed than any comparable income group he investigated in a wide-ranging national survey that included their own parents as well as urban workers. In the 1920s the lads expected three substantial meals a day, most including meat, pies, vegetables, and cheesecakes, as well as plenty more besides. The work was hard, not all farms came up to scratch, and even on the good ones they were often hungry by meal times, but their diet was incomparably better than that of their town contemporaries. A bad meat house was soon widely known and had difficulty in hiring good lads, whereas a good meat house could demand great efforts in the fields without getting complaints. Their parents, moreover, could live better because there were fewer mouths to feed and there is no doubt that most, if not all, families recognized that sending out their children was the key to a better life for everyone. This seems to be proof that the life they lived, if not one of comfort or leisure, was one that had distinct advantages.

IV

Is all this of merely local interest, or does it have wider implications? Farm servants everywhere, for instance, have become recognized as a group with a clear tendency

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4° Tape 18/1.
47 Tape 6/2.
48 Kussmaul, Servants, p 33.
49 Report by Mr Wilson Fox on the Wages and Earnings of Agricultural Labourers in the United Kingdom, PP 1900, LXXXII, p 15.
50 Sixth Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, PP 1864, p 238.
towards late marriage. The East Riding example shows this mechanism in action even in this century. There was no need to marry just to get out of a crowded home and their ability to save, particularly in their twenties, encouraged both partners to wait so as to marry with a substantial sum in hand. Traditionally this was the crucial step up to independence, giving the chance to take a small farm or to set up in some business. In 1900, it could still be said that in the Lake District, 'Many of [the] farmers have risen from the ranks of the farm servants, and there are numerous instances in which they have become farmers on a large scale... Not infrequently a hired man marries a young woman who has also saved money as a dairymaid'.

It was the ability thereafter of most adults to look after themselves at least part of the time which made them prefer the status of a day labourer to that of a permanently employed wage earner, and the comments of the enclosure propagandists of the early nineteenth century make it clear that a man did not have to acquire more than access to the common to become an unreliable wage labourer. This, in turn, created a need for servants to fill the gap. In this century, in an arable county like the East Riding, farmers had become virtually a hereditary caste and few servants could realistically hope to take a farm any longer. The system survived because, quite apart from the fact that even a cottager's marriage got off to a better start with savings behind it, an adequate replacement motivation had been evolved: the chance to become a hind. Even though change had occurred, there was such a clear continuity that it is apparent that the same mechanism was still at work, but through different channels.

The hinds were recruited from the ranks of the waggoners, though a few years in between as a labourer were almost inevitable. They held responsible jobs that provided a large house as well as good wages, so there was still something for ambitious lads to aim for after marriage. Their savings helped to set up a comfortable home, and they could hope to hang on to their good start, rather than seeing poverty eat it away as would have been inevitable in most southern counties. The hind had not existed, as far as is known, in the eighteenth century, and numbers only became significant in the late nineteenth century as farmers yielded to the social pressures that urged them to separate themselves from their inferiors. His predecessor was the single farm foreman who was usually a senior farm servant, and the nature of his contract was somewhere between a servant's and a labourer's. His promotion was the result of the farmers' need to preserve the servant system, albeit at arm's length, rather than to destroy it. The servants' traditional role of providing committed labour as an extension of the family so that the core of essential and repetitive work could be guaranteed was still needed.

Continuity, then, seems proven, but it still remains open to question how far the East Riding experience represents a general pattern. Nationally, there seems to have been a large degree of unity in the hiring and usage of farm servants down to the mid-eighteenth century, but from this point on regional experiences did diverge sharply. The south-eastern arable zone led a rejection of the whole concept of hiring as a large and permanent labour surplus built up in most counties in the early nineteenth century. Previously, conditions in the labour market had led to long term rises and falls in the use of servants, but this total abandonment was unprecedented. The East Riding

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41 Report by Wilson Fox, p 14.
42 See, for instance, A Young, A Six Months Tour Through the North of England, 1770 vol 1, p 173.
43 See, for instance, I Lestham, A General View of the Agriculture of the East Riding of Yorkshire, 1794, p 31. Morris, British Workman, pp 55-6, notes the beginnings of the system half a century later, but even in 1871 a search of ten townships' Census returns revealed only two hinds.
44 Kussmaul, Servants, pp 117-8.
TWENTIETH-CENTURY FARM SERVANTS

emerged from this period with an intact farm servant system not because it was different or because it was immune to the forces that led to this historic change, but because local forces existed here which counterbalanced the others, neutralizing them to a large extent.

Probably most important was its agriculture’s ability to cope with the increase in its population from 80,000 in 1801 to 136,000 in 1851. Outside Hull, the county has always been wholly dependent on farming and no industries developed to take the strain. Despite being part of Yorkshire, it remains today one of the most completely rural English counties, and the 1831 Census commented that it ‘would be entirely agricultural did not the town of Kingston-upon-Hull . . . contain the manufactures indispensable to an active Seaport’. This was partly because there had never been a tradition of craft employment that could be developed. On the other hand, it also meant that a failure to industrialize did not in itself create unemployment as crafts declined, so the crucial question was whether agriculture could create extra, productive jobs for the ever-rising population of the villages.

The growth of Hull and, more especially, the West Riding towns provided an escape route for those wanting to leave farms, but more importantly, it also provided an ideal market for East Riding agriculture. Already in 1793, Isaac Leatham commented that the two Ridings were exchanging coal and lime for food, making ‘so happy a combination . . . as each county is adapted to supply the wants of the other [and] . . . the most convenient channel of communication is afforded by the adjoining rivers’. Accordingly the East Riding specialized in the industry which suited it best within the booming regional economy. The Wolds were the most visible symbol of the increased intensity of production that resulted, with its extensive sheepwalks and rabbit warrens turned into permanent and highly productive arable through the careful application of scientific rotations. Large areas elsewhere had also been idle or underused and its farming had been backward. A significant group of prosperous farmers only arose in the eighteenth century, but by 1851 Caird reported that they were ‘probably the wealthiest men of their class in the country’.

As new land was brought under the plough the ox was replaced in front of it by the horse, and then a steadily increasing proportion of the farmwork was done by machinery rather than direct hand labour. The isolated nature of many new farmsteads and the work the actual improvements themselves created meant that there was an increased need for both servants and labourers in their traditional roles. Even though labourers now were mostly full-time employees, the division of work between them and the servants still fulfilled a function, for they were naturally less willing than the servants to take on the long hours of looking after stock. There were bad periods, but the labour market locally never allowed farmers to dispense with servants, or even to maltreat them so much that they would wish to opt out of the system, as happened wherever a board wages system was adopted.

Change certainly occurred, as we have seen, and the increase in the number of large farms reinforced a trend towards an increase in the size of servant groups on farms. The growing social separation between the farmer and his servants also made these groups more self-contained and more likely to adopt a culture appropriate to permanent employees, but such changes as resulted were an organic development that preserved the spirit of the hiring system as nearly intact as it could be.

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52 Leatham, Gen View, p 12.
Total of occupied males = 32,544

Percentage of agricultural workers = 58.5%

**FIGURE 2A**
The occupations of all males at work in East Riding rural districts in 1911

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Total of occupied males of this age group = 863

* not domestic
** none large enough to distinguish individually

Percentage of agricultural workers = 75.7%

**FIGURE 2B**
The occupations of males aged fifteen to sixteen years at work in East Riding rural districts in 1911

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Source: Census, 1911, X, pt II (PP 1913-14, LXXIX, Cmd 7019), pp 644-6.
If a square peg's hole becomes round, it must acquire rounded corners or lose its function. Functionless survivals are easy to spot precisely because of their fossil nature and their romantic appeal as quaint bygones, whereas customs and practices that are still evolving will usually seem mundane because they are so practical, yet it is the latter that offer a living connection with the past. This does not mean they are the only ones worth studying, but perhaps by collating both we can get the fullest vision of past societies.

This evolution had produced a stable system by 1914 which seemed to meet the needs of both farmers and farmworkers. This is not to argue that it was perfect or that individuals did not suffer under it or reject it, but merely that it avoided many of the miseries suffered by farmworkers further south and that East Riding society as a whole accepted it. Unionism made little headway in the county before the First World War, which seems to show that there were no grievances important enough to cause the men to unite against their masters. Those I talked to remembered the period as one when change seemed far distant even though they knew it was no golden age. When change did come to seem possible later, they worked for it and welcomed it, as with the extension of statutory holidays to farming. In 1914, however, the system was so all-embracing that acceptance was easy and change seemed to be precluded.

As Figure 2 shows, nearly 60 per cent of males in employment in the rural county worked on farms in 1911, whether as farmers, their relatives, or employees, and most of the rest worked in transport and agricultural support industries. Of fifteen-year-olds, 76 per cent were in farming.

The most obvious explanation, mechanization, can be quickly rejected. Horses held their own in the county better than they did nationally, and tractors were no real threat to them until the 1930s, as Figure 3 shows. Between 1921 and 1925 there were only 2000 tractors at work in the whole country, compared to 796,000 horses, and they were primarily competing with steam tackle and stationary engines. At this time they were simply mechanical horses with very high operating costs, offering in return only greater pulling power and large savings in the care spent on horses. Reductions in horse numbers in the 1920s were a result of economies and a reduction in farming intensity. Even in the 1930s progress was slow and by 1939 the 549,000 horses still at work vastly outnumbered the 55,000 tractors. In the continuing liquidity crisis of the Depression years, horses that could be bred on the farm and fed on farm products, which seemed to have no profitable outlet, made more economic sense than tractors that had to be bought, fuelled, and repaired for cash.

The Depression hit the East Riding savagely. Competition from abroad was compounded by the collapse of prosperity in the West Riding. Mr Johnson took a farm in 1931 and a friend said,

'You're all right, things is - they're at the bottom. They can't go any lower'. And he was wrong, they did. Between 1930 and 1942, say if you made a living and came and paid your debts, you were lucky. You had to, you know, work all hours God sent to make a living, and men out of work in every village and . . . we had plenty of work but couldn't employ them.
With cash so short, with all the social tensions of taking servants into the farmhouse solved, with no poor law regulations to discourage hiring for fear of giving settlements, and with no chance of subsidising wages out of the poor law, farmers had none of the reasons to cease hiring servants that had motivated their southern counterparts in the depression that followed the Napoleonic Wars, when hiring was largely given up in this region. Servants' wages were never more than 50 per cent cash and much of their food could be provided by the farm, especially if garden produce like rhubarb and apples could be put on every menu. It has also been noted that there was a 41 per cent reduction in the numbers of under twenty-one-year-olds at work on the county's farms between 1921 and 1938, and since there was no move to introduce married horsemen, it may be that farmers still needed to tie this age group to them to be sure of their services. Bargaining at the fairs made servants' wages very responsive to depression conditions once wage regulation ended in 1920. In 1918 waggoners were offered £50 to £57 at Howden, whereas in 1922 they 'were content with £25 to £30' at Hull. Hinds came under pressure to board lads for less, some being offered 6s per week per man instead of the 7s 6d they expected. Some ended the year badly in debt, while the lads were being hit in their most sensitive areas, their stomachs.

Thus, though the Depression brought no direct reduction in servants' numbers, it did create a background against which dissatisfaction could grow. The war had taken large numbers of lads out of their enclosed lives and showed them a range of possibilities they could embrace.

Source: Ag Stats (1912–59). The numbers used are those for horses which had been broken and therefore exclude young horses and stallions.

FIGURE 3
The decline in the horse population of the East Riding after 1918

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\[aggregate\]

\[quote\]

\[figure\]

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\[text\]

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\[citation\]

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\[citation\]
had never thought existed. They might have gradually learned to disregard their experiences, but their lives were changing at home as well. Bicycles, previously beyond their means, gave them much greater mobility, and radios and the cinema brought national and even international culture into the rural areas. Trade unionism exploded, especially on the Wolds, with servants flocking to join as much as labourers, even though their contracts in theory precluded all industrial action.

There were large-scale strikes in 1918, 1920, and 1922, and there was some support for the General Strike. Working hours were shortened and holidays gained, but otherwise neither the strikes nor the unions' negotiations showed many positive results. Even so, the mere fact that workers were prepared to organize and strike was a severe blow to the old society. Some servants who struck were treated as contract breakers, but most farmers preferred to reach an accommodation, especially as they usually won the disputes. Some servants went home for the duration, like Mr Tate's brothers who had 'the best time they had in their life . . . They'd have strike pay, that would pay for my dad's keep, you know. Aye. And they went to all the farm sales there was'. Others stayed on the farm, caring for the horses in return for their keep, and passing the time by picketing neighbours.

This is further proof that while the yearly contracts of the servants may have been the backbone of the system, it was not their legally binding nature that gave them their real strength. Once mutual agreement as to the fairness of the bond was lost, wholesale threats of legal action would destroy relations between the farmers and their lads, who would not have entered contracts that denied them rights everyone else had, except under extreme duress. The farmers also acceded gradually to demands for weekly wages, for farm lads were starting to feel the attractions of consumerism, and saving for marriage was becoming less important to them. Some farmers even began to pay overtime, which was always an issue on any farm that acquired a tractor. They were worked as long as possible and the lads saw no reason why long hours on a tractor seat should attract extra pay when their even longer hours among horses did not. Mr Rispin actually gave up hinding because of the tensions this caused on his farm, which were making it very hard to get the horses properly cared for.

Lads had further cause for questioning the value of the traditional system to them after 1924. The renewed legal regulation of wages effectively set norms and removed much of the bargaining from the fairs to the county wages committees. Moreover, from 24 November 1935 the East and West Ridings' unique 'fixation of special rates according to the nature of duties was discontinued', so that lads' wages were now ruled almost entirely by their age. A capable, ambitious lad was entitled to no more money if he accepted extra duties as, say, a waggoner than if he did not. There was an increasing tendency towards a better defined working week, with more leisure and statutory holidays which diminished the importance of Martinmas. There could no longer, in the 1930s, be said to be one employment system for youngsters in the East Riding, for the effect of all these changes was to fragment it.

Had the inter-war years been prosperous, with plenty of jobs to leave agriculture for,
it is possible that the system could have adapted as it had in the past. The post-war depression of a century before had bitten deep, but hiring survived because both sides wanted it to. Now the farmers were merely hanging on, rather than seeking creative change, and the lads' demands therefore simply broke the system up. Some areas seemed to remain untouched right down to the war, but this indicated neither immunity nor an ability to cope. Rather it signified an increasing remoteness from the reality of the modern economy. An inner decay had set in, stemming from the growing integration of farming into the international economy, and of all farmworkers into a national society. Where no one pushed, its effects did not show openly, but the weakness was still there. When prosperity returned after the war, horses and servants vanished from the scene together everywhere with great rapidity.

The yearly bond had been far more than just a contract between employers and employees. It was a rich and complex socio-economic system that carried children from dependency to independency, aiding and controlling them while using their labour to the full on farms. It flourished in the East Riding until the 1920s despite all the adjustments farming had made in the nineteenth century, and it did not become a quaint relic that attracted the attention of folklorists. The similarity of modern oral accounts to the fragmentary mentions in the General Views of a century before suggest that we can extrapolate backwards to a more intimate understanding of the system as it operated in most villages in pre-industrial times, as long as we tread cautiously. The oral contributors certainly felt that, from their memories of their parents' recollections, little had changed in the previous century. It also seems likely that many of the conclusions drawn from this one county may be relevant to the whole arable area of England.

ABBREVIATIONS
Ag Stats
Agricultural Statistics, published annually up to and including 1918 by the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries; afterwards by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries; and from 1952 by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Up to and including 1920, the horse population of the East Riding is given in table 3, thereafter in table 2.
Earnings and Hours
Second Report
The Bootstrap and Dr Walton’s
Red Herrings

By JOHN CHAPMAN

WALTON states that I find problems in his use of standard error where none exists but then rightly points out that ‘corrective measures’ are needed where a population exhibits extreme skewness, which is precisely my point. The population in this case is highly skewed, hence my objection to this method. His description of the bootstrap is grossly misleading, and the red herrings are of his own introduction. The point at issue is not the sample mean, but the range of values which might have been produced had my sample been differently drawn, which is precisely what the bootstrap was designed to calculate. Its basic purpose is to test for the possibility that one or two extreme values have caused the sample to produce a distorted result, and to offer a measure of the probability of any other result being produced. The sample mean is an irrelevance, since the bootstrap specifically makes no use of it. Walton’s descent to schoolboy insults rebounds upon him, for his example merely illustrates his own lack of thought and understanding. If one of his apples were to be exceptionally large the resampling process involved in the bootstrap would detect this, since some samples would contain the errant apple and some would not. The result would be to produce a highly erratic pattern of values, and a high probability for values far from that given by the original sample. He would thus be warned that his sample was inherently untrustworthy. Since this does not happen in the case of my sample I see no reason to doubt its validity, hence my belief that Turner’s figure is substantially too low.

Walton challenges me to provide the probabilities for other possible figures between my own and Turner’s. I have already quoted the median, and, obviously, the probabilities of the figure being higher or lower than this are identical. Just over 2 per cent of the values lie between my initial calculation and the median. The lower quartile indicates that there is a 75 per cent probability that the figure exceeded 7.056 million acres, and there is similarly a 75 per cent probability that it falls below 7.597 million.

Much of the confusion appears to have arisen from Walton’s misreading of my original paper. Why he has treated the range of 100,000 acres between my figures of 7.25 million and 7.35 million acres as if I were implying that it represented a statistically-derived level of confidence about my sample mean is difficult to see. The original text makes clear that it was an attempt to adjust my total for suspected spurious enclosures included in the figure by which I had multiplied. In his quotation from my paper he omits the vital phrases ‘assuming a maximum number of erroneous enclosures’ and ‘assuming none’, which qualify the two totals. I fully accept that

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1 J R Walton, ‘Parliamentary Enclosure, the Bootstrap, and a Red Herring or Two’, *Ag Hist Rev* 39, 1991, pp 52 and 53.
there is a significant margin of error involved in my calculations, but I stand by my view that they offer the best estimate currently available.

In conclusion, I must apologize to Turner for overlooking his reference to his method of allowing for missing estimates. The method is, indeed, as I indicated in my initial response to Walton, but appears in his English Parliamentary Enclosure, not in the Domesday.

Notes on Contributors

CHRISTOPHER K CURRIE is a Leverhulme Research Fellow and Director of the Gardens Archaeology Project, currently researching the application of archaeology to the restoration of historic gardens. He is a founder member of the Landscape Section of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society and his main interests are in the evolution of the landscape and historic land use. Although his work has encompassed the historical study of urban landscapes and such diverse subjects as woodland management, gardens, hedgerows, medieval settlement, and Roman pottery manufacture, he is best known for his work on the history and archaeology of freshwater fish-farming. He has contributed to a number of collected volumes on this latter subject. He is also the author of a number of archaeological excavation reports, including Southwick Priory, Hampshire; Brinkworth, Malmesbury and Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire; and Castle Bromwich Hall, West Midlands.


DR JOHN CHAPMAN, of the Department of Geography, Portsmouth Polytechnic, became involved in research on Wales while working for his PhD on agricultural change in Monmouthshire. He has since conducted a detailed survey of Welsh Parliamentary enclosures, which is due for publication shortly in book form. He has just begun a two-year ESRC-funded study of unofficial and agreement enclosures in south-central England, aimed at identifying land enclosed after 1700 without parliamentary authorization.

DR R J MOORE-COLYER is Director of Equine Studies at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. In a series of books and articles he has published extensively on the social and agrarian history of Wales and the Welsh landed gentry. Current research includes the development of horse-racing in modern Wales and the operation and function of the Royal Studs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He is shortly to publish 'A Land of Pure Delight; selections from the letters of Thonas Johnes of Hafod (1748–1816)' and 'Rogue Watch, Rogue Catch; the Diary and Accounts of John Macky, Inspector of the Waterkeepers on the River Bann, 1791–1804'.

DR STEPHEN CAUNCE is now a Lecturer in Social and Economic History at the University of Leeds, after working for several years in museums, mostly in West Yorkshire. This strengthened his interest in proto-industry and the transition to an industrial society. He hopes to develop his work on the dual economy of the West Riding of Yorkshire and its development of the East Riding as a complementary economy in the future. This article is a short version of his book Amongst Farm Horses: The Horselads of East Yorkshire (1991) and won the second prize in the Yorkshire History Essay Competition.

EDITH H WHETHAM was formerly Gilbey Lecturer in the History and Economics of Agriculture in the University of Cambridge, and sometime Fellow of Newnham College. She is the author of many books and articles on agricultural history, and was President of the British Agricultural History Society, 1977–9.
Supply Responsiveness in Dairy Farming:

a Note

By EDITH H WHETHAM

The research by Dr Hallas on the supply responsiveness of farmers in Swaledale and Wensleydale in the nineteenth century is an excellent study of two small communities whose environment limited their powers of adaptation to changing circumstances. The Dales being unsuited to the commercial production of crops, farmers generally found that dairying was the most profitable enterprise as giving the greatest return per acre. Within dairying, the choice between selling milk liquid or in the form of butter and cheese was constrained, until the second half of the nineteenth century, by the small size of the local retail market for fresh milk; even after a railway opened the Leeds market to farmers in Wensleydale, it required the rapidly falling prices of butter and cheese in the 1890s to "push" them into changing their practice. Without a railway, Swaledale farmers had little defence against low prices for dairy products; they could only sell more cattle at younger ages so as to obtain a quicker turnover from their herds.

The reluctance of farmers in Wensleydale to abandon the sale of butter and cheese may possibly be explained by fear of becoming dangerously dependent on a single product sold in a single market. Once the production of butter and cheese had stopped, the equipment dispersed, and the skills lost, there was no alternative to the continued sale of milk liquid, whatever the price obtainable in the local market. As so many dairy farmers found in the 1920s and 1930s, the necessity of selling the daily output from their cows left them no defence against general depression or local glut. Of all types of farming, the specialized sellers of liquid milk had the least power of adopting alternative enterprises, if their primary market collapsed. That was shown sixty years ago, and has been even more clearly demonstrated in the last two decades, when herds are so much larger than they were, equipment even more specialized, and the costs of conversion to alternative enterprises even greater.

Indeed, adapting the supply of any major farm product to changes in demand has become progressively more difficult in the last half-century, with the rising costs of the specialized machinery, buildings, and processing plant required to provide an output above the minimum economic size. In contrast, perhaps the period when supply was most easily responsive to changes was the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the majority of lowland farmers ran some variant of a four- or five-course rotation of crops and kept a variety of livestock, selling a dozen or more products, and shifting the emphasis between them in accordance with local markets. Arable farmers buying sheep and cattle to convert their roots and leys into muck for the corn crops, midland graziers buying stock throughout the year, could adjust the quantity and quality bought by a continuous series of decisions, based on their expectations of future prices and the current

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supply of fodder. They could thus defend their profit margins against changing prices whether in the store market or the markets for fatstock. Hill and upland farmers had no such easy defence, even in the nineteenth century, since the quantities of stock they sold, and the times of disposal, were largely determined for them by the seasonal variations in the weather and the characteristics of their environment.

Dr Hallas has expounded this fundamental difficulty of the upland producers of livestock, but this same difficulty seems now to have been generalized throughout farming, by the increasing cost of the specialized equipment required to produce each of the major commodities, which in turn limits the variety of products grown on individual farms. In the last half-century, there has been a marked decline in the 'supply responsiveness' of the major agricultural products to the changing circumstances, whether induced by national policy or the CAP.
# List of Books and Pamphlets on Agrarian History 1990

Compiled by V J MORRIS and D J ORTON  
Brynmor Jones Library, University of Hull

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Conference Report:
Spring Conference 1991

By CHRISTINE HALLAS

Delegates to the Society's Spring Conference at Chester arrived in anticipation of enjoying an interesting and varied intellectual menu. The sherry reception was one of many portents which augured well for the events of the following two days. The reception provided the occasion for the presentation of a festschrift, *Land Labour and Agriculture, 1700–1920* for Gordon Mingay. The presentation was made by the co-editors, Jim Holderness and Michael Turner, and the publisher, Martin Sheppard. The excellent dinner which followed ensured that the tradition of starting the first evening's paper behind schedule would be retained. Dr Nick Higham's (University of Manchester) paper on 'Land use and settlement in early Cheshire: a local perspective' provided an omen for the following day's field trip. Dr Higham guided us through the intricacies of the meagre evidence and highlighted the problems of hunting for material. He noted the lack of nucleated villages, the changing sites of occupation, and the frustrating paucity of material on vaccaries. We commiserated with the archaeologists and were left wondering what there would be to see on the following afternoon's visit.

After the usual excitement of the Annual General Meeting we were again taken hunting, this time into deer forests. Miss Jean Birrell (University of Birmingham) presented a paper on 'A neglected forest resource? Deer and deer farming in medieval England' in which she posed several questions concerning the extent to which deer were being managed and farmed both in parkland and in less controlled environments. She noted that deer were carefully managed in a variety of ways, for example, cows suckled motherless fawns and additional fodder was put out during winter. In terms of the extent of the deer population, estimates could be made on the basis of the ideal ducal household in the fifteenth century being expected to consume 300 deer per annum. Despite this indication of a substantial deer population at that time the question still remained as to whether the activity of deer keepers could be referred to as farming. Perhaps a better description would be that of marshalling natural resources. Miss Birrell concluded her paper with a call for more research to be undertaken on this much neglected topic.

After coffee the subject of the paper ostensibly moved from animals to humans though, as Professor John Beckett (University of Nottingham) in his paper 'Marriage, inheritance and the rise of great estates: the Grenvilles of Stowe, 1710–1889' demonstrated, the distinction was occasionally blurred. The paper centred on two questions: by what means did a minor gentry family owning an estate of 3000 acres in 1700 enlarge its holding through marriage and inheritance to 60,000 acres in 1822 and, in the process, gain a dukedom; and how did such an estate, supposedly protected by entail, come to be broken up so that by 1848 only 10,000 acres remained? The answer to the former appears to have been a mixture of luck, judicious action, and prudence; and to the latter, lack of luck, gambling, and imprudence. The minutiae of the Grenville family activities in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were very complicated but essentially the family was fortunate in that each generation produced an heir who then proceeded to marry an heiress. When Professor Beckett addressed the second question he demonstrated how the decline of fortunes commenced with the antics of the profligate first Duke of Buckingham who mortgaged the whole estate between 1813 and 1822 and was continued by the gambling second Duke who persuaded his son to release the claims of entail. Fortunately, the Duke's wife (née Chandos) protected some of the estate by drawing up a clause forbidding the sale of any of her Chandos property unless the proceeds were used to buy estates in Buckinghamshire. By 1847 the financial situation was so dire that large portions of the estate were sold off culminating in the great sale at Stowe in 1848. The Duchess's clause allowing Chandos property to be sold was activated in 1850, when many of the financial problems had been resolved and repurchase of Stowe and Wooton could proceed. Professor Beckett concluded that settlement appears to have worked when circumventing one generation's misdeeds but, where two generations were intent upon dissipating the family assets, entail and other restrictions could not protect the estates.

The weather for the afternoon excursion was, for a change, bright if somewhat nippy. Although Tatton Park has been in constant habitation since 2500 BC, there were few remains to be found for the period 2500 BC and 1100 AD. As the afternoon progressed the hollows and bumps beneath our feet gained significance as Nick Higham took us through the ages; glancing at a sod and sand dam of a medieval...
Over the expanse of thirteenth-century deer parks; pointing out hollow roads; surveying changing field and crop systems; and appreciating the movement of the park from wealth to poverty and back again as the centuries progressed. We inspected the great hall of the old manor and nearby barns pausing only for a quick afternoon tea before returning to Chester.

After dinner Professor Ann Kussmaul (York University, Toronto) presented some novel evidence on ‘The world we have lost’. Professor Kussmaul’s subject was rural communities prior to industrialization. She demonstrated that, due to hiring arrangements, marriages in arable eastern England generally took place in autumn, while in pastoral western England spring and summer nuptials were favoured. Those communities where no pattern could be identified probably already had a dual occupational structure of agricultural and industrial activities. Professor Kussmaul suggested that marriage totals could be used to provide a proxy of the occupied labour force because the occupation of grooms would drive the seasonality of marriage. This exercise produced evidence which demonstrated that between 1601 and 1801 the agricultural proportion of rural communities declined and conversely, there was a growth in the industrial proportion. The findings, Ann Kussmaul maintained, were consistent with the recent gradualist interpretation of industrialization and she suggested that the shift may be even longer and slower and be traced back to Domesday.

Demonstrating its range the paper was followed by a plethora of questions from contributors representing a wide range of subject and period interest. Some contributors noted that the interpretation of the data raised many questions relating to parish size and the precise relationship between industrial and agricultural production in rural communities. After the formal part of the evening was closed discussion on this paper continued, initially around the overhead projector and later in the bar.

Memories of late-night partying were relegated to the background as on Wednesday morning Professor Marjorie McIntosh (University of Colorado) presented an analysis of ‘Agricultural Change on the periphery of London: Havering, Essex 1460–1620’. Havering was ahead of its time and enjoyed several advantages in terms of location, land tenure and land use. Lack of tight manorial control resulted in tenants retaining profits and consolidating their position. The proximity to London had a major impact in terms of both land purchasers and markets for produce and this also affected tenure, size of holdings and servant keeping. Professor McIntosh maintained that the recent theories of agricultural capitalism were not helpful in this context as close examination of the Havering material demonstrated that the theorists had not really understood the mechanism of agricultural change.

The penultimate paper on ‘Farming in the Highlands and Islands prior to the Clearances’ was presented by Professor Robert Dodgshon (University College of Wales, Aberystwyth). Until the eighteenth century farming in this region was dominated by the clan system. The chieftains were obsessed with the possession of food as a status symbol. It was this obsession, rather than an increasing population, that caused land pressure as communities sought to respond to the demands of their chieftain. The subsistence farmers who peopled these communities learned early the importance of manure. They balanced their winter stock capacity to the summer potential for grass which they sought to improve by exploiting manure production from sources additional to animals. There was an abundant labour force and Professor Dodgshon contended that, rather than a lack of response to innovation, a conscious decision was taken to continue using the higher-yield-producing intensive labour inputs in the form of spade husbandry. Use of the plough was only adopted later when marginal lands were colonized.

The conference papers concluded with Dr Avner Offer (University of York) presenting an analysis of ‘British perception of overseas agriculture in the nineteenth century’. Dr Offer commented that his interest in this subject was as an historian of political economy and his conclusions were drawn entirely from a study of contemporary commentators who had varying expertise in agriculture. He maintained that two points of view emerge: the macro perspective which concentrates upon world trade and migration, particularly that of the frontier settler; and the micro perspective which examines the continental peasant farmers. From these two perspectives the debate concerning peasant ownership versus the British landlord/tenant system developed. Dr Offer concluded his paper by drawing some parallels between the nineteenth-century debate and the recent Thatcherite approach. The discussion which ensued centred upon the different approaches to the topic taken by political economists and agricultural historians.

After a final lunch conference members departed with a sense of having intellectually and physically wined and dined to the full and with a promise to meet next spring at Nottingham and, among other activities, visit the open field village of Laxton.
Book Reviews

The Acknowledgements (p x) remark on how the authors have 'benefited from the care taken with the production of this volume at Cambridge University Press'. Not just 'the care', surely? - in what are dire days for the proper publication of primary data in British archaeology, a 'bravo' too must go to the Press in actually deciding to undertake the publication of such a volume. May it be the first of many. Even so, a companion volume, Papers on the Prehistoric Archaeology of Cranborne Chase (Oxbow Monograph, Oxford, 1991), is required to deal with much primary evidence (environmental and artefactual). Nevertheless, what better place than Cranborne Chase for such Oxford inauguration: General Pitt Rivers would be pleased, while doubtless allowing his enthusiasm for cultural evolution to remark that whereas he was able to investigate and publish entirely in-house, as it were, the late twentieth-century equivalent involved not just two publishers but three universities, multiple funding, numerous national and local institutions, and a host of specialists.

His methodology and achievement lurk behind both the project reported on here and the achievement of his successors on archaeologically hallowed ground a century after the publication of his four famous blue and gilt volumes of Excavations. Indeed the project began in a re-investigation of South Lodge Camp, one of the General’s more enigmatic sites now re-investigated and contextualized within an ambitiously incremental schema rationalized in terms very close to his original intentions: ‘... what had started as an investigation of landscape history almost inevitably extended into a study of social change’ (p 1).

This latter is examined from the Earlier Neolithic to the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age (rather surprising, this anachronistic reversion to a Three Age chronology in so contemporary a volume). In fact, ‘... in Cranborne Chase there is little sign of large-scale occupation until the Later Neolithic period’ (p 35) when we see ‘the establishment of a social landscape dominated by the Dorset Cursus and the non-utilitarian monuments which develop around it’, replaced in the first millennium by a settlement system with ‘its growing concern with land and food production’ (p 2). The latest site taken into account is the well-known but now sadly-reduced complex of earthworks on Gussage Hill with occupation into the Roman period (p 242), here re-interpreted as a ‘sub-Durotrigian’ equivalent of oppida in south-east England.

Is not all this rather a long way from agrarian history’s sake if it is so regarded. Such unwritten and unconscious evidence as is here displayed and discussed is fundamental to understanding how people have used and, as important, regarded their contemporary landscapes while living in and off them. ‘The architecture of the Romano-British landscape operated upon the remnants of four thousand years of prehistory and was in many ways a product of that prehistory’ conclude the authors; and as on Cranborne Chase, so virtually everywhere else in Britain. Not only that: add another 500 years to be in the early medieval period, and 1000 to be with the Normans, and the principle holds good for a well-informed understanding of agrarian history in medieval and later times too.

P J FOWLER

A new journal has appeared in these hard times for beleaguered academics. Its editors hope it will match Études Rurales, even Annales ESC. Its prime aim is to integrate a wide range of rural interests, including, for example, literature, folklore, religion, and vernacular architecture, with mainstream research in economic and social history. Moreover, this interdisciplinary venture proposes to cover a long time period from prehistory to the present day and to encompass all countries with a European cultural background. Considering all the many journals already catering for one or another group of such interests, this is imperialism indeed!

Seven articles appraise the trends in past writing and plan a new future in archaeology, history, rural geography, and folklore studies. The restlessness of some of their authors may have something to do with the forty-year rule: the end of World War II involved a new start around 1950 in all academic studies, and a reappraisal is, therefore, due. But the editors’ stance in this case is more backward-than forward-looking. The integration of cognate disciplines was the great aspiration of the 1950s and 1960s, and while the strength of that co-operation has ebbed and flowed, its successful practitioners who, in the nature of things, cannot be numerous, already find a ready home in existing journals; Past and Present especially has accommodated much of this work.

In the 1990s a brighter future might seem to loom for collaborative research within a truly European circle of scholars. The time is surely right for a Renaissance flavour to be injected into discussions of common cultural processes? But the editors’ main skills, as their footnotes citing foreign journals bear witness, do not lie in the European forum of debate. Nevertheless, B K Roberts in a mature survey of
NJ G POUNDS, An Historical Geography of Europe, CUP, 1990. xiii + 484 pp. £30 (hbk); £12.95 (pbk).

Between 1973 and 1985 Norman Pounds produced An Historical Geography of Europe in three volumes;
now he presents a single work under the same title. This new publication is itself substantial, and is in many ways impressive testament to the scholarship of an individual whose interests embrace 2,500 years of European history. The book is replete with facts and figures, graphs and maps, through which Pounds charts the 'changing spatial pattern of human activities'. But the end result is a work which looks to the past in more ways than one. This is a book for geographical traditionalists; devoting attention to population growth, and the pattern of urban centres, to agriculture, manufacturing industry, and trade in material goods. These are the chief recurring themes that structure the chronological chapters. There is no gainsaying their importance, nor the value of making accessible to an English speaking audience information first published in other European languages. But this is hardly a balanced record of human activity.

The shadow of a receding age of historical geography as economic history with maps hangs over this book to the detriment of treatment of social, cultural, and political themes. Much recent, and interesting work in these latter spheres goes unacknowledged; indeed the select bibliographies accompanying each chapter make scant reference to work published during the last decade (eight references from over 300). Pounds relies more on work from the 1950s and 1960s (161 references), not always the most attractive or challenging fare for his intended audience, the undergraduates of the 1990s. I would also hesitate to recommend to my students a work that restricts itself so narrowly to the description of spatial patterns. For this means that while some of the outward signs of change are detailed there is little opportunity to analyse the processes and significance of change. There is no place here, for example, for debate over the nature of developments involved in transition from feudalism to capitalism. There is little place indeed for ideas or theoretical explanation amidst the relentless accumulation of facts. While impressive in its historical sweep this book lacks a vital spark of intellectual excitement.

Martin Purvis


Writing a comprehensive social history of the English countryside from about 1300 to the 1930s, the effective span of this book, is a prodigious task, especially in 229 pages. What we actually have are 'essays dealing with some of the major aspects of rural society as it developed through the centuries, and with the economic and social setting'. These aim at 'a rounded picture', but they lack overall, and sometimes internal, coherence. The emphasis is firmly on the last two and a half centuries in any case.
THE AGRICULTURAL HISTORY REVIEW

The socio-economic survey material the book opens and finishes with is generally lucid and informative, but it is too compressed to be the textbook the title suggests. Only well-informed readers will get the full value so it is hard to see who this book is aimed at. As there is no bibliography, and the footnotes are no substitute, it is not a good introductory book. The purely social history never reaches the same standard and it can be, at its worst, like dropping back a century to early folklore. Lists of oddities are presented out of context for the delectation of readers and some, on the limitations of village education for instance, are used two or three times. The lack of care over comparability on dating and places is breathtaking at times and in great contrast to the economic history.

On pages 124-5, we range from the Dissolution back to medieval times and then on to the 1820s in a diffuse examination of the quality of village clergy: surely this tells us nothing. Page 72 is a strange mixture of material on cures including an East Anglian idea that whooping cough sufferers should put their heads in a hole in the ground to trap the cough. The hole was then filled in in Essex. Even accepting that they are different holes, this kind of lumping together of traditional practices according to the barest description of appearances may hide fundamental differences in underlying motivations. It is, of course, the ordinary folk who come out worst from this methodology which can only travesty our ancestors' ability to think rationally. Occasional reminders that we must not generalize too far, and even a well-made point at the end that most of the efforts of recent times to improve the farmworkers' lot were futile as long as their wages were too low to pay economic house rents or develop their own social activities, do not compensate for the bulk of the book. Women are barely mentioned, which is a comment in itself on its value as rounded social history.

In many ways this seems like an attempt to do the same job as The Victorian Countryside on a grander scale but in far less space. It does not work.

J H BETTEY


Cleeve Hill is a stretch of common land which is still some thirteen hundred acres in extent, and was formerly very much larger. It is four miles north-east of Cheltenham on the highest part of the Cotswolds with spectacular views across the valley of the Severn. Using the evidence of archaeology, careful fieldwork and extensive documentary research, David Aldred has compiled an interesting account of the development and use of this common from prehistory to the present. During the Middle Ages Cleeve Hill lay on the edge of the Bishop of Worcester's great estate on the Cotswolds, and for agricultural historians the most interesting section of the book will be the use of episcopal records to show the way in which the land was exploited and the life of the societies which used it. Much of the hill remained as common pasture, but there were also arable fields, woodland, many assarts, quarries and, in spite of the exposed and windswept situation, there were even small settlements, although few survived after the mid-fourteenth century.

After the Middle Ages the great expanse of common grazing on the hill remained a crucial feature of the agriculture of the neighbouring manors of Bishop's Cleeve and Southam, and there were numerous disputes over rights, overstocking, 'strangers' cattle, enclosures and other pressures on the land. Problems grew with the expansion of Cheltenham as a spa and the rapid growth in its population. Cheltenham races were held on the hill from 1818 and attracted vast crowds to the annoyance of the commoners who found their ancient rights turned into 'an open-air extension of the spa's many amusements'. Other threats to the common have included the building of houses, hotels and health resorts, the extension of quarries, its use for football, golf and other sports, and for military exercises.

But in spite of all this, a large expanse of the common survives, and this book provides a scholarly and well-illustrated exploration of its development and changing use.


In an absorbing account of the East Anglian breckland as a farming region Mark Bailey identifies the uses to which the land was put, the varied sources of livelihood of its inhabitants, and their relative prosperity from the thirteenth to the beginning of the sixteenth century. The mystifying question mark in the title refers to Michael Postan's discussion of marginal land and its use in the High and later Middle Ages. Seeing agrarian change determined mainly by the changing relationship of land to labour, Postan depicted poor and hungry soils like those of the brecklands as an unattractive terrain, which men did not choose to cultivate until population pressure forced them to do so. How does his proposition fit this case?

In a general sense, of course, Postan's argument must be valid, and he doubtless did not intend his remarks to apply to whole regions; as is well known, the breckland was continuously settled and cultivated from Neolithic times onwards. So the author's
severely theoretical discussion of the term 'marginal' is pitched at a different level from Postan's, and gives the word so narrow, and almost legalistic a meaning that he himself is then driven to circumlocutions to avoid using it as the comfortable shorthand term for which he criticizes Postan. The tough opening chapter on these lines is, fortunately, at odds with the thoroughly realistic and practical account of breckland agriculture which follows. Mark Bailey is able to show how flexibly the arable rotations worked, how well sheep courses were adapted at first to keep the fields fertile for the benefit of all cultivators, and later were more deliberately manipulated by lords at the expense of the peasantry. Important new light is shed on gradual changes in foldcourse practices, and also on the development of rabbit warrens. It took about a hundred years before rabbits were nursed from tender weaklings into healthy, strong survivors in the landscape. Then wild colonies formed, poachers seized their unwonted opportunities, the warren became the bane of life for peasant farmers in the common fields, and the change was reflected in rabbit prices. The story is sensitively analysed and explained.

Barley was the breckland’s main grain, and curiously the author, without debating the matter or defending his point of view, decides that barley was not a bread grain except in extreme circumstances. Allowing its use only for beer, he must then explain the high proportion of the land used for barley in terms of a commercial demand in urban markets near and far. This conclusion almost certainly exaggerates the brecklands’ contribution to the grain market, and, indeed, the supporting evidence is not compelling. The truth is that barley was the all-purpose grain long after the Middle Ages, providing the bulk of the bread eaten by the peasantry (when not displaced in some regions by oats), supplying all the beer, and yielding livestock feed when it could be spared. Far more convincing is the author’s evidence for sheep and rabbits as the richest resources of the breckland at the end of the Middle Ages.

Generous tables summarize information from the author’s wide-ranging documentary sources, without oppressively burdening the text. Occasionally a longer perspective, recognizing what happened after 1500, might have deepened the discussion, but this book remains a satisfying demonstration of how shrewdly and sympathetically historians have learned to judge each farming region on its own terms. Some land may be marginal, but rarely whole regions.

JOAN THIRSK


The Paston letters represent an exceptional source of information for historians of the fifteenth century, a period of sustained agricultural depression. The family’s preoccupation with the exploitation and organization of their landed estates is a recurrent feature of their correspondence. Their insights provide a more graphic illustration of the difficulties and commercial dilemmas facing fifteenth-century landlords than the terse and colourless manorial accounts and rent rolls which constitute the historian’s staple fare.

Bennett’s work still provides a delightful introduction and general background to the Paston letters, but the earnest historian must now rely on more sophisticated and detailed studies. Colin Richmond’s fascinating book – the first of a series – is principally a socio-political study of the Pastons as a gentry family, and a very fine one at that. It is appropriate, then, that he should concentrate on the legal, political and marital manoeuvring which underpinned the acquisition and then the defence of the Paston estates, for such issues are central to understanding the rise of a gentry family. As a consequence, though, the book offers few fresh perspectives on fifteenth-century Norfolk farming. The agricultural historian is still best served by R H Britnell’s assessment of the Paston letters in a recent volume of this Review.

Richmond, however, delights in digression (indeed it is his preferred method of history), and there are some nuggets to be uncovered on various aspects of estate management. In one footnote, for example, he presents a subtle perspective on the difficulties of finding tenants in the mid-fifteenth century. It was not just that tenants were reluctant to risk arable farming in a depressed grain market: it was certainly possible for farmers to squeeze a profit from arable land already in tillage. The discouragement to many prospective tenants, particularly in a period when they could pick and choose their holdings, lay in the initial costs of ‘bringing round’ land that had fallen out of cultivation. Abandoned holdings soon became overgrown and dilapidated, and required prohibitively high overheads to bring them into productive use.

The Paston letters as a source of agricultural history may receive further attention in Richmond’s forthcoming volumes. Perhaps one avenue worthy of his scholarship would be a direct comparison between evidence contained in the letters and that contained in any surviving manorial accounts. In this way, he could establish if the Pastons’ complaints about agrarian difficulties were justified, or whether the reality was less bleak than they would have themselves believe.

MARK BAILEY


Cuenca, once a centre of one of the taifa kingdoms in Al-Andalus, is a medium-sized hill-top town on the Castilian Meseta, half-way between Madrid and
Valencia. With its high population density, large buildings and limited open spaces, David Sven Reher classifies the town as prototypically urban. During the sixteenth century Cuenca was a vibrant and dynamic place with a burgeoning economy. Along with Segovia, it was one of the two leading producers of woollen cloth in Spain and an important point where sheep were sheared during their biannual transhumant migration. The town also maintained active trading relations with other centres in Castile, Europe and North Africa. Yet, by the nineteenth century, as Reher recounts, Cuenca was a shadow of its former self and had become a sleepy provincial capital whose meagre industrial production was destined almost entirely for the domestic market. Its demise was part of the widespread economic and demographic decline of almost all of urban Castile, with the exception of Madrid. Thus Cuenca was neither alone nor was it in control of its own destiny. Reher, in a well-written, pioneering study, incorporating a variety of hitherto unused data, analyses the socio-economic structures of the town within the wider context of the urbanization of rural Spain. Among his main findings is the town's perennial resistance to change. Family structures, basic migratory patterns, economic structures and their spatial distribution in the change, reaction to famine and disease, demographic patterns, etc. were all essentially unchanged, especially between the middle of the seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries. Reher discovers little evidence that, in the case of Cuenca, the existence of towns stimulated change in rural social structures and behavioural patterns. Unlike the Spanish capital, Cuenca's impact on its surrounding rural hinterland was marginal at best. Among topics covered in the book are urban systems, migration, inheritance and family ties. It will be a useful guide for demographers, social anthropologists, historical geographers and historians of early modern Spain.

JOSEPH HARRISON


This collection of papers is part of an intended pre-conference series prepared for the Tenth International Economic History Congress held at Leuven in the summer of 1990. As the Preface makes clear, the original plan was that those attending the conference would have available in advance complete sets of the papers to be presented. Unsurprisingly, this proved somewhat optimistic - not only did the organizers receive a very patchy response to their efforts, but what did arrive paid little attention to guidelines laid down as to length (eight to ten pages) and format. Instead of reverting to a more realistic, and cheaper, approach, issuing those attending with a sheaf of xeroxed typescripts lacking uniformity in either quality or language, the organizers opted for re-editing and retyping.

Whether such dedication and effort was worthwhile is an open question. The thirteen papers assembled here average less than nine printed pages each, and although dealing primarily with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they range geographically over the USA, Poland, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Italy, and England. The thematic introduction, signed by the organizers Maurice Aymard and Gilles Postel-Vinay, provides a charter for this lack of focus in their argument for an emphasis on diversity in rural economic organization. This emphasis is grounded in their belief that rural history is today marking time; that the major quantitative and comparative advances of the 1960s and 1970s have now been consolidated, but without the emergence of a new synthetic framework for the study of rural society. Some historians, they suggest, are inclined to stress the changeless nature of rural life, revolving unvaryingly around the economy of the market-place. Others have given up a search for a synthesizing vision, and have turned to an emphasis upon specificity. In response, this collection of papers restates the diversity of rural economies - hence, one can suppose, the jarring use of 'exploitations' in the title to signify that here we are not so much concerned with 'diversity', but with 'diversities'. Without isolating any individual contributor, it is difficult to see what useful purpose is served by publishing these short papers, whose utter lack of coherence and point is boldly pronounced a methodological virtue by the editors. And if the editors do seriously believe that there was a climacteric golden age of rural history in the 1960s and 1970s, this should be put down to academic mid-life crisis, rather than to any informed comment on the state of contemporary historical research. Faced with a claim that agrarian history has been 'marking time' since the 1960s and 1970s it is difficult to know quite where to start in itemizing important theoretical and empirical contributions from Germany, France, Italy, Britain, and the United States during the 1980s. One thing is certain - nothing of value can be reflected in eight-to-ten page conference contributions unless contributors address a common, well-posed problem in a highly disciplined fashion.

KEITH TRIBE


This book comprises abridgements of papers presented at the Tenth International Economic History Congress. Although there are, besides Tsubouchi's
overview, eight country studies; none deals with Indochina or Japan.

In his Preface, Hayami asks whether the region's development was different from that of Europe, and, if so, was rice cultivation the cause. This important question is not pursued. However, the assumption, suggested by the subtitle, of a similarity of the various peoples' experiences between 1500 and 1900, must be rejected on the evidence presented here. Tsu-bouchi portrays considerable variety among rice cultures and societies, and suggests that rice growing, per se, does not necessarily lead to high population densities or to 'oriental despotisms'. Yet in Korea, Yi considers, government was influential in the move from a highland rain-fed agriculture to lowland rice cultivation, and even if, as Lee believes, rice productivity improvements were not dependent on the state, both authors agree that the change was accompanied by population growth. Liu and Shi Zhihong describe advances in Chinese traditional agriculture. The former is puzzled as to why population pressure, small farms, and tenancy could delay industrialization in China, though not in Japan. The latter observes that population increase, unlike in Europe, preceded non-agricultural developments but fails to note that the expansion in numbers (almost seven-fold) was far greater than in Japan. The traditional rulers of the Malay peninsula and Java appear to have had little interest in hydraulic works. There, and in Thailand, rice production responded to international economic demands, backed up in Java by colonial administrative pressures.

This publication was designed for advance distribution to Congress participants. The editors, compelled to follow stringent length guidelines, excised all tables, graphs, appendices, and most references from the papers, thereby somewhat diminishing for this reviewer the value of an otherwise interesting collection of essays.

P K HALL

D S Reid, The Durham Crown Lordships in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, and the aftermath, Durham County Local History Society, Durham, 1990. vi + 196 pp. £7.50 (+ £1 p&p, from the society, 3 Briardene, Margery Lane, Durham DH1 4QU).

Reid's title is perhaps rather mischievous. The second and third chapters of his short monograph are indeed about the Durham Crown lordships, but the second (and longer) part of the book offers a detailed discussion of a single manor – Long Newton in Barnard Castle lordship – both during its period in the hands of the Crown and after its sale to the City of London in 1627-8.

The Crown was of unusual local importance as a landowner in County Durham. Reid presents much valuable material on its administration. The record is pretty dismal; rents, in nominal terms, remained well below their high medieval levels even in 1600. There is a fascinating account of the Duchy of Cornwall's attempt to remedy this in the early 1620s which largely failed in the face of tenant resistance. I did come to feel that County Durham was too small a frame in which to write a satisfactory account of the Crown's administration of its estates, especially when so much material is overlooked. Reid might be forgiven for not discovering the materials on the Duchy's management of its Durham estates which remains in the Duchy of Cornwall Office, but he never draws on the Exchequer Equity Pleadings in the Public Record Office (E 112) and I should be very surprised if he could say, hand on heart, that there was nothing of interest in them.

The remaining chapters are more satisfying. Their main theme is really to show how Long Newton was transformed into an estate village, epitomized by the clearing of one side of the village street to make way for a great house and park in the 1660s (a matter on which I would have welcomed much more). There is valuable material on the field system before enclosure, the conversion of arable to pasture and the enclosure by agreement in 1659. Certainly Reid shows how the timing of enclosure was contingent upon tenurial matters. On completion, a refusal to accept new leases at the rents required by the lord left him with an extensive area of vacant, untenanted ground until he reduced his rents from 7s to 5s an acre. All the way through this section, I wanted to know how the Vanes could afford the estates policies they adopted.

The account of Long Newton is clogged with too much detail and could have benefited enormously from more comparative examples. An accident has overcome the footnotes to chapter three. No matter; this detailed study should not be overlooked by early modern agricultural historians.


This volume describes the history of the development of the Blyth navigation and its environs in East Suffolk. While the author adopts a purely factual account she vividly depicts the struggles and conflicts experienced by landowners, merchants, and professional men in their attempts to improve this most penurious waterway. A detailed account of the lives of a number of individuals including members of the clergy living in the Blyth Valley provides a backcloth to this story of determination, self-help, private initiative and dynamism. Perhaps the book's main contribution is in its description of the pivotal role
played by local attorneys, who both managed the local estates of landowners and merchants and acted as treasurers and clerks to local turnpike trusts and river navigations. This gave them a central role in raising finance and support for the development of the local infrastructure. (cf. Peter Jermyn of Halesworth pp 103–104).

There are twenty chapters in all, each between four and eight pages long. The text is supported by a series of clear and detailed illustrations, photographs and maps which provide a useful visual perspective to this study of East Suffolk. While the book is structurally sound it is confined to a descriptive and chronological account. It is disappointing that the fruits of such meticulous research are not related to other regional studies or to current debates on the development of the region. The evidence throws up many questions about the organization of trade and in particular the functions of those who serviced the river traffic. The nature of trade is discussed in relation to the conveyance of corn and coal and there is a brief outline of the development of rural industry and agricultural change, but more could have been said about the spatial development and pattern of transport and the role of the local road haulage industry and its interlinkages with the river traffic.

This does not mean, however, that the book fails to achieve what it sets out to do. Given the limitations of the source material, a point which the author acknowledges on p 81, the parameters of the study are inevitably restricted. Rachel Lawrence admirably reconstructs the realities of the development of a rural-based economy through the experiences of the local inhabitants in their attempts to provide a viable transport route.

This is a welcome addition to the growing number of publications on local communities, which have been overshadowed by the interest shown for more obviously glamorous areas of study of the industrialized North-West and Midland regions of England.

FIONA WOOD


Although written by an English literature specialist, The Englishman's England provides the historian with an interesting and unusual book which examines the development of and changing attitudes to tourism from the medieval period to the nineteenth century. Ian Ousby studies the different stages of tourism in terms of literary shrines, great houses, interesting ruins, and natural beauty. Although the book, which has the sub-title of 'Taste, travel and the rise of tourism' is wide ranging and examines places as different as Stonehenge, Jervaulx Abbey, and Chatsworth House, it is somewhat imbalanced with rather too much space being given to a few subjects such as the Poet's Corner, Shakespeare's Stratford, and Wordsworth's abhorrence of and contribution to the 'rash assault' in the Lake District.

The author frequently draws parallels with today's tourists and makes some interesting and provocative comments. He suggests that the penchant for visiting country houses and the acceptance by the upper classes of this desire in the late eighteenth century was an English compromise to the revolutionary period. 'The continentals chopped off heads...while in England the lower classes were allowed to visit and gawp'. He comments that tourism, despite having developed from the pilgrims' desire to visit shrines, had become by the eighteenth century a superficial sightseeing activity and he further contends that the tourists' present-day admiration for untouched nature is influenced largely by a guilt complex concerning poor stewardship of the natural world.

The book is attractively illustrated and is well written with a flowing and easily readable style though with a rather heavy reliance on quotations. The study is useful for historians in providing a different perspective on the growth of tourism from that presented in other published works which have concentrated largely on the seaside town and the impact of railways.

CHRISTINE HALLAS


This attempt to enliven the study of the English industrial revolution offers a broad framework for future research. Wrigley injects the debate with an imaginative characterization of the English economy which became transformed, it is suggested, in two stages between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries. During the first stage, the pre-industrial economy expanded along traditional lines to form an 'advanced organic economy' and was replaced, when the inevitable ceiling was reached, by the 'mineral-based energy economy', which constituted the second stage. To emphasize the protracted nature of change, and to incorporate such recent findings as the persistence of traditional technologies and modes of production in many sectors well into the nineteenth century, the two stages are seen to have overlapped for several decades. The negative feedback of the earlier system, which preoccupied contemporary economists, was eventually superseded by a structure of positive feedback. Dependence on the agricultural sector that provided the basis for as well as the constraint on expansion in the first stage was reduced in the second when new industrial sectors emerged in which the consumption of organic material was minimized. So far, so unexceptionable. The breakthrough occurred, in Wrigley's interpretation, because
of the ready availability of coal and metal ores in Britain, which formed the foundation of an energy-based economy, where industrial development proceeded on the basis of increasingly complex use of inorganic materials.

The vague chronology of Wrigley's thesis and the weakness of the explanation of the replacement of one system by another comprise the least acceptable features of the work. Wrigley rejects the notion that change was implicit in the nature of the earlier system and ignores such possible avenues of explanation as the various forces of human agency. Indeed any causal relationship is undermined by the author's emphasis on the casual and coincidental character of the transformation. While the 'fuke' theory of the industrial revolution has constituted the last resort of many frustrated economic historians, it is less than satisfactory.

Elements of the industrial revolution debate are undeniably unstimulating, particularly the gradualist perspective adopted by the quantitative school (which Wrigley's approach implicitly supports), yet it is precisely the most interesting and valuable revisions of recent years that Wrigley neglects or dismisses. The proto-industrial model may have lost its early vigour (though Wrigley's complete rejection of it is poorly founded) but from it have emerged such potentially productive themes as regional transformations, the complexity of organizational forms and the importance of social relations of production. Minute local studies have provided important clues to the nature of industrialization, and social and industrial conflict have recently been revealed as important determinants of industrial change. Such an ambitious project, of which this book represents the starting point, invites criticism, yet too much of influence is omitted from this framework to allow optimism that it will constitute the 'answer' to the industrial revolution. It does, however, hold the promise of lively debate.

KATRINA HONEYMAN

SARAH WILMOT, 'The Business of Improvement': Agriculture and Scientific Culture in Britain, 1750-1870, Historical Geography Research Series, 24, Cheltenham, 1990. iii + 130 pp. £7.95.

Sarah Wilmot's splendid little book says nothing that is really new or unexpected and presents conclusions that inevitably reflect the sparsity and tentative nature of studies in the field. But it is exactly the kind of review needed to encourage investigation where opportunities abound. Almost fifty pages of notes and bibliography provide ample justification.

It begins by establishing the growing influence of agricultural science during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in terms of the societies and publications that represented its interests. Despite the dismissiveness of some recent scholarship, there is clearly no historical basis for omitting the agrarian improvers and their remarkable gatherings in any consideration of the scientific culture of the time.

That this interest could reflect only a new attitude to science or to the scientific method, rather than the application of new knowledge to practice, is borne out in the minimal improvements in agricultural productivity attributable to science and in the frequent expressions of a faith in the future of scientific progress. Yet the early acceptance of agricultural research as respectable philosophical enquiry made it attractive to a landowning elite needing to be seen contributing to public service. It thus had the effect of transforming the notion of 'a gentleman' and shifting the basis of social leadership. By the middle of the nineteenth century it also provided significant career opportunities for individuals of impeccable scientific credentials. One such was Joseph (not John) Henry Gilbert, who worked at Rothamsted for fully fifty-eight years and, for six of them, held the Chair of Rural Economy (not Agriculture) at Oxford.

But the relationship between agricultural science and social change was complex. Except for the early years of political tension after the French Revolution, agricultural improvement had a broadly stabilizing influence in society; to a significant degree it was a 'science of flattery'. From the 1830s, however, the 'feudal' system of land ownership was criticized more openly as progressive science implied a demand for change. It is no wonder that contemporary debate was so fierce and no surprise that this represents so fascinating a controversy for us today.

STEWART RICHARDS


Agricultural historians have known since the days of T W Fletcher that Lancashire is different. Here the depression bit less hard and a combination of factors protected the Lancashire farmer from the hard times experienced by his southern brother in the years after 1880, even if the years before that date had been tougher in the north-west. Similarly, to those interested in the history of the labourers Lancashire is special. The great reports of the late nineteenth century point, in some areas at least, to a very late survival of living-in service and a farming ladder which had elements of reality not found elsewhere. It was also in Lancashire that the 'new' labourers union won its first great victory in 1913.

Yet, as the author points out, Lancashire agriculture, like northern agriculture in general, remains unstudied compared with the south and east. This pamphlet, based on Dr Mutch's thesis, seeks to remedy this
by looking at that area of south-west Lancashire dominated by small, intensively farmed units. He shows how the area was developed agriculturally essentially in response to local urban demand for food and for fodder for the huge urban animal population. The society and economy that emerged was not however one of peasant agriculture but of capitalist production for the market with 'ample capital, liberal use of manure, the best seed and cattle and abundance of labour' as a contemporary account put it. Increasingly, as the century went on, the farming of south-west Lancashire came to rely on intensive vegetable production, and especially early potato growing.

However, to a southerner like this reviewer, there remain many similarities between Lancashire and the south and east. In an excellent section on game Mutch shows how preservation and shooting united rural society in rituals of reciprocity as well as dividing it on lines of class and law. Similarly before the 1880s at least landlords acted as local leaders and could rely on the political support of the tenant farmer. From the 1890s onwards this began to change under the impact of depression. Here Mutch differs significantly from Fletcher. He argues, as he has in this journal, that the depression produced real conflict between landlord and tenant in south-west Lancashire which although it failed was of central importance. He argues that out of these conflicts grew a distinct consciousness among the tenants of these interests as farmers which were 'cutting across the traditional bonds fostered by landlords'. This view, it is argued, is supported by the farmers' actions in relation to the strike of 1913 where 'the farmers took the lead' and took a much more anti-union line than the one adopted by the landlords.

Ultimately these arguments are convincing although given constraints of length there is less supporting material than one would like. Certainly it is an account which fits in with the formation of organizations like the Farmer's Federation, an openly strike-breaking organization, elsewhere in England. More than that, though, this pamphlet provides an excellent introduction to the social history of this still little studied area. One can only hope Dr Mutch is able to bring out more material from this fine thesis especially on labouring life.

ALUN HOWKINS


The publication in 1989, virtually unchanged, of a doctoral thesis written in 1952 would at first glance appear to have little to recommend it to potential readers. This is not true of Armstrong's book. Why it has not been published before is both a shame and a mystery. (The explanation may be that, until his retirement in the mid-1980s, the author was a distinguished public servant rather than an academic, and so was under no pressure.) Still, better late than never. For despite the literature on later nineteenth-century Irish agriculture produced over the last thirty-odd years, Armstrong's book still has great merit.

The first section, on the system of land tenure in Ireland and Ulster in the period from the Famine to the establishment of peasant proprietorship in the early twentieth century, is as good as, if not better than, anything else on the topic in print. Particularly useful is its discussion of the complex questions of Ulster tenant right and the details of various land legislation enacted before the Wyndham Act of 1903 effectively solved the problem of Irish land tenure. In this section the author mines the minutes of evidence presented to the various parliamentary committees with a thoroughness that, in terms of Irish historiography, was ahead of its time and not attempted again for nearly twenty years.

The discussion of land tenure occupies about a third of the book. This proportion is about right. Compared to Britain, this subject has bulked large, too large, in the historiography of Irish agricultural history. On the other hand technical developments, such as they were, have frequently been given short shrift, or ignored altogether. Here Armstrong is particularly strong. Most of the great mechanical developments common in Britain during the period of High Farming, were, he shows, largely irrelevant to an agriculture where farms were small, labour underemployed for much of the year and which, in any case, was shifting away from arable production towards animal husbandry. In the context of Irish agricultural change technological development meant things like the replacement of the sickle by the scythe, or the effectiveness of using Bordeaux mixture in eliminating blight. Thus the undoubted rise in agricultural incomes in Ulster, as in the rest of Ireland, in the second half of the nineteenth century was mostly a result, through famine and emigration, of a reduction of pressure on the land rather than technical change: a sort of latter-day Black Death effect. Despite superficial political/religious similarities, a hundred years after the Act of Union the pattern of farming practice in Ulster analysed by Armstrong was far removed from that of much of England.

The publication of this work, however belated, is to be commended. It should become essential reading for any student of the development of agriculture in the British Isles in the second half of the nineteenth century.

DAVID JOHNSON


'No worthwhile comment on Dutch foreign trade is
BOOK REVIEWS

possible as the figures are virtually useless.' This was
the dismissive statement made by A S Milward and
S B Saul in the chapter on The Netherlands in their
standard work, _The Development of the Economics of
Continental Europe, 1850–1914_ (1977, p 214). What a
pleasure it is, therefore, to welcome Pilat's study —
written in impeccable English — which is essentially a
collection of time-series on export volumes by
product, together with price series, and the deflated
results. The methodological problems involved with
the original source material are substantial, and indeed
it is now for the first time that we have before us a
really comprehensive set of series, although important
work in certain areas had been done in the past,
notably by R W J M Bos and J L van Zanden. The
main text of this work is only thirty pages in length
(the rest being taken up with appendices), and half of
that is to do with methodology. This brevity, and
the clarity of the graphs and tables, make it a useful
reference tool; the analytical sections are limited to
listing only the most obvious conclusions drawn from
the quantitative material. One interesting point is the
rapidity with which Dutch agriculture responded to
the crisis of the late 1870s: Pilat sets 1883 as the turning
point after which exports ceased their decline, and
began rapid and extended growth right up to the First
World War, especially in horticultural and increasingly
in processed agricultural products. The importance
of the subject matter is beyond doubt: agricultural
exports accounted for some 40 per cent of total Dutch
exports in the 1920s, and a large part of those exports
were (and still are) bound for the United Kingdom.
Pilat is part of a team working at Groningen
University on the history of productivity and income
in Dutch agriculture, and this set of results is published
by the Dutch Agronomical-Historical Institute. It
makes a string of eighty-year series available inter-
nationally, and — barring the inevitable quibbles with
the methodology — allows us finally to jettison
Milward and Saul's dire words of warning, at least as
far as agricultural exports are concerned.

MICHAEL WINTLE

JACK RALPH KLOPPENBURG JNR, _First the Seed: the political
economy of plant technology_, 1492–2000, CUP, 1988,
xviii + 349 pp. £27.50.
HENRY A WALLACE and WILLIAM L BROWN, _Corn and its
Early Fathers_, 2nd edn, Iowa State UP, Ames,
_First the Seed_ covers the history of agricultural seed
production in North America and the present and
possible future scientific and economic development
of the seed industry in the world. Within this large
topic Kloppenburg concentrates on three areas which
he succinctly sets out in the preface:

'(1) progressive commodification of the seed, (2)
elaboration of a social division of labour between
public and private plant breeding, and (3) asymmetries
in global patterns of seed commerce and exchange
between the less developed countries of the South
and the advanced industrial nations of the North.'

Farmers can save part of many harvested crops as
seed for next year. The author shows how US
commercial seed firms have overcome this 'biological
obstacle' to commerce and forced farmers to buy new
seed each year by promoting hybrid varieties (whose
seed is not worth saving), product differentiation and
brand names, successful lobbying for patent legislation
covering seeds and recently, by using biotechnology
to engineer seeds capable of commercial exploitation.

The declining importance of public institutions in
developing and producing agricultural seeds in the
present century is discussed; at one time the distribu-
tion of free seed by them was a major hindrance to
commercial production in the USA. Public bodies
have been pushed into basic research, leaving the
development of commercially exploitable seeds to
private enterprise.

Surveying the global distribution of, and commerce in,
germplasm, Kloppenburg highlights the paradox
that commercial organizations and governments in the
developed North wish to regard plant life in
germplasm-rich areas of the underdeveloped South as
a 'common heritage' to be sampled for research
purposes. But the North needs to sell, as a commodity,
the new seed strains created by such research. He
concludes that the underdeveloped nations should
seek world-wide agreement to a system of compen-
sation on a national basis for any commercial use of
their germplasm resources.

The author traces recent advances in biotechnology
and notes the growing interest of large chemical firms
in seed production. He foresees a danger that, if
governments allow large multinational firms to take
the lead in biotechnology, profit, not the best interests
of mankind, will dictate development. The success
of the chemical industry in promoting the use of
herbicides and pesticides on farms in recent years
demonstrates the danger of leaving the environment
at the mercy of the market.

Kloppenburg uses Marxist economic and social
theory as the framework of his discussion and this
works well, allowing his argument to flow smoothly
from the past to possible future developments in plant
technology. The product of much detailed research,
this well-written book is a convincing argument that
society must determine the direction of scientific
research.

Following chapters on the nature of corn (ie maize)
and corn breeding, much of _Corn and Its Early Fathers_
consists of short biographies of men who have bred
corn in the USA, from the eighteenth to the twentieth
centuries. Although the final chapters do show some concern about modern research methods this is not a critical work: corn breeding is here depicted as steadily progressing over the years, culminating in the production of hybrid corn as an unmixed blessing to US and world farmers. This is a lightweight book, by no means as erudite as Kloppenburg’s.

MALCOLM THICK


This is a fascinating book, and certainly one of the most interesting that this reviewer has read for some time. In it Warren Dean examines the curious fact that the world’s commercially successful rubber plantations were established in South-East Asia, and to a lesser extent in West Africa, whilst all attempts to cultivate it in estates in its native South America failed abysmally. This was because a pernicious fungus, Microcyclus uliei, or South American Leaf Blight, rapidly infected any large stands of the main commercial rubber tree, Hevea brasiliensis, which were planted in or near its native habitat. Many attempts were made to breed fungus-resistant strains, or graft fungus-resistant canopies to high yielding stems, but still the fungus invaded and reduced the flow of latex to non-economic levels. Indeed, high yield and high resistance seemed to be mutually incompatible.

Yet in Asia, by luck, the tree flourished. Unwittingly, those who carried the tree to Asia had removed it from the environment in which the fungus flourished. There the tree grew disease-free, and the plantations produced copiously. Although commercial plantations were really only established from the 1890s in Malay and the Dutch East Indies, and their rubber was only used in tyre manufacture from 1910, so successful were they that by the 1920s overproduction was evident, and prices began to fall. This led to the rubber-control schemes of the interwar years. Incensed by price-rigging, Henry Ford attempted to plant estates in the Amazon basin, but his scheme turned into a gigantic fiasco, and after thirteen years, during which $10.5 million was spent, and 3,650,000 trees had been put in, there was almost nothing to tap. The blight had won again. Goodyear, Firestone, and others all tried to beat the cartel in the same way, but failed. Mostly these schemes were laughably mismanaged and misinformed – one promising plot of supposedly resistant stock was burned down in a fire started by an outdoor barbecue! Where the commercial companies failed, Government did not do better. Repeated attempts by the Brazilian Government to grow rubber collapsed, again due to incompetence and ignorance. The fungus remained the real problem, and it became clear that it was useless to try to grow rubber in South America until a cure had been found. Yet mercifully, and puzzlingly, the blight had not found its way to the South Asian rubber groves, even despite jet air-transport. If there had been attempts to sabotage the Asian plantations with diseased material from South America, and how can there not have been, they had not worked. So Henry Wickham, who had first brought the seed from Brazil in 1876, had succeeded where many others had failed. He was encouraged by Clements R Markham of the India Office, later head of the Royal Geographical Society, and they, together with rubber-mad Henry Ridley of the botanical gardens in Singapore, laid the basis of the world’s rubber supply. If they succeeded because they had the luck to try growing it where the fungus was absent, it was still a tremendous achievement to which the author gives grudging credit. Wickham’s seeds provided the genetic stock for the world’s estate rubber, and even if he was a garrulous old dog who had used the seeds to get himself and his family a free passage home, he still deserved the knighthood which Dean so much disparages.

A J H LATHAM


Known earlier for his The Draining of the Somerset Levels (CUP, 1970), Michael Williams has now turned his sojourn in the American Midwest into a massive volume. His account of American forests falls into four parts. His first section on the forest before 1600 shows how the Indians used fire as a tool to manage the land and to promote their welfare. As a result, the nature of the landscape was radically changed so that when Europeans came they found a forest whose characteristics were man-made and not natural. In the next 250 years, with the expansion of settlement, the ravages of fire were suppressed and controlled but the frontier of the forest was pushed back through settlement, with timber required in America’s wooden age for houses, fencing and for fuel. As the population grew, more land was required for agricultural production. Timber, produced by a growing number of sawmills, was also needed for the construction of ships to provide material not only for the hulls, the masts and spars but also pitch, tar and turpentine for British as well as for colonial shipping. An export trade grew up in staves, shingles and planks while in the colonies the expanding iron industry had a growing appetite for charcoal whose provision left a deep imprint on the forest. The pace of agricultural expansion grew as did the industrial demand for timber. To cope with these needs, the location of milling shifted and its organization altered. In the
third section which carries the story from 1860 to 1920, three case studies are considered: the depletion of the forests of the Lake States; the lumberman’s assaults on the southern forest and the Pacific Northwest, the last lumber frontier; together with a discussion of the enormous impact of the railway. And with the pace of deforestation (140 million acres before 1860 and a further 50 million between 1860 and 1910), concern about this problem was expressed. Dr Williams’ fourth section is largely an expansion of his chapter in Richards and Tucker, *World Deforestation in the Twentieth Century* (reviewed in *Agricultural History Review*, 37, 1989) where he charted the reforestation of America with the large-scale abandonment of farmland made possible by the intensification of agriculture. This long historical story is discussed with the aid of a number of illustrations, over forty tables and more than 100 maps and diagrams in the context of the place of the forest in American culture. Given the expanding forest resources of the USA, this book, though published by an English publishing house, was appropriately produced in America.

WALTER MINCHINTON


For those interested in the development of Indian agriculture, Dr Guha’s book provides much of interest, but it is also a deeply flawed work. It works best in its discussion of the nineteenth century, and Guha in general seems more comfortable dealing with the fragmentary evidence from the period. He is especially good on such issues as the British distrust of Indian officials, which contributed to an overly oppressive tax regime (pp 31–8).

Unfortunately, when considering the period from the 1880s onwards, Guha’s account increasingly lacks conviction, despite having a prominent central idea. Following the Malthus-oriented ideas of Michael Postan, Guha argues that the technological development in the agriculture of the Bombay Deccan was virtually stagnant throughout the period, and indeed was further rendered ineffective by environmental degradation. As a result, the rise of population in the nineteenth century led to an agrarian crisis of the type predicted by Malthus, which the introduction of such factors as railroads and the development of the world market did little to alleviate.

While this idea has some plausibility, it would certainly have worked better if Guha had marshalled his evidence more effectively. His population figures (ch VI) highlight recurring episodes of high mortality from the late 1890s to the early 1920s, but it is never shown convincingly whether these were due primarily to declining resources relative to population or to extraordinary conditions of climate and disease. In particular, Guha declines to explain why these crises did not return in the 1930s and early 1940s, when the population squeeze on land seems to have been greater than at any time previously.

It is in his treatment of the question of technological stagnation (Ch IV), however, that Guha is least convincing. His two main case studies – for sugar-cane and cotton – provide as much evidence for the effectiveness of new technology as against it, despite his claim that this appearance of progress is illusory. The more generalized figures supplied for crop acreages, crop yields, and the availability of bullock power present a better case for the stability of agricultural production at least, but these figures are extremely broad and do not take into consideration regional variations. In particular, the rural-urban interaction that was becoming increasingly important throughout the period is unreflected in this material and is summarily dismissed by Guha based on a very sketchy analysis of real wages.

Because of these and other deficiencies (such as the vagueness about why the technological response should have been so weak in the first place), Guha seems at a loss in dealing with the latter part of his period. As a result, statements defending aspects of his thesis became increasingly debatable if not contradictory (cf. his comments about the importance of town-country relations on pp 138 and 141). In short, by tying himself too rigidly to Malthusian economics, Guha in the end signal fails to do justice to the complexities of Indian agriculture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

JOHN LANGDON
Notices to Members

1 Changes to the Constitution

The Executive Committee will recommend various changes in the Constitution of the Society to the 1992 Annual General Meeting.

Proposed change 1
Paragraph 2: replace 'the history of agriculture and rural economy.' with 'agricultural history and the history of rural economy and society.'

This change merely broadens the formal aims of the Society to match those printed on the cover of the Review. It will make no change to what the Society actually does.

Proposed change 2
Paragraph 3: delete the sentence 'Candidates for membership shall be nominated by any member of the Society and all such nominations shall be approved by the Executive Committee'.

The practice of nominating candidates for membership died out many years ago and not even the longest-serving member of the Committee can recall having a list of names of the Society’s new members put before it for its approval. We think this anachronistic item is reminiscent of the age of the gentlemen’s club. For many years the Treasurer has immediately accepted as a new member anyone who pays the subscription, and simply presented the Committee with a list of those who have joined over the past year.

Proposed change 3
Paragraph 4: delete full point at the end of second sentence and add ', who may set a lower subscription for those who are registered for a degree and not in full-time employment.'

This will allow us to set a student subscription rate lower than that charged to those in full-time employment. In this way it is hoped to encourage a lifetime interest in and commitment to the Society among those registered for a degree. The Committee believes that today’s students will be tomorrow’s ordinary members, so it is important to help them at this stage. The Treasurer will suggest a current student rate at the 1992 Annual General Meeting.

Proposed changes 4 and 5
Paragraph 7: replace ‘sixteen’ with ‘twelve’.
Paragraph 8: add a sentence to the end of the paragraph 'The retiring ordinary members shall not be eligible after eight successive years of office for immediate re-election.'

In paragraph 7, which deals with the size of the Committee, we wish to reduce it from sixteen to twelve, and in paragraph 8 we wish to exclude members who have served eight continuous years on the Committee from standing for immediate re-election. These are important changes and revert back to the situation in the original Constitution of 1953. The Committee was enlarged in 1979 because the Society’s membership had grown considerably from its early years. But since then numbers in the Society have shrunk and fewer new people are now coming forward for election to the Committee, so that sometimes vacancies are uncontested. When there is a contest the natural tendency of members who attend the Annual General Meeting to vote for names they know means the turnover of Committee members is very slow; so much so that at the present rate there is almost a danger of places on the Committee becoming life appointments. The Committee regards this with anxiety, because it is only by a continuous infusion of new (and younger) members that fresh ideas can be brought onto the Committee to help maintain the vitality of the Society. We believe that the reversion to the pre-1979 practice of an enforced sojourn in the wilderness will encourage more newcomers to seek election to the Committee. We also believe that a smaller Committee of twelve (plus President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Editor) will be more effective than one of sixteen.

Proposed Change 6
Paragraph 9: replace ‘the consent of the nominee’ with ‘the signed consent of the nominee’; replace ‘seven days’ with ‘ten days’; add to the end of the paragraph ‘Those nominating candidates for the Executive Committee should provide a statement of about twenty words about each candidate at the Annual General Meeting where the election takes place.’

Changes to paragraph 9 of the Constitution affect the conduct of elections, and are intended to make both the candidate and the person proposing that candidate think about the election. The candidate and the proposer must both sign the nomination form. In addition the proposer should supply a statement of about twenty words about each candidate they nominate at the AGM where the election takes place.

Ag Hist Rev, 39, II, pp 190–191
This means that the proposer is required to act more as an election agent, rather than regard their duties as a mere formality. The change from seven to ten days will give the Secretary more warning of nominations for the Executive Committee.

2 Changes to the Conferences

The Committee have decided to introduce a number of changes to the residential Spring Conferences. These have been held since the 1950s and they provide members with the main opportunity to hear papers and meet together in comfortable surroundings. They last from Monday afternoon to Wednesday morning and are held early in April. They will continue to be held at this time and although it is not intended to alter this, we will make some changes to the way the conference programme is structured. We have decided to move the official Conference Dinner from the Monday evening to the Tuesday evening, and the excursion from the Tuesday afternoon to the Wednesday morning. This will leave the Monday evening free for a more serious paper to be given than hitherto. It is planned that this should be presented by a 'big name' in agricultural history talking on a major theme. Society members are encouraged to suggest any names that they may have for this spot to the Secretary who will pass these on to the conference organizers. The removal of the Tuesday afternoon excursion will leave the bulk of that day free, after the Society's Annual General Meeting, for papers. We normally expect to have six papers over the whole conference and one will be a debate with a number of speakers under the guidance of a chairman. It is intended that this will again be on a key topic or issue in agrarian history, and once again the Secretary will be glad to receive suggestions.

A further change we intend to introduce from 1992 is to put aside a single half-hour slot where non-professional agricultural historians who attend the conference can talk about their own research. This will allow them to tell a predominantly professional audience about their work. It is hoped that this will provide an opportunity for the amateur engaged on a project, who is perhaps stuck or uncertain how to proceed, to obtain help and advice to further their researches.

We do not intend to change the arrangements for our one-day Saturday December Conference, held at the Institute of Historical Research jointly with the Historical Geography Research Group of the Institute of British Geographers. This will continue to be centred on a theme with papers given by members from both societies. In addition we are introducing a new one-day conference held in September. It is intended that this will also be a Saturday one, jointly run with a different local institution each year, with predominantly regional themes. The first of these was arranged for 21 September 1991 and was held in Oxford at Rewley House, the headquarters of the Oxford University Department of Continuing Education, on woodland communities. Members who have suggestions about locations, themes and speakers for either of the one-day conferences are encouraged to give these to the Secretary who will inform the appropriate organizers and the Executive Committee.

These changes have been made in response to the replies received to the questionnaire on conferences that was distributed at the end of 1990. There were 64 responses, which compares favourably with an average attendance of 50 at the Spring Conference over the last twenty years. The Executive Committee wishes to thank all who replied.
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Membership is open to all who are interested in the subject and the subscription is £15 (from 1 February 1992). Details may be obtained from the Treasurer.

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