

The
**AGRICULTURAL
HISTORY REVIEW**



SUPPLEMENT SERIES, 1, 1992

FENLAND WORKER-PEASANTS

**The Economy of Smallholders at Rippingale,
Lincolnshire, 1791-1871**

*

BY ADRIAN HALL

with a preface by Joan Thirsk

PUBLISHED BY
THE BRITISH AGRICULTURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Preface

FOR A CENTURY or more, the history of English agriculture has been written within one framework. The rise of large-scale, capital intensive farming has been seen as the golden end of the road. That road end has now been reached, and yet the road winds on. Where is it going? At present, we cannot be sure, but historians with a memory of English farming history that reaches back beyond the last two centuries will not be surprised to see that, as fresh vistas open before us, we are also given new views of the past. That new perspective enables us to appraise the economy of the peasant farm from a different viewpoint, and more sympathetically than has been possible for nearly a century. In the new circumstances, the Minister of Agriculture in July 1987 'pledged the support for the family farm, which he described as vital both for the environment and for the economic health of rural communities'.¹ If that viewpoint is maintained, we may expect to see a better understanding of the social and economic role of the peasant farms of continental Europe in the future, the political consequences of which could be far-reaching.

As a contribution to this reappraisal of peasant agriculture, Adrian Hall's study of nineteenth-century peasant farmers in Lincolnshire is timely, and warmly to be welcomed. For too long the very existence of this class in England has been ignored, while all attention has been directed to the growth of large tenant farms and their necessary supply of labourers. What A H Johnson called 'the disappearance of the small landowner' has been accepted as an accomplished fact in England by the

beginning of the nineteenth century, if not earlier.² Adrian Hall rescues this class from oblivion, and subjects the economy of the smallholding and the strategies of its occupants to closer scrutiny. His sensitive analysis of the characteristics of the self-perpetuating family farm shows the vital role it played in the local community as well as serving the wider market of the nation. Enriched by a study of one community in the Lincolnshire fenland, Rippingale, he brings the generalities into sharper focus through personal histories, and sheds new light on the continuing role played by the peasant class in the nineteenth century.

Rippingale was not the ideal environment for smallholders, since the land belonged to a large landowner. Yet circumstances allowed them to survive, and this careful study shows their strategy. They had trades as well as farms. They were shopkeepers, carriers, and tool menders. The notion that family farmers always lived entirely by agriculture is, as Adrian Hall convincingly argues, an invention of the nineteenth century. The myth has to be cleared away. When the economy of the peasant farm is more fully examined, the contribution of peasant farmers is revealed as a distinctive amalgam of services and agricultural products that entitled them to recognition as a third class in rural society. Alongside the farmers and the labourers, the smallholders played an essential role in smoothing the operations of the capitalist farmer as well as finding for themselves their own way of life. The women in the family had their recognized, indispensable place in the regime of work. They all worked

¹ Report in *The Times*, 18 July 1987, under the headline 'MacGregor pledges support for family farms'.

² Johnson's book of that title was published in 1909.

extremely hard, but they maintained a relatively independent position in the village community.

During the severe agricultural depression at the end of the nineteenth century, smallholders attracted considerable attention in the political arena when some of them showed far greater resilience and resourcefulness than the large tenant farmers.³ Yet despite attempts to increase their numbers, the economics of farming relentlessly withdrew from those that remained any sympathetic consideration in public debate. Nevertheless, some have lingered into the late twentieth century, resisting the tide of factory farming. Perhaps they may now renew hopes in their future.

Changing times will almost certainly produce more studies of English peasant farming, which will endow its history with a continuity into the twentieth century that has hitherto been denied it. The adaptability and versatility of peasants, which Adrian Hall documents so convincingly in *Rippingale* in the nineteenth century, will then be stressed as a more general phenomenon. This characteristic forges a link with the many historical studies made in recent years of peasant farmers, with part-time occupations in rural industries, in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. At that period too they showed adaptability, and flexibility. Moreover, historians have begun to recognize the merits of that way of life. Indeed, it is likely that the decline of the peasantry would have been much more rapid in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had they not been saved by part-time industrial occupations. Keeping the two occu-

pations in equilibrium, however, even with generous family labour at hand, was a precarious undertaking, and could not last for ever. Peasants were forging a successful path into the future, but it took an unexpected direction when the industrial occupation took precedence over the farming. In the end, an industrial revolution gathered momentum in some rural areas, and an agricultural revolution in others. The peasantry gave ground to industrialists on the one hand, and to capitalist farmers on the other. Nevertheless, the transitional stage lasted through the nineteenth century; flexibility again prolonged its life.

Fresh perspectives on agricultural development urge us now to see the history of the English peasantry as a continuum, lasting from the Middle Ages into the late twentieth century. The next two decades will broaden our viewpoint further and perhaps open a fresh chapter. But already, as Adrian Hall points out, we need to recognize that we share the same inheritance as the peasant farmers of the European continent, and their story has not yet reached its end. We in England sacrificed the peasantry first in the cause of greater agricultural production. But now that reduced agricultural production is the only sensible policy, a modest revival of peasant farming, offering specialized foodstuffs or based on dual occupations, is one of the reasonable alternatives among many on offer.

Knowing the past, historians with a long view of human ingenuity will keep an open mind on what lies ahead. In 1930, C S Orwin, the distinguished economist and historian, showed this open-mindedness when writing about the future of farming. In a chapter on the Reconstruction of Agriculture he gave sympathetic consideration to small holdings, and the strategies they might adopt. In summarizing those measures (Chapter VIII), he observed, moreover, that 'finality in

³ The literature on this subject is voluminous, much of it associated with the name of Jesse Collings. It produced some studies and surveys of smallholdings that show remarkable dedication on the part of their authors. See, for example, the now yellowing pages of a cheap edition of William Sutherland, *The Call of the Land*, 1909, surveying and counting smallholdings in Scotland. It is written in vigorous, sometimes almost poetic language, and obviously involved a long journey of investigation through all the counties.

farming progress has not and can never be reached'.⁴ This was a wise conclusion – wiser than that of Harvey Franklin, appraising in 1969 the condition of the worker-peasant in Europe, and confidently declaring that 'industrialization has put an end to the peasant economy'.⁵

Twenty years on, the peasant economies of Europe are far from dead. May Adrian Hall's portrayal of one peasant community in the relatively recent past inspire more, for each one is likely to give a deeper understanding of this long chapter in our shared European experience.

Joan Thirsk

⁴C S Orwin, *The Future of Farming*, Oxford, 1930, pp 109–14, 119.

⁵Harvey Franklin, *European Peasantry: the Final Phase*, 1969, cited in Teodor Shanin, ed, *Peasants and Peasant Societies. Selected Readings*, 1971, p 102.

Introduction

Sixteenth-century England was ahead of Germany and France in having got rid of the servile status of the peasant ... But the agrarian changes of the epoch were beginning another evolution less to the peasants' advantage, which in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries gradually got rid of the peasant himself, converting him either into farmer or yeoman, or into the landless labourer on the large leasehold farm or into the town workman divorced from the land.¹

TREVELYAN'S *English Social History* sums up fairly adequately the general state of opinion among English historians on the fate of the English peasant; even though this was written in the early 1940s, the revision of agrarian history moves slowly. In 1968 Hobsbawm wrote that

... certainly by the early decades of the Industrial Revolution ... England was a country of mainly large landlords, cultivated by tenant farmers working the land with hired labourers ... a 'peasantry' in the usual sense of the word no longer existed.²

Mingay's *Rural Life in Victorian England*, while giving ample evidence of the social variety of nineteenth-century villages, follows the same pattern. He devotes a chapter to craftsmen and tradesmen, but gives only the slightest reference to their land-holding role.³

How then should we account for the smallholders, of whom thousands are known to have existed in various regions from the eighteenth century onwards?⁴ By implication rather than analysis they have been placed in the bottom levels of the 'farmers' or 'yeomen': a solution

which begs some important questions about their social origins and mode of economy, but which has never been seriously challenged. Thus, when Jones, Mingay, Chambers, or Johnson discussed such types they did so on the basis that they differed from large farmers only in scale.⁵ Even D R Mills, who has adopted the terms 'estate' and 'peasant' systems to describe social models in historical geography, the latter being the system within which these types were more likely to be found, regarded the 'peasants' of nineteenth-century Britain as distinct from the continental peasantry, indeed hardly peasants at all. Yet enough has been known about the nature of the continental peasantry for some considerable time, to provide more than a hint that the views mentioned above require reassessment in the light of evidence from other sources.

This study looks closely at one set of local sources from a perspective which takes into account the general nature of European peasantry, and which questions the extent of the hegemony achieved by the classical capitalist agrarian structure during the later eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. It is intended to show that peasantry survived at least into the 1870s, and to explore the detail of the peasant society and economy, and its relationship to the co-existing capitalist structure, as represented in the Fenland village of Rippingale.

¹ G M Trevelyan, *English Social History*, 1944, p 118.

² E J Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, 1968, p 98; this point has been recently re-echoed by Overton.

³ G E Mingay, *Rural Life in Victorian England*, 1976, pp 180-1; M Overton, 'Agriculture', Langton and Morris eds, *Atlas of Industrialising Britain*, 1986, p 42.

⁴ D Grigg, *The Agricultural Revolution in South Lincolnshire*, Cambridge, 1966, p 169 ff, 197-8; L Jebb, *Small Holdings*, 1907, pp 1-7 and passim; H Levy, *Large and Small Holdings*, 2nd ed, 1966, Table 1, Appendix II, pp 224-7.

⁵ E L Jones and G E Mingay, *Land, Labour and the Industrial Revolution*, Cambridge, 1967; G E Mingay, *Enclosure and the Small Farmer in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, 1968, esp p 10; J D Chambers and G E Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution 1750-1880*, 1966, pp 92-3; A H Johnson, *The Disappearance of the Small Landowner*, reprinted Oxford, 1963; D R Mills, *Lord and Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 1980, pp 16, 43 ff.

I. The Smallholder in English History

(i) TERMINOLOGY AND CHARACTERISTICS

A variety of terms has been used to refer to the loosely-defined range of occupiers of land and owners which we now tend to call smallholders. On the Spalding Priory estates in the mid-thirteenth century, the occupants of small holdings were probably referred to as bond-sokemen and freemen.⁶ From at least the sixteenth century the terms cottager, husbandman, and yeoman have been used almost interchangeably as standing for farmers of small acres, while the term 'smallholder' itself seems to have entered widespread usage only in the later nineteenth century. Each of these terms has its own set of associations: legal, social, economic, and cultural. Even the last, which is perhaps the most colourless of them, acquired strong political overtones as a result of the smallholdings movement of the 1880s. Part of the problem of dealing with the people to whom these terms refer, is that they are seen through these associations rather than through socio-economic and cultural definitions. Indeed Levy took Johnson, Gray, and Hasbach to task for their adoption of the term yeoman with reference to the 'small farmer' because the term covered 'holdings of very various extent and, therefore, from the economic standpoint, of quite heterogeneous character'. Gray was content to discuss 'yeomen' holdings which varied from two to three-hundred acres in size, and Levy quite rightly feared that such imprecision might form an obstacle to research.⁷

The attempt to define more clearly the socio-economic group with which we are concerned must go beyond the setting of

upper and lower size limits, however. Basic social and economic characteristics must be shown to be related to those size limits, as opposed to other ranges of acreages, in order to justify treatment of the given group as a discrete entity with its own name. That the definition might be fairly complex is shown by Donaldson's description of 'cottagers', written in 1795:

Cottagers are those who either reside in the neighbourhood of large farms adjoining to moors or commons, or in small hamlets. They generally possess a few acres of tillage-lands, from the cultivation of which, together with what they receive for labour performed to the farmers, or from carrying on the occupations to which they had been bred, as weavers, tailors, shoemakers, blacksmiths, thatchers, etc, are able to maintain their families.⁸

Here a wide variety of labourers, tradesmen and craftsmen, are grouped economically together on the basis of two common features: settlement pattern and duality of economy. This remains a rather blurred definition of 'cottagers' because the 'few' acres, and the settlement patterns are themselves poorly defined. It does however serve to make the point that apparently heterogeneous groups may in fact be part of a single discrete socio-economic grouping when the totality of their economic circumstances is explored, revealing the shoemaker's smallholding and the husbandman's trade, particularly if the acreages in question are found to fall within a clearly identifiable and restricted range. Put the other way, a group to which we apply a single name, assuming that adequately to express its characteristics, may on inspection show a rich variation on its central theme. With these points in mind the characteristics of the smallhold-

⁶H E Hallam, *Settlement and Society*, Cambridge, 1965, pp 215-6.

⁷Levy, *op cit*, p 33.

⁸J Donaldson, *Modern Agriculture*, Edinburgh, 1795, vol 1, p 390.

ers can be explored, to try to arrive at a more accurate definition. The most detailed account of this group came from Levy, and his work provides a useful starting point.

In the eighteenth century, Levy thought, it was possible to discern certain categories within the general group referred to as 'smallholders'. Those who worked less than ten acres (but over a quarter of an acre) were classed as allotment holders. They ran their holdings as by-employments to supplement wages from farm labouring, consuming rather than selling their produce, and may have owned up to three cows, three pigs, and some geese and poultry. Those who worked between ten and a hundred acres were the smallholders proper, subdivided into those who relied on family labour, and those who employed some wage labour at busy periods. Both of these subgroups were fully occupied by their holdings, and were essentially pasture farmers, with some corn being grown for human and animal consumption. The term 'small farmer' was frequently used for this second main group. Whereas the allotment holders were in decline throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the smallholders were still numerous at the end of the nineteenth century.⁹

The accuracy of this picture has yet to be assessed against local evidence.¹⁰ In particular, the level of subsistence afforded by a given size of holding, and the need for other employment, will vary from one soil region to another. So, too, will the nature of the employment. Indeed a major weakness of Levy's view is that he fails to look outside of farming for economic activity on the part of the smallholders or the allotment holders, making the very large assumption that the smallhold-

ers proper had no occupation other than their holdings. The essence of Levy's view is that allotment holders were 'landholding day-labourers', while smallholders were 'small farmers' at the lower end of a scale which merged by degrees into large farmers employing regular wage-labour. It preserves what might be termed the capitalist analysis of agricultural relationships, which is based around the dichotomy between labourers and farmers: an analysis which works in regions of capitalist agriculture such as Wiltshire or Suffolk, but is severely stretched in those regions which are rich in farms based upon family labour and smallholdings, such as we will identify later. It is important, however, that Levy has identified for us two key features of the occupants of less than a hundred acres: duality of economy and family labour. These can be seen as the core of a definition of the smallholding economy and society. Indeed, in terms of filling out the details of the definition, and identifying the social and economic boundaries of the group, they should take precedence over the question of holding-sizes.¹¹

The very limited evidence which is available from secondary sources does allow us to establish some additional characteristics of the English smallholder. Family labour itself has ramifications which help to characterize the group. The head of the household in this situation must organize the family not only as a social unit in the sense that we now know it, but also as a labour force. Family relationships and the task of earning a living must be inextricably interlocked. This adds a dimension of power to the head of the household; places an assessment of the abilities of individual members of the family, i.e., as human resource, at least equally with their assessment as loved ones and sexual partners; binds the

⁹ Levy, *op cit*, pp 3, 8.

¹⁰ Mills has brought together some of the salient research in the context of examining the dichotomies of 'open-closed' and 'peasant-estate villages'.

¹¹ Levy, *op cit*, pp 92, 105; Mills, *op cit*, pp 43, 61.

family into a common enterprise; and brings the issues of family alliances through marriage, and inheritance, to the forefront. This must be set against the very different family culture of the capitalist farmer whose role as employer is distinct from that of family head. It is no accident that the growth of capitalist farming saw the decline of the practice of farmers sharing the meal table with their men. Family and labour became distinctly separate as concepts and entities within the new culture.

An important feature of the family labour culture must be the idea of obligation and co-operation. This had its counterpart outside the family, among members of the smallholding group. Arthur Young noted in 1772 that

They are very poor respecting money, but ... contrivance, mutual assistance, by barter and hire, enable them to manage these little farms ... A man will keep a pair of horses that has but 3 or 4 acres by means of vast commons and working for hire.¹²

Slater found this 'mutual assistance' still working at the turn of this century, in Epworth, Lincolnshire, where smallholders would pay for the hire of horses from each other by their own labour, rather than in cash or kind.¹³

Such flexibility, enabling the pursuit of off-holding employment on an irregular basis, allowed smallholders to do more than labour on the farms of 'bigger' men. Given a suitable division of labour within the family a whole range of by-employments was possible. A good example of this flexible dual economy in practice is that of Tom Mullins, who was born around 1863 and lived near Macclesfield.

When I was twenty-three I married and a year later I rented a smallholding of seven acres for £15; an extra five acres brought the rent to £20.

I remained there fourteen years. My wife managed the holding and our three cows, while I worked as a labourer for neighbouring farmers. When idle between haymaking I broke stone in the parish quarry ... Sometimes I cleaned 'dyches' ... I also did carting and pig-killing. Once a week I walked six miles to Leek market with a basket containing two hundred eggs on one arm and another basket with twelve pound of butter in it on the other.¹⁴

Many writers have noted the close relationship between smallholdings and rights of common. Not only did commons make smallholdings viable by providing a source of animal manure and grazing, they also allowed a piecemeal acquisition of small acreages without stretching the family's resources too far, whereas sudden occupation of a medium-sized farm would involve a great input of capital in terms of stock and seed. Where smallholdings have been strongly viable, and a market for small acreages has flourished, the mobility of landholding status has also been marked. In their communication to the Parliamentary Committee on Small Holdings (1889), the labourers of Epworth in the Isle of Axholme, Lincolnshire, stated that they were 'in occupation of allotments or smallholdings varying from 2 roods to 3 acres'. J Standring, giving evidence to the Committee, and himself an occupant of ten acres, said of Epworth:

I do not believe there is one in ten in my parish and in the adjoining parish, among those who are renting from 50 to 100 acres, but what, in my time has been an agricultural labourer or agricultural servant before he was married; and each of them, to my own knowledge, has commenced with two or three acres and in some cases with not more than one acre.¹⁵

However, the viability of smallholdings, let alone their ability to offer a pathway to larger things, was questionable in many areas. Without commons the smallholder was likely to remain tied to his by-employment. Indeed this would

¹² Quoted in G Slater, *The English Peasantry and the Enclosure of the Common Fields*, 1907, p. 53.

¹³ Slater, *op cit*, p. 59.

¹⁴ J Burnett, *Useful Toil*, 1974, pp. 64-7.

¹⁵ Slater, *op cit*, p. 59.

possibly represent his main source of income, and certainly of cash. Jefferies, writing in 1880, thought that up to half an acre could help sustain the labourer along with his wage, but that above this size it became increasingly hard to balance time on the holding against wages lost, and that 'three or four acres require an amount of manure which it is quite out of a labourer's power to purchase; and he cannot keep livestock'.¹⁶ Apparently Joseph Ashby of Tysoe thought the same. According to his biographer, the campaign by Jesse Collins in the 1880s for 'three acres and a cow' for labourers was seen as ill-advised.

A fair weekly wage and a good-sized garden – yes, one could do on that or on a little farm of thirty or forty acres. Three acres were ... either a waste of good land or a perpetual anxiety added to perpetual work.¹⁷

This was the view of a labouring man from enclosed Warwickshire. It, and the view of Jefferies, is supported by the example of Charles Home, who ran a smallholding in the 1880s at Great Hockham, Norfolk. Initially he occupied a three-acre piece in a four-acre field, in which he fattened two bullocks, per year, having grazed them on rented meadowland. These animals, sold in April, were an important element of the family economy and helped to pay for winter bills. They were fed on beet and hay grown in the field. Most of the time Home's sons managed this work, but a man had been employed when they were too young. Vegetables were grown in the garden, and grass verges were used as spring and summer grazing for a horse. Like similar smallholders, Home also did wage work of various sorts. He made coffins and did carpentry in general. He thatched, acted as pig-killer for the village, and he poached. Eventually he rented more land,

bringing his total rent to £15 and his arable land to about eight acres. The holding paid only because his sons 'saved all the labour except the occasional hire of a man'. However, in competition with other farmers Home was disadvantaged. The most efficient local farmer kept bullocks for dung and employed two men feeding and carting. He worked a four-course rotation of barley, beet, grass, and wheat, with an occasional catch-crop of turnips. The grain and bullocks were sold for cash. 'It was a kind of perpetual motion'. By contrast, Home could not keep enough bullocks to supply adequate amounts of manure, and the field in which the animals were fattened took all their dung. The holding was too small for a four-course rotation and grew only beet and barley. The barley suffered from being on poor land infested with rabbits and pheasants. Shortage of cash meant that the corn stacks had to be threshed at the same time each year, in order to pay the rent at Michaelmas, instead of waiting for higher prices. In addition, the acquisition of extra land meant that a horse had to be kept for ploughing and carting.¹⁸ Clearly, an arable holding without commons, while not unmanageable, was hardly a stepping-stone to larger things.

There are two salient factors beside the inability to obtain sufficient manure, which appear from Home's account. First, there was the vicious circle turning between the small corn crop and the lack of cash, into which the arable smallholder was locked, unable to break into a situation in which he could keep some of the crop back to await higher prices; and secondly, the cost of keeping a horse in order to work the eight-acre holding. Under such conditions, a crop failure could undermine the finely-balanced holding. Spufford has noted a decline among smallholders and small farmers,

¹⁶ R Jefferies, *Hodge and His Masters*, 1966, p 107.

¹⁷ M K Ashby, *Joseph Ashby of Tysoe 1859-1919*, 1961, p 114.

¹⁸ M Home, *Winter Harvest*, 1967, pp 43-89.

and subsequent polarization between labourers and substantial farmers at Chippenham, Cambridgeshire, at a time of bad harvests between 1598 and 1636.¹⁹ One can reasonably speculate that such factors were at work in that decline.

The need for horse power may well have represented a significant barrier to the enlargement of holdings for many smallholders, unless, as at Epworth, a neighbourly arrangement for hire could be made, or the cost of the horse could be defrayed in additional work. Annie Fell of Binbrook on the Lincolnshire Wolds told me how her father, who had a small farm around 1900, 'delivered eggs, pounds of butter, half stones of apples, door-to-door, at Grimsby to make a living', buying the apples and butter at Market Rasen market and weighing the produce out, adding his own butter to it. In addition he would carry goods between Binbrook and Grimsby on his weekly trip. 'He would bring people shoes and boots, on appro from Louth, and take them back for tuppence a parcel ... And if you bought a hundredweight of sugar, or a bag of flour, it was a shilling a hundredweight'.²⁰ This activity must have paid well, and it says something about the extent of the market in north Lincolnshire at that time that Annie's father had told her that he had known seventeen carriers operating into Binbrook at one time. Given the need for smallholders to operate a dual economy, the nature of the local economy assumes great importance in determining the specific employments which might be pursued off the holding, and thus the extent to which the holding could be supported by secondary employment. Of no less importance in this context were the skills and knowledge of the smallholder and his family.

There is little evidence at the national

level of the stock and crops kept by smallholders. We have seen how Charles Home struggled to maintain an arable holding on a very small scale. Young described a twelve-acre holding in 1772 as producing enough wheat for the family's annual bread-corn, a marketable surplus of dairy produce, possibly pigs or an acre of barley, two acres of turnips or peas, and perhaps some poultry.²¹ In the early 1900s, an occupant of sixty acres in the Isle of Axholme was producing ten acres of potatoes, four of turnips, three of mangolds, five of clover, and thirty of wheat, oats and barley. He kept eight acres of permanent pasture, and the oats and barley were fed. Only the eight and a half acres of wheat were sold out of the corn crop.²² The interesting feature of these two examples, separated as they are by time and size, is their degree of similarity, which focuses on variety of produce, livestock (in particular pastoral animals) and feed crops being a major element. The main difference between them is the considerable investment in potatoes on the latter holding. This reflects an important feature of many smallholdings after the full impact of the 'agricultural revolution' began to be felt: the attempt to find other marketable crops than wheat, in the face of competition from large farmers, which culminated in suitable areas in market gardening.

At the level of broad generalization, the attempt to define the smallholders as a social group is rather like asking 'what do we mean by "middle class"?' We can set out the broad characteristics of those who belong to the group, such that possession of a large number of those characteristics will allow us to classify an individual as a member of the group. But there is no single defining characteristic. We can establish the range of sizes of holding with

¹⁹ M Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, Cambridge, 1974, pp 90-2.

²⁰ Transcript of a tape-recorded interview, 29/7/1974, at Annie Fell's house in Binbrook, Lincs, in possession of the present author.

²¹ Levy, *op cit*, pp 5, 31.

²² *Ibid*, p 107.

which members of the group can be correlated, but having done so, we cannot use holding size as an absolute measure of socio-economic standing, any more than we would use the size of an individual's house to ascertain social class. These are simply parts of the set of characteristics which we apply as a test for membership of the group or class. Having developed such a set of criteria, we are able to define what we mean by 'smallholders' with greater clarity, and begin to approach an analysis of the group with greater sensitivity than was allowed by the approach based only on the size of holdings. This defining set of characteristics can be summarized as follows:

family labour, based on the skills of individual members;
dual, or even multiple, economic activity, exploiting local opportunity;
occupation of small amounts of land, difficult to quantify in abstract, but ranging between as little as half-an-acre to tens of acres, the mode probably falling between five and twenty acres;
reliance upon rights of common;
pasture farming rather than arable, in the modern period, at least.

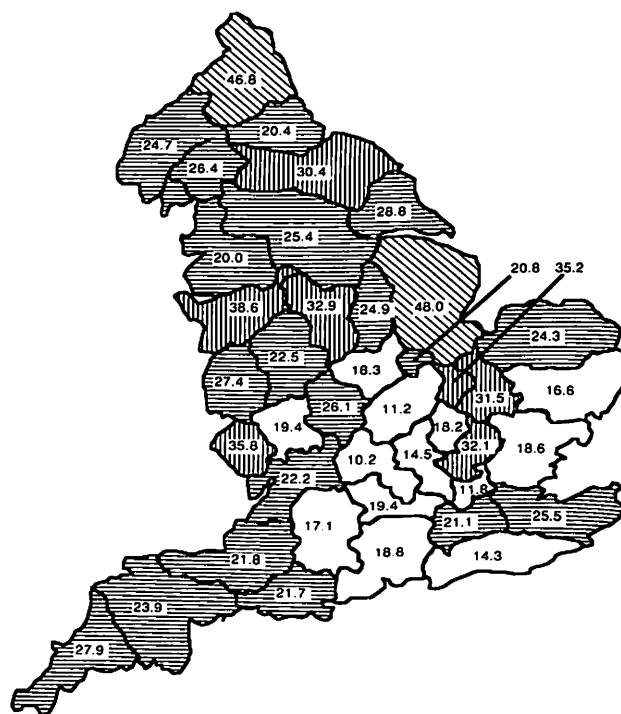
When individuals, families, or groups in a community display one of these characteristics, we can feel reasonably hopeful of discovering one or more of the others on closer investigation.

(ii) GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Statistical evidence of the geographical distribution of smallholders is difficult to obtain. Two useful sources are the Parliamentary reports of 1846 on Real Property, and of 1873 on Land Ownership.²³ The units of measurement in terms of region and holding sizes are far from ideal for

our purpose, and in the case of the 1846 report the method of sampling is very unsatisfactory. However, they do represent a rough guide which we should use in the absence of anything better at the national level.

Maps 1 to 3 summarize the information from the 1846 report concerning the three ranges of size of holdings with which we are concerned. Map 1 illustrates well the general relationship between a strong representation of occupants of between three roods and ten acres, and geographical region. The most intensive concentrations appear in the counties which run north from Hertfordshire, through the Fenland counties and across to the Welsh border, with a major concentration in Northumberland. In the Fenland, the Ouse valley, Cheshire, and Hereford, the strong pres-

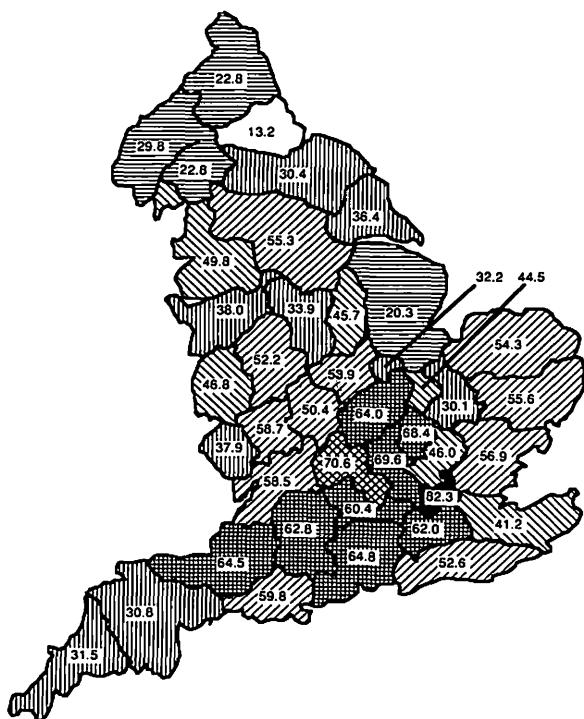


MAP 1

Percentage of occupants from six tithe districts in each county on holdings of 3 roods to 10 acres.

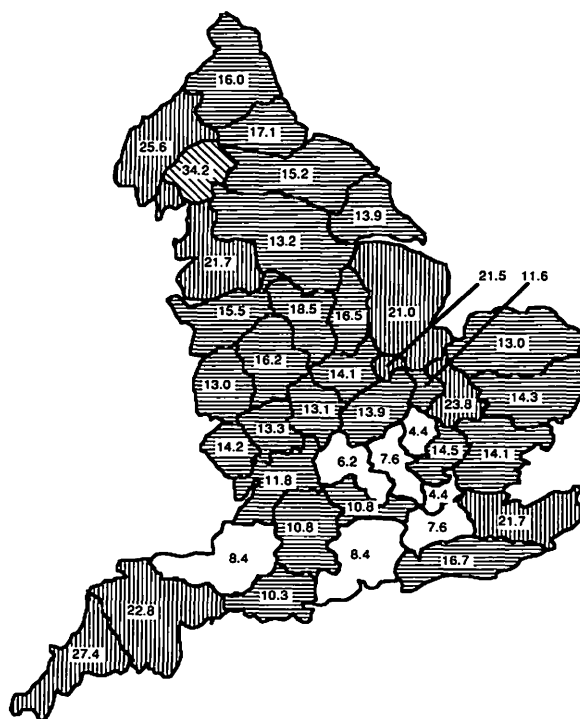
Source: *Report on Real Property, 1846*

²³ BPP 1846, VI, Parts 1 and 2, Appendix 3. BPP 1874, LXXII, Parts 1 and 2.



MAP 2

Percentage of occupants from six tithe districts in each county on holdings of less than 3 roods. Source: *Report on Real Property, 1846*



MAP 3

Percentage of occupants from six tithe districts in each county on holdings of 10 to 50 acres. Source: *Report on Real Property, 1846*

ence of smallholders may be largely accounted for by the occurrence of fertile alluvial soils (on the Wirral in Cheshire and in the Wye valley in Hereford). In Northumberland, the pattern of land-ownership may be a major factor. Given the problematic nature of the sampling, which was randomly, and sometimes very unevenly distributed, with few sites in each county, the precise percentages are less important than the broad picture. This is perhaps best brought into focus by noticing the counties at the other end of the spectrum with low percentages of smallholders. These are clustered in central and southern England, and in the south-east. The greatest single distinction between these counties and the rest lies in their heavy commitment to arable farm-

ing rather than pastoral farming or market gardening.

Comparison of Maps 1 and 2 shows that generally speaking those counties with lower proportions of smallholders had high proportions of occupants of less than three roods. This inverse relationship is to be expected, as an area of large holdings, especially where arable farming predominates, would have needed many full-time labourers, and it is they who occupied the allotments and cottage gardens represented by this size of holding.

Map 3 shows that the central, south and south-west counties had the lowest percentages of occupants of holdings of ten to fifty acres, while high percentages tend to accompany high percentages of the smallholders revealed in Map 1. It is worth pointing out that this is not a consistent

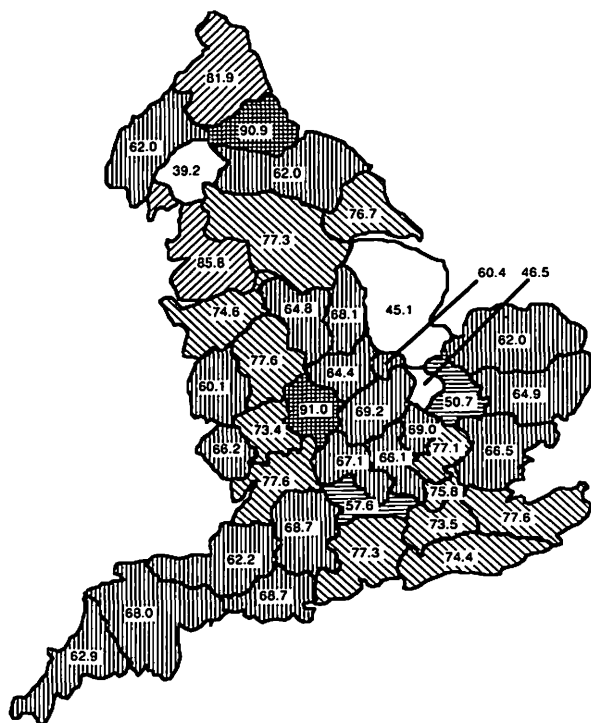
relationship, however, and that the precise balance of holdings varied from county to county.

What is readily evident from these sources is that the agricultural regions which underlay the county figures can be identified, and provide a number of targets for local research, and that the social and economic differences between the arable south and the pastoral west and north (not forgetting those of the Fenland, and Kent's gardeners) are so clear that one suspects the dominance over past decades of a 'southern' school of historians which has failed to convey the extent of the pastoral economy in the modern period, and over-emphasized the importance of the large farming interests in social terms, whatever their degree of political and economic influence.

The statistics for 1873 presented in Map 4, are even less helpful than those for 1846, the only useful category being that of holdings below one acre. The report is concerned with ownership, rather than occupancy. However, comparison between the 1846 and 1873 data shows that there was no easily defined relationship between holding sizes and ownership.

In Westmorland, Lincolnshire, and Huntingdonshire, a low percentage of the population occupied allotments of under an acre, and of these few were owners. In Northumberland, Durham, and Lancashire, however, which also had low percentages occupying allotments, there was a high incidence of ownership.

Overall, Lincolnshire's statistics show a relatively open land market, with many owners, who either occupied themselves or rented out their land in a range of sizes falling mostly between three roods and fifty acres. On the other hand, Northumberland was distributed between very few owners who rented it out, again in holdings falling mostly between three roods and fifty acres. Lincolnshire's smallholders were equally likely to be owners or ten-



MAP 4

Percentage of owners of land in each county holding less than 1 acre. Source: *Return on Owners of Land, 1873*

ants, although ownership of very small parcels of land was infrequent. Northumberland's smallholders were largely the tenants of great landlords, yet the very small men were likely to be owners. Between these poles there were many permutations, and their history would form the subject of fascinating research.

How stable was the above geographical situation likely to have been during the modern period? When comparing information on the geographical distribution of holdings from the 1851 Census Report and the 1957-8 Returns to the Ministry of Agriculture, Grigg found a 'striking similarity' between the two, and argued that the structure of farm sizes had been stable for at least half a century before 1851. In 1958, the regions showing concentrations of farms of under one hundred

acres were the south-west, north-west, north Midlands and the Fenland counties of Holland, Huntingdon, and Ely. In 1851 the pattern was similar, allowing for distortions caused by the use of county boundaries which subsumed lesser administrative areas (Holland under Lincolnshire and Ely under Cambridgeshire). Indeed, Grigg has recently found that 'in terms of the relative structure of numbers there was little change' in the structure of farm size between 1851 and 1975, and that the broad pattern of geographical distribution, with the small farm predominating outside the south and east of England, has also remained unchanged. His findings and data on farm size in 1895 also concur with those based upon the sources for 1846 and 1873 in correlating the absence of small landowners with lowland arable. The appearance of such a pattern in separate sources, none of which is ideal for analysis, and which if anything would dilute such a correlation, suggests that the relationship between smallholdings and the regions we have mentioned was strong in statistical terms, and thus historically deep-rooted.²⁴

(iii) THE FACTORS DETERMINING SURVIVAL

Little is known of the history of smallholders prior to the late eighteenth century when, as alleged victims of Parliamentary enclosures, they began to receive the attention of social commentators and historians. It has been estimated that in the period between 1500 and 1640 'cottage farmers', as distinct from wage-labourers or craftsmen, made up about a quarter of the total farm-working population of England and Wales.²⁵ Evidence has been presented

which suggests that, in certain areas at least, it was the early seventeenth, rather than the later eighteenth, century which saw the beginning of the decline of small holdings.²⁶ A major factor in this decline was possibly the period of bad harvests and high prices which occurred between 1590 and 1640, when, as at Chippenham in Cambridgeshire, small farmers occupying acreages equivalent to (and perhaps derived from) the medieval yardland (twenty to thirty acres) or less, and trying to operate an arable economy, fell prey to larger men. Chippenham is a chalk upland site and may reflect the fate of many villages where the soil type favoured arable.

Regions of certain soil-types have maintained a continuous presence of smallholders from the Middle Ages through to the period of Parliamentary enclosures and beyond: notably south Lincolnshire and the neighbouring Fenland. The Soke of Bolingbroke has been noted for a predominance of smallholders in the eleventh and sixteenth centuries, with the old village holdings being supported by extensive nearby fens upon which the villagers intercommoned.²⁷ Only when the soil and landscape were changed by the drainages of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was the survival of this situation threatened, albeit to an uncertain extent.²⁸

Contrary to earlier opinion, recent research supports the view of Johnson and Davies that Parliamentary enclosure tended to enhance rather than undermine the position of smallholders. Johnson argued that it was the post-Napoleonic depression which forced many small farmers to sell up, rather than enclosures which, according to Davies, increased the presence of all 'grades' of the small owner-occupiers. By contrast, the Tudor enclos-

²⁴ D B Grigg, 'Small and Large Farms in England and Wales: their size and distribution', *Geography*, 48, 1963, pp 270-1; Overton, *op cit*, p 46; David Grigg, 'Farm Size in England and Wales, from Early Victorian Times to the Present', *Ag Hist Rev*, 35, II, 1987.

²⁵ A Everitt, 'Farm Labourers', in J Thirsk, ed, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, IV, Cambridge, 1967, p 420.

²⁶ Spufford, *op cit*, pp 92, 118.

²⁷ J Thirsk, *English Peasant Farming*, 1957, p 81.

²⁸ *Ibid*, pp 118-9.

ures were seen as having been responsible for a major decline in this group.²⁹ Chambers pointed out that where enclosure Acts awarded land in lieu of common-rights, there was an increase in smallholdings, but that this process did discriminate against customary tenants. Where conditions were generally favourable, enclosures had a mildly positive effect on smallholdings, as in Rutland where a combination of favourable soils and a developed rural economy supported the small occupants.³⁰ Mingay suggested that it was in the arable lowland regions which, lacking marginal lands, were prone to engrossing during the corn boom of the French Wars, that smallholders were most threatened by Parliamentary enclosures.³¹ Indeed, it has been argued that small farmers in arable regions were only able to survive the bad times of the seventeenth century where market gardening was viable.³²

This alone cannot answer for the demise of smallholdings since medieval times in some regions and their survival in others. The ability of small farmers and smallholders to stand out against the growth of larger and more powerful interests has been of no little importance through the centuries. Weak lordship, indifferent manorial management, or the presence of more than one large landlord had provided the basis, by the seventeenth century if not earlier, for the survival and growth of small owners or tenants, and the development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, of 'open' village communities.³³ The dispersed settlements of the pasture farmers of the west and north had been able to escape close seigneurial control,

and the 'frontier' characteristics of these regions were to be found also in the Fenland, where colonizing peasants of the eleventh and twelfth centuries established a considerable degree of freedom from manorial impositions.³⁴

Under the combined conditions of weak seigneurial control, fertile soil, and low population density, all typical of peasant colonial regions in their beginnings, partible inheritance is favoured, and this was practised by the medieval peasants of south Lincolnshire, and the farmers and smallholders of at least three Cambridgeshire villages during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³⁵ Once established, partible inheritance has its own effect upon the relationship between land and people. In Holland (south Lincolnshire) it resulted in a proliferation of smallholdings often no bigger than one 'selion' or 'land', an area between half-an-acre and an acre. It tends to hold the population to the area, and is likely to produce 'nuclear' rather than 'stem' families (that is, families made up of parents and children, rather than parents, a married child – the heir – and his children) so that marriage is possible earlier and population therefore more dense than in areas of impartible inheritance practices such as primogeniture, where 'stem' families tend to occur.³⁶ Pressure on land and related resources is thus likely to become heavy in regions of partible inheritance. The ability of each generation to stay on the land as smallholders will then depend upon either an abundance of spare land or the presence of non-agricultural pursuits such as rural crafts and trades, local industry, or freely obtainable flora and fauna. In the Fenland the first of these existed in the form of

²⁹ Johnson, *op cit*, pp 121–3; E Davies, 'The small landowner, 1780–1832, in the light of the land tax assessments', *Econ Hist Rev*, I, 1, pp 111, 113.

³⁰ J D Chambers, 'Enclosures and Labour Supply', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser, V, 3, pp 325, 328, 330, 334; Chambers and Mingay, *op cit*, 1968, pp 20–1.

³¹ Mingay, *op cit*, 1968, pp 20–1.

³² J Thirsk, 'Seventeenth-Century Agriculture and Social Change', Supplement to *Ag Hist Rev*, XVIII, 1970, pp 166, 168.

³³ *Ibid*, p 157; Mills, *op cit*, 1980, *passim*.

³⁴ Hallam, *op cit*, p 222.

³⁵ M Spufford, 'Peasant inheritance customs and land distribution in Cambridgeshire from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries', Goody, Thirsk and Thompson, eds, *Family and Inheritance*, Cambridge, 1978, pp 156–68.

³⁶ B K Berkner, 'Inheritance, land tenure and peasant family structure', Goody, Thirsk and Thompson, *op cit*, p 95.

huge areas of common and waste, and the abundance of fish and wildfowl in the Fens before drainage is well known. In other regions associated with pasture farming in the 1600s by-employments based on environmental and industrial resources were 'almost common form', and a secondary occupation was an essential, integral element of the family economy.³⁷

(iv) SUMMARY

The picture which emerges from this overview of the smallholder in English history is of a group whose characteristics and conditions were variable and yet distinctive enough to separate them from the class of farmers proper on one hand, and the class of labourers, with whom Mingay seems to want to merge them, on the other.³⁸ Their household-centred, often dual, economic activity shows them to have occupied a place in society which has not been recognized by analyses based on a model derived from capitalist structures of agricultural society. The geographical regions within which they are found show historical continuity, and there is a strong relationship between soil types and this continuity. The regions in which they were poorly represented in the nineteenth century are those with arable farming and relatively poor soils, where the viability of smallholdings had become questionable by the early seventeenth century, if not well before. The factors of survival in those regions with a

strong presence of smallholders were: soil-type, land availability, weak lordship, and a varied local economy. Parliamentary enclosures seem to have crystallized the position of the smallholder in some areas.

The economy of the smallholders, if found on the Continent, would be described unhesitatingly as that of the peasant, whereas application of this term to English agrarian groups has been dismissed by at least one historian as being imprecise and sentimental. In questioning the historical, as opposed to the anthropological, validity of this term, J V Beckett concluded that its use to describe 'rural society in general' is misguided. He amply demonstrated the general terminological confusion surrounding this and other descriptions for rural social groups. The fundamental issue, however, is not about terminology as such, but about the socio-economic models which we apply in our analysis of rural history, and our ability to use terms which adequately reflect and support analytical distinctions of social and economic status. Use of the term 'peasant' to describe a whole society is meaningless: as a label for a social group which exhibits a relatively well-defined set of characteristics it has considerable force, and, as Beckett says, 'What are the alternatives?'.³⁹ The following chapter shows that it is this precise understanding of peasant culture and economy which is required in order fully to understand the socio-economic nature and position in history of the smallholders of Georgian and Victorian England.

³⁷ Thirsk, *op cit.*, 1970, pp 170-2.

³⁸ Mingay, *op cit.*, 1968, p 9.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p 10; J V Beckett, 'The Peasant in England: a Case of Terminological Confusion?', *Ag Hist Rev.* 32, II, 1984.

2. Peasant Culture, the Worker-Peasant, and English Peasant Survival

(i) THE FAMILY ECONOMY

A good starting point for an account of peasant economy is the work of A V Chayanov, who developed his theory of peasant economy on the basis of empirical study in Russia in the early decades of this century.⁴⁰ He noted that the main feature of the peasant enterprise was that it was based on the 'non-wage family economic unit'.⁴¹ That is to say that it depended upon family labour, not hired wage-labour. This absence of wages or some quantifiable monetary measure of the labour-value contributed to the enterprise made it impossible to introduce net profit as a category in the analysis as one would for a capitalist enterprise, and so no final profit value could be arrived at. For the peasant the concept of profit in its strictly economic sense was meaningless. Instead, from the family's labour over a year there resulted a quantity of produce which could be consumed or exchanged at market. This constituted a 'gross product' from which an amount could be deducted for material expenditure during the year. The amount remaining was the actual income of the family for the year, called 'labour product' by Chayanov. The labour product could be converted into a monetary value, but there the analysis must stop because no monetary equivalent could be given for the labour performed in order to create the labour product.⁴²

Various factors would affect the size of the labour product: the distance from, and quality of, markets; availability of mate-

rials, such as stock, seed and tools; soil conditions; and the family's size and composition, the last being the most important in Chayanov's view. A further important factor in the size of the labour product was the degree of self-exploitation to which the family members were prepared to commit themselves. Beyond a certain point, which depended upon subjective judgements made by the individuals, the value of the additional labour product gained from further work would cease to be balanced or justified by the extra effort involved. For this reason labour-intensive crops would be avoided as far as possible, only being cultivated where land pressure and the absence of by-employments made it unavoidable. Such an economy produces inherent limits on the general level of wealth created, whereas capitalist farming is oriented towards maximization of profits from each unit and increasing wealth for appropriation by landowners and the State.

The definition of 'family' within peasant culture has never been limited to biological or blood relationships.⁴³ In medieval times the basic unit of economic and social life was the 'group co-resident under the same roof', referred to in Latin as the *domus*, and encompassing subordinate ideas such as the hearth, goods and land, children, conjugal ties, servants, and the future-born of the family. This unit was ruled over by the head of the family, *dominus domus*.⁴⁴ This economic outlook and organization has remained essentially unchanged, despite new pressures or

⁴⁰ Especially A V Chayanov, *The Theory of Peasant Economy*, ed D Thorner *et al*, Homewood, Illinois, USA, 1966. The model has been examined by Mills, *op cit*, 1980, pp 43-8.

⁴¹ Chayanov, *op cit*, p 1.

⁴² *Ibid.* p 5; E R Wolf, *Peasants*, New Jersey, 1966, p 14.

⁴³ Chayanov, *op cit*, p 54.

⁴⁴ E Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village 1294-1324*, 1979, pp 24 5, 34, 46.

influences from outside, up to recent times. Mendras has noted the role of the twentieth-century peasant head-of-family, who like his medieval forebears 'lives his professional and his family life as an indivisible entity'.⁴⁵ The size of holding determines the family's social position, and any surplus product is converted into stock, land or savings rather than spent on improvements in the living standard. In such a context it is the family and lineage which is the beneficiary of an individual's labour, with the individual simply taking a share. Technical improvement has value only where there is pressure on land, or where competition from capitalist farming reduces the value of the labour product in the market and creates a need for higher productivity.⁴⁶ Economic autarky is therefore a strong element in the culture of the peasant.

(ii) PEASANTS IN SOCIETY

Absolute autarky is of course impossible both for the family and for the peasantry as a whole. If all of society consisted of family-labour farmers, the term 'peasant' would have no meaning. The peasantry, by definition, exists only in relation to other social classes and to the State, and such relationships bring economic and cultural influences to bear in varying degrees upon the family and the peasant community. Below the level of the local administrative unit, such as the parish in England, the peasant family can conduct its affairs on the basis of kinship and personal relationships, the key to which is the household itself; but above this level the family must deal with institutions rather than people, or at least with people as institutions or their representatives. For example, fiscal and educational decisions are made at national or regional level and

are conveyed and implemented at local level within administrative structures. Thus the extent to which changes are accepted willingly or otherwise by the peasantry tends to be determined by the balance of power and influence between the peasantry and the local representatives of administration such as landowners, clergy, teachers, and justices.

Economic change and the local balance of power can affect each other in this situation. Conditions such as land availability, population pressure, annual production levels, the state of the market, and levels of rent and taxation can cause changes in the relative strength of landlords and peasants. This was exemplified in the social impact of labour shortages and land availability following the Black Death. Highly developed marketing networks will put pressure on peasant communities to meet the needs of distant populations with changing demands, while poorly developed networks will tend to isolate and thus conserve the peasant status quo. On the other hand, a powerful landlord or administrator can impose change on the local economy.

Ties with members of other communities through class, kinship or religion act as a medium of cultural transmission. The structure of the local community is perceived within a cultural perspective which is derived partly from the peasantry itself, and partly from other groups within the society as a whole.⁴⁷ A change in the local social structure is felt throughout this social network, and accumulations of change over a long period must result in a change in the cultural viewpoint of society. Thus, a society with a widespread peasantry at one point in its history might over generations undergo sufficient change at the local level to bring about a very significant loss of that class, with the result

⁴⁵ H. Mendras, *The Vanishing Peasant*, Cambridge (Mass), 1970, p. 76.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁴⁷ R. Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture*, Chicago, 1956, pp. 40-9, 68-9.

that any surviving peasantry are seen from a changed viewpoint – no longer as members of the now ‘lost’ peasant tradition, but in the new perspective of capitalist relations, as small farmers, that is, as diminutive versions of the capitalist farmer or as labourers who happen to hold some land. This appears to have happened in England to the extent that the term ‘peasant’ is itself looked upon as either a sentimental token or – popularly – as a pejorative word, rather than as a reference to a social reality.⁴⁸ Under such circumstances one might say that the peasantry has disappeared *culturally*, whereas its total demise as a social entity exhibiting specific characteristics remains to be shown objectively.

Cultural change can also occur at the technological levels, producing sub-cultures within the broad peasant tradition. The major sub-cultures have been usefully summarized by Wolf. There are two main ‘eco-types’: the ‘paleo-technic’ and the ‘neo-technic’ which might equally as well be termed pre-industrial and industrial. The former relies essentially upon animal and human (and, of course, elemental) power and involves a very limited intervention in natural processes in order to produce crops and stock. Swidden culture, long-term fallowing, irrigation, and basic crop rotation are found in this culture. The latter involves extensive intervention in order to compete with capitalist farmers, and such practices as the use of chemical fertilizers, drainage systems, closely-controlled stock breeding and mechanization are to be found. Specialization is common, but despite the adoption of dairy farming, horticulture, and market gardening, the peasant culture in this context is relegated to the background since the peasants themselves are no longer the main producers of food and revenues for society. Within the ancient

tradition of ‘Eurasian grain farming’ sub-cultures based regional on technologies and ecologies have formed the basis for much of the cultural diversity seen in our world today, mediated by the inheritance of what we now call folklore.

The political forms of the West (indeed of the world) are also the result of cultural movements based on the development of a power-structure, a State, appropriating the wealth of the peasantry and reflected in the culture of the peasants themselves. Much of Europe’s history is concerned with the clash of wills as between the peasantry and the landowners, the Church, the aristocracy, or the bourgeoisie.⁴⁹ There are many ramifications which might be traced from the outcome of local and national disputes over taxes, tolls, tithes, inheritance practices, rents and duties, and which affect peasant culture in areas such as family structure, market-orientation, by-employments, and farming practices.⁵⁰

(iii) DUAL ECONOMY AND THE WORKER-PEASANT

In the context of this study, by-employment is of particular interest. It is, of course, no new thing. Surnames throughout the West testify to a past in which families held craft occupations alongside their husbandry of the land. Under the aegis of nineteenth-century industrialization, however, two developments took place. On one hand the opportunities for by-employment increased dramatically in many regions, while on the other the more traditional rural crafts were challenged by competition from the new industrial sector with its radically

⁴⁸ Mingay, *op cit.*, 1968, pp 9–10.

⁴⁹ R Hilton, *The English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages*, Oxford, 1975, p 13; Wolf, *op cit.*, pp 10, 19–36, 50–6.

⁵⁰ J Thirsk, ‘Introduction’, A H Johnson, *op cit.*, pp viii, ix; G C Homans, ‘The Rural Sociology of Medieval England’, *Past & Pres.*, 4, 1953; C Howell, ‘Peasant Inheritance Customs in the Midlands 1280–1700’, Goody, Thirsk and Thompson, *op cit.*, p 117; Mills, *op cit.*, 1980, *passim*.

new standards and quantities of production. It has been suggested that in this way the old-style dual economy of the peasant household, based on land and craft or trade, was replaced by an economy in which by-employments were linked to the industrial system and the rural livelihood became synonymous with farming or farm labour. 'The industrialisation of the towns was paralleled by the "agriculturalization" of the countryside.'⁵¹ The participation of peasants in this process from its beginnings in 'traditional' (or 'paleo-technic') rural society led to increased pursuit of by-employments and a growth of the peasant sub-group in which the land no longer had absolute primacy within the household economy and culture.

Chayanov noted that instances of peasantry engaging in crafts or trades occurred in two ways: where the family holding produced insufficient income and extra income could be had from a by-employment; and where seasons of slack labour-demand allowed the pursuit of a seasonal secondary occupation.⁵² Given what is known about the attitudes of peasants towards 'unnecessary' consumption we can reasonably suggest that what would attract them to such occupations would be not so much a desire to expend 'spare' labour power on enhancing the family income (unless this was insufficient to cover rents, taxes and basic needs), but rather the relatively higher reward for one's labour when combined with a craft or trade as opposed to work on the holding. This may even lead to under-cultivation of holdings, as Chayanov himself observed in the area around Moscow.⁵³ High population density and the breakdown of holdings through inheritance practices can equally create a drive towards by-employments. Certainly, the mere presence of 'opportunities' for by-

employment is not enough. Adverse circumstances in the peasant household seem generally to be a condition for their uptake. Chayanov found that it was precisely those whose holding was 'supplemented' by a secondary occupation, among peasant families generally, whose annual budget was the lowest.⁵⁴

Whatever its immediate cause it is important to bear in mind the economic context in which the dual economy exists. There are two main types: the pre-industrial and the industrial. In a pre-industrial context one would expect to find a peasantry and a dual economy based on 'traditional' crafts and trades such as those of blacksmiths, wainwrights, carpenters, shoemakers, innkeepers, and carriers. As industrialization proceeds so one expects to find by-employments of a kind increasingly related to industrial processes, from 'cottage' industry based on the working-up of raw materials into finished and part-finished goods, to factory work. Some peasants operating 'traditional' trades and crafts will extend into activities which arise from and relate more closely to the industrial economy, as in the case of a blacksmith developing a cycle and motor repair shop, or a harness-maker finding a new market for leather and fabric working in the demand for maintenance and replacement of transmission belts on farm machinery.⁵⁵

It has been suggested that where a peasant is the head of his own off-holding occupation he is more properly termed a 'peasant entrepreneur'.⁵⁶ However, this has a misleadingly capitalistic ring to it. The peasant's concern is not accumulation of capital, or business expansion, but preservation of the household economy: one might as well argue that the term 'entre-

⁵¹ S. H. Franklin, *Rural Societies*, 1971, p. 24.

⁵² Chayanov, *op cit*, pp. 101, 107.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 107.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 102, Table 3-17.

⁵⁵ G. E. Evans, *Where Beards Wag All*, 1977, pp. 50-3; Mills, *op cit*, 1980, pp. 120-3.

⁵⁶ S. H. Franklin, *The European Peasantry: the final phase*, 1969, pp. 54-65.

preneur' be applied to all peasants, seeing their holdings as 'enterprises' in our modern sense. That said, the phenomenon of peasants with 'traditional' or 'industrial' by-employments, running a smithy, organizing the family to do 'out-work' for a factory, or doing actual factory work, does require a generic description. I propose to use the term 'worker-peasant' as being relatively neutral provided it is taken to cover all forms of off-holding work, including wage-work.

The existence of dual economy in a peasant household does not fundamentally alter the nature of that household as compared with other peasant families. Both the holding and the by-employment are run as part of the household under the supervision of the family head, and both are family-labour concerns, with possibly the hiring of some non-family labour as required by the scale of operations and family structure. Often such hired labour comes to form an addition to the household in its broad sense, with the individuals living in like journeymen or apprentices. If the family's by-employment involves working for others rather than in its own business, then here too the household remains intact unless such work is of an industrial nature, in which case the peasant economy is threatened by the penetration of industrial culture and processes such as regulated hours of work, payment according to productivity, and the labour market. Indeed the peasant who takes such work throws his family open to radically different attitudes, practices and expectations. Land is no longer seen as the focus of life, the concept of the household therefore ceases to have relevance, personal consumption begins to have value, and work is measured in abstract terms of hours rather than by the needs of the task. Industrial technology introduces division of labour to a degree which is foreign to the peasant. Ultimately the holding itself becomes

irrelevant to the worker-peasant, and he becomes a fully-fledged wage-worker.

This is to telescope a very long process. The resistance of peasantry to 'foreign' precepts is well known, and such changes are to be seen as taking place over more than a single life-span. This relationship between worker-peasants, indeed peasantry in general, and the capitalist economy presents itself as a kind of symbiosis, though it gradually leads to the absorption of one by the other: a view which was expressed by Luxemburg.⁵⁷ The beginnings of capital accumulation are to be found in the subordination of peasant family-labour craft occupations, such as spinning or weaving, to capitalist forms of organization as in 'cottage' industry, and the gradual centralization of production in suitable regions. Technological developments allow the further centralization of labour into factories, at which point the worker-peasant must conform to factory discipline and organize his holding around it. The balance of daily life shifts decisively towards industrialization. This model of labour recruitment for industry in its early stages seems more acceptable than that of the creation, through enclosures and engrossing, of a rural proletariat which moves off the land to seek work, with no intervening stage or process. Its importance lies in the fact that it is able to cope with the long term process of industrialization. Industries capable of recruiting a rural proletariat in large numbers did not spring up in a short period during the industrial revolution in England and Europe, but rather followed the organizational development outlined above over a period of generations, the classic case being that of textiles.

If this process leads to the break-up of the peasant economy it also provides opportunities for by-employment just when the growth of capitalist agriculture

⁵⁷ R Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, 1951, pp 395-418.

is placing pressure on the viability of small peasant holdings. Hoskins provides an instance of the early phase of this process during the English industrial revolution:

The early industrial landscapes differed essentially from those that developed with steam-power. They showed a thick scattering of settlement, of cottages and small farm-houses dotted about all over the place, and a corresponding splitting up of fields into small crofts and paddocks. It was a 'busy' landscape, full of detail and movement, like one of Breughel's paintings, not a massive conglomeration of factories and slums ... The typical figure was that of the craftsman-farmer, combining, say, a smithy with a small-holding, living in his own small balanced economy; hence the minuteness of the detail in the picture. One still finds traces of this kind of landscape on the fringes of the Black Country, as for example in the hamlet of Lower Gornal, in the hills to the north-west of Dudley.⁵⁸

This quotation brings us back from a rather general and wide-ranging view of the characteristics of peasantry to the question of the extent to which evidence for the survival of peasant types occurs in the modern period in England.

(iv) THE FATE OF THE ENGLISH PEASANT

The English peasant economy has passed through a series of important changes in its external relationships and appearance, the most notable being perhaps the establishment of a thriving market in both agricultural goods and land by the twelfth century, the decline of feudal tenure in the fifteenth century, and the enclosures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Having compared the major features of the European peasantry in general with those of the English smallholder we are justified in concluding, first that the family-based dual economy of a significant portion of European peasantry was strongly echoed in the culture of English smallholders of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; secondly that this sug-

gests a common heritage; and thirdly, that the specific socio-economic circumstances of the English smallholder can be seen as evidence of the durability of the peasant culture rather than its erosion under the advance of capitalist agriculture. Well beyond 1850 there were significant numbers of smallholders, some in dense pockets, around England. To that extent, peasant culture, though fallen under the hegemony of capitalist rural relations and economics, was far from having been extinguished. The question is, how did the smallholders stand in relation to the great and now vanished mass of peasantry? How long had the decline of the latter been going on, and what extent had it reached by the mid-Victorian period? What factors contributed to the survival of the smallholders as representatives of peasant culture and economy in England? The state of knowledge is at present such that we can only provide some rough answers to these questions.

If Franklin's view of the growth of industry leading to the 'agriculturization' of the countryside through the defeat of rural crafts and trades is accepted, then the period of rapid industrial growth after 1830 is the only time when dissolution of the peasant economy could have occurred on a national scale in England. We have seen that peasant holdings in the lowland areas were weak, and that capitalist agriculture came to predominate there early on, but only the industrial economy, it seems, had the power to destabilize the peasant economy in the pastoral regions. Hilton, who sees the same basic features in the late medieval English peasantry as we have identified in European peasantry in general, certainly feels that the English peasantry were not seriously threatened until the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries.⁵⁹ George Ewart Evans argues that the

⁵⁸ W G Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape*, 1970, p 212.

⁵⁹ R Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free*, 1973, pp 114, 225; Hilton *op cit.* 1975, p 13.

'old culture' survived in technological terms, and thus also in many other respects, until after 1918 in East Anglia.⁶⁰

Accepting the basic proposition that there was in some areas 'a transformation of the medieval peasantry into a self-respecting group of smallholders between 1300 and 1700', both operating what she calls a 'self-perpetuating family farm' (that is, a family-labour household), Howell argued against the use of the term 'peasant' to describe both groups on the grounds that their external circumstances were very different. In medieval England the main economic grouping was that of the twelve- to twenty-four-acre subsistence holdings occupied by low status villeins who had little connection with the state and were highly exploited, whereas in the later period the main grouping was that of 'smallholders' occupying sixty to one hundred acres, who were of respectable status, holding influential positions in their parishes.⁶¹ These are undoubtedly important differences, but they should be seen as a concrete example of the way in which the 'self-perpetuating family farm', which is the essence of peasant culture and economy, was able to survive under changing social and economic conditions, unless we are to view the term 'peasant' as synonymous with servile status: a view which lacks analytical force. Leaving aside the issue of terminology, however, it is interesting to note the shift in the size of holdings between the two periods, suggesting a decline in the viability of the earlier peasant holding of around twenty to thirty acres.

Hilton found that in the century after 1340 the group of peasants with holdings of half to one yardland (approximately sixteen to thirty acres) with a range of rights including appurtenant pasture, was

declining relative to others.⁶² By the time of the Parliamentary enclosures the peasantry were occupying a range of holdings from 150 acres downwards in size, and were a mixture of owners and tenants.⁶³ The wealthier among them received additions to their homesteads and old enclosures under the enclosure awards, though these were diminished by tithe awards, leading in some parishes to a significant increase in peasant land ownership.⁶⁴ While the small peasantry of the Midlands appear to have declined during the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, it seems equally likely that an increase occurred in the number of small holdings in the period after 1750 when industrialization began to gather momentum. At this time in Shropshire, Staffordshire, the West Riding, and to an unknown extent across the rest of the country, it became increasingly possible for peasant families on very small holdings to live by means of dual economy based on the growing industrial or proto-industrial economy.

All in all this is a very sketchy picture: data are hard to come by. The general trend appears to be one of a decline in the 'classic' medieval holding of around one yardland balanced by an upward movement in viable sizes of holdings, together with a development of dual economy in some regions to support smallholdings. Of course, from medieval times onwards, there continued to be a group of peasants who occupied various sizes of holdings and also ran crafts or trades. It is quite clear that peasantry as such did not disappear from the English landscape. In 1831 family-labour farmers were exceeded by farmers employing wage labour by only ten per cent.⁶⁵ If we are to

⁶⁰ G. E. Evans, *The Pattern under the Plough*, 1966, p. 17.

⁶¹ C. Howell, 'Stability and Change 1300-1700: The Socio-Economic Context of the Self-Perpetuating Family Farm in England', *J. Peas. Stud.* II, 1975, pp. 468-9.

⁶² Hilton, *op. cit.*, 1975, p. 40.

⁶³ V. M. Lavrovsky, 'Tithe Commutation as a Factor in the Gradual Decrease of Landownership by the English Peasantry', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, IV, 1933, p. 276 ff.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

⁶⁵ J. P. Cooper, 'In Search of Agrarian Capitalism', *Past & Pres.* 80, 1978, p. 26.

understand the distribution of peasantry across Victorian England, and develop a clearer picture of the individuals, families and communities which formed that peasantry we must look behind the naked national statistic and investigate the local evidence.

Certain areas, such as the Isle of Axholme, have been noted as models of continental-style peasantry.⁶⁶ The key to survival there was a combination of soil type, market conditions, population density, and land availability which made it

possible to resist the penetration of agricultural capitalism. The open villages of the nineteenth century not only fed the surrounding farms with wage labour but also supported a local peasantry with abundant use of by-employments.⁶⁷ Detailed study of local evidence can reveal the balance of social and economic forces within such communities, helping us to understand the means by which the fabric of peasant culture was maintained, the importance of the dual economy within that culture, and the fortunes of individuals affected by it.

⁶⁶ J D Chambers, 'Enclosures and Labour Supply', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser, 1953, 5, 3, p 338.

⁶⁷ D R Mills, 'The Peasant Culture's *New Society*, 7 April 1977, pp 10-13; Mills, *op cit*, 1980.

3. Rippingale – a Community of Smallholders

(i) LAND USE AND THE STRUCTURE OF HOLDINGS

Rippingale is situated on the western edge of the Kesteven fens in Lincolnshire, an area of linear settlement with elongated parishes running from east to west out of the peat fens, across gravels and up into clayland and limestone. By the middle of the sixteenth century Aveland wapentake, in which Rippingale lies, was one of the most densely populated areas in the Fenland region.⁶⁸ Charters of the thirteenth century and by-laws of the sixteenth century demonstrate that holdings in severalty were established early in the Fenland region.⁶⁹ The holdings themselves were on a small scale throughout the period from around 1600 to 1870. On five Lincolnshire fen manors in the early 1600s, holdings of less than five acres accounted for 61.6 per cent of the total, and those between five and twenty acres accounted for a further 27.2 per cent. By comparison, on five marshland manors the figures were 28.7 per cent and 18.6 per cent respectively.⁷⁰ By 1801 in the Kesteven fen holdings between five and forty-nine acres represented 77 per cent of all holdings over five acres, with the remaining 23 per cent in sizes up to 299 acres. This compares most dramatically with the northern end of the Lincoln Heath, where holdings of over 300 acres represented 30 per cent of the total.⁷¹ In 1804 and 1830 the holdings on the Duke of Ancaster's estate, which included Rippingale, reflected this pattern, with those occupying holdings of below

fifty acres representing 79.6 per cent and 76.8 per cent respectively.⁷² By 1870 the same range of holdings made up 77.7 per cent of all holdings in the Holland fens, suggesting a similar distribution of holdings throughout the fenland villages of Lincolnshire.⁷³ The continuity of this picture throughout our period is supported by the local evidence for Rippingale.

The parish had contained two manors until the early eighteenth century, although by that time one of them existed in name only and was soon absorbed totally into the working of the other. The 'lost' manor consisted of a number of small fields known as Ringstone Leas or Ringstone Closes in the terriers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and in the Enclosure Map of 1803. In a rental of 1720 the land is referred to as 'The Manor of Ringston', and approaching a century later, when the parish was surveyed by the Ordnance Survey, the site of Ringstone Hall was still marked by a small structure of some kind. After 1720, however, there is no further reference to the area as a separate manor. The fields themselves varied in size between seven and thirty acres, and appear to have been created well before this time.⁷⁴ To the north-west of the village as it appeared before 1803 there lay West Field, which was open arable land but by 1679 already contained a number of enclosures. Two of these were stone pits, and a third was a grass 'ley', or pasture enclosure, possibly

⁶⁸ J Thirsk, *Fenland Farming in the Sixteenth Century*, Occasional Papers, University College, Leicester, 1953, p 11.

⁶⁹ Hallam, *op cit*, pp 150-6; Spufford, *op cit*, 1978, p 167.

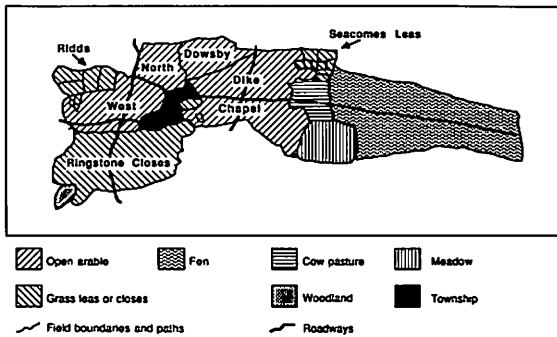
⁷⁰ Thirsk, *op cit*, 1957, Tables 4, 12.

⁷¹ Grigg, *op cit*, 1966, Table 11.

⁷² *Ibid*, Table 10.

⁷³ Thirsk, *op cit*, 1957, Table 46.

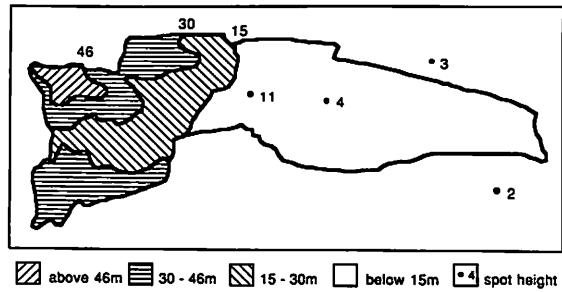
⁷⁴ Ordnance Survey, One-Inch, First Series, Sheet 70, Sleaford, reprinted as Sheet 35 with Notes by J B Harley, Newton Abbot, 1970; Rental 1720, Lincolnshire Archives Office (hereafter LAO), Anc 6/A/6/C.



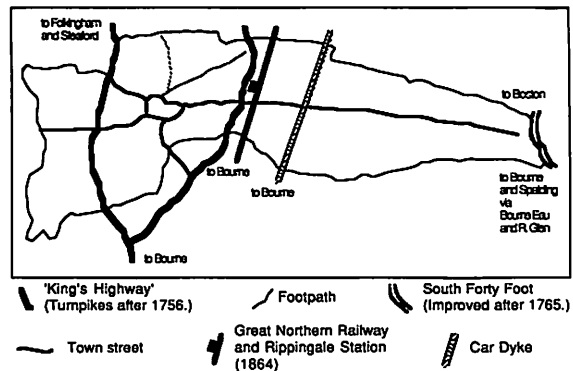
MAP 5
Land use at Rippingale c.1700-1803

temporary. A fourth was 'Stony Wong', the latter being a word of Scandinavian origin meaning enclosed land among open strips. There was the site of a windmill called West Mill, which faced out over the fens, and in the north-west corner of the West Field there lay an area of hedged enclosures similar to those of Ringstone, called the Ridds, a word which possibly has the same meaning as 'riddings', that is, an assart. A similar feature, known as Seccom or Seacombe (or Seacombe's) Leas, was to be found in the low-lying north-east corner of Dike Field. (See Map 5.) These features suggest that holding in severalty was well established in Rippingale in the late seventeenth century.⁷⁵

Besides West Field there were four distinguishable areas of open-field arable, known as the North, Dowsby, Dike and Chapel fields. These were established by 1700. A glebe terrier for 1671 refers to 'The North Field to Dowsby' instead of the later 'Dowsby Field', suggesting that the two fields were worked as one until some time at the end of the seventeenth century. Map 6 shows the contours of the land. The lower parts of Dike and Chapel Fields were apparently used as meadow, and the Cow Pasture lay at the edge of



MAP 6
Land Relief in Rippingale. (Contours to the nearest metre.) Source: O.S. 1:50,000 2nd Series, Sheet 130



MAP 7
Transport Facilities c. 1750-1870. Sources: see note 4

the fen.⁷⁶ Figure 1 shows the balance between the various uses of the land as it stood in 1791-2.⁷⁷

Of the homesteads and old enclosures such as the Ridds and Ringstone Closes 93.7 per cent was down to pasture or meadow, as was 76.2 per cent of the field closes. The last figure suggests that enclosures of open-field land had been undertaken to create additional grass rather than to follow individualistic arable cropping schemes. In total, pasture and meadow accounted for 46.7 per cent of the village's non-common land, while arable occupied 41.4 per cent. The exact nature of the ley

⁷⁵ LAO, Glebe Terrier, 1679.

⁷⁶ LAO, Glebe Terrier, 1708; LAO, Enclosure Award, Kesteven Award 61, 1803; Ordnance Survey, 1:50000 Second Series, Sheet 130; Grigg, *op cit.*, 1966, p 42, Fig 6; J Richardson, *Local Historian's Encyclopaedia*, New Barnet, 1974, pp 183-98; W H Wheeler, *History of the Fens of South Lincolnshire*, 1896, Figs 2, 10.

⁷⁷ LAO, 3 Anc 4/10, 1791-2.

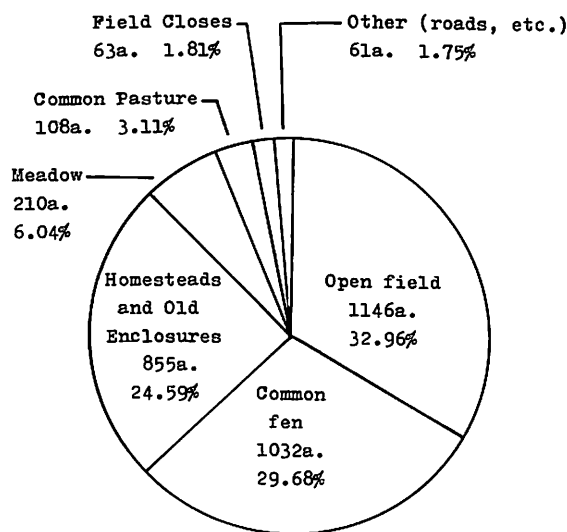


FIGURE I
Land use in Rippingale, 1791-2

ground in the open fields is unknown, but temporary or permanent it took a further 10.7 per cent giving grass dominance over arable in 1791-2.

Common grazing was provided by the Cow Pasture and the Common Fen. In 1791-2 the Cow Pasture was stinted for 128 cow commons, of which twelve were held by freeholders. If full use was made of this common-right, each cow would have an area of just over three-quarters of an acre. This situation was no doubt alleviated by the use of grass closes and leys by those who had them, and by open arable and meadow during the autumn. Other cattle and horses were grazed on the fen, which was also available to at least some of the villagers of Kirkby Underwood, the village to the west of Rippingale. The total number of Rippingale commons stinted here was 480, of which 459 were for horses and the remainder for 'beasts'. It was reckoned that each stint gave the right to common two horses or three beasts, giving a potential population on the fen of 960 horses or 1440 head of cattle for Rippingale. Freeholders had sixty-three of the horse commons.

Sir Gilbert Heathcote owned 96.1 per cent of the parish of Rippingale, and the remainder was in the hands of the rectors of Rippingale and Kirkby Underwood and three other freeholders. The largest of the latter owned $37\frac{1}{2}$ acres of which all but $1\frac{1}{2}$ were in the open fields. By looking at the structure of holdings among the tenants and freeholders of the village we can discern the main groups in the local agricultural economy.

A small group of seven tenants and the Rector of Kirkby possessed no rights of common in the parish. Of these, Edward Alford, John Hill and the Rector had very small parcels of land in the open fields, probably single selions of well under an acre. They did, however, occupy unspecified land in Kirkby, where they had their homesteads. In addition, Hill and the Rector each had just over a quarter of an acre of annually mown meadow. Thomas Barnes and John Allen, though listed as tenants, were noted as 'with' other tenants who were important farmers, and their land is not specified. They appear therefore to be labourers occupying allotments sub-let from their employers. John Johnston and William Spencer had meadow or pasture homesteads of under a quarter of an acre each on the Waste, and Richard Luff held a similar homestead in the village. In agricultural terms these five represent the poorest section of the community.

Twenty-four tenants and one freeholder, the Rev John Caparn, enjoyed rights of common although they occupied only a homestead like those just mentioned. This illustrates that rights of common were attached to homesteads in the village rather than to open-field holdings. There is no constant relationship between the size of homesteads and the apportioning of commons, suggesting that stinting was a matter of arrangement between the lord, his agent, and the tenants as individuals rather than as a collective. Indeed,

this process was in evidence in 1879, when, despite the enclosure of 1803, 'commons' were still being distributed and redistributed by the agent.⁷⁸ An attempt was made to balance the stints. Ten of these tenants had one cow common (on the Cow Pasture) and one horse common (on the fen) each. The remaining fourteen had three commons each: usually consisting of one cow, one horse and one beast common, though three of them had commons for a cow and two horses.

The ability to keep two or three animals placed the twenty-four commoners in a more complex economic situation than that of the simple homesteaders. Resources must be more carefully balanced and the labour of the family would likely be involved to manage the work associated with the animals, the more so when, as with a number of them, the primary occupation was in a trade or craft, evidence of which we shall see later. The variable quality of holdings in the parish is illustrated by the range of rent per acre among these tenants, the lowest being 6s 8d and the highest £2 10s, with a mode of £1.

Twenty-seven tenants and one freeholder fall into the next clearly distinguishable group. In addition to homesteads and attached common rights they occupied a small area of open-field arable, open-field ley, and annually mown meadow in various permutations. Four of them had other land, in Kirkby, and of these one had his homestead in Rippingale but lacked rights of common in the parish. Typical of these was Samuel Taylor, who had a homestead of just over a quarter of an acre, just over two acres of open-field arable, and commons for a cow and two horses, for which he paid a rent of £2. In all cases the arable, ley, or meadow holdings were between a quarter and three-and-a-half acres, so the main vari-

ation in the size of holdings occurred on the homesteads, and this in turn affected the extent of common rights. For example, William Peddor had only $\frac{1}{2}$ acre of open-field ley, but his homestead was $9\frac{1}{4}$ acres and he enjoyed commons for two cows and three horses, whereas Robert Chapman and William Grummitt both had homesteads of around $16\frac{1}{2}$ acres, and both had commons for two cows and five horses. With such holdings we are truly in the realm of dual economy family-labour farming. The holding could be large enough to require considerable labour, yet too small to provide subsistence, thus necessitating a second, though not necessarily secondary, occupation.

The fourth group is distinguished by the fact that all of its members had shares of open-field arable and ley, and, with the exception of Mary Chapman, who had land in Kirkby, annual meadow, and by the size of their holdings, which ranged from 37 to 110 acres. In this group there were two freeholders. Thomas Shields' holding consisted of a one-acre homestead, 25 acres of arable, 5 acres of ley, and 6 acres of annual meadow. He had common right for four cows and sixteen horses. The Reverend W Gascoigne, Rector of Rippingale, had almost 16 acres of arable, $3\frac{3}{4}$ acres of ley, and $20\frac{1}{2}$ acres of meadow. He had commons for four cows and thirty-eight horses. These two cases show that among the more complex holdings it was the overall size and structure of the holding which determined the extent of common rights. Besides the homestead pasture, Shields would have had rough grazing on the arable stubble and on the ley ground, together with a far greater amount of straw and meadow hay for winter feeding than the previous group could have had. Gascoigne's much larger number of horse commons (as compared with Shields') seems to rest upon his greater acreage of homestead and meadow. Although, with the exception of

⁷⁸ LAO, 9 ANC/2/C/3/8.

Mary Chapman, Shields and Gascoigne were the smallest of this group of true farmers, the latter possessed the largest amount of meadow. Among the group as a whole the main differences in size occur on the homesteads and on the arable. The upper end of the group can be represented by Stephen Stapleton. He occupied a 30 acre homestead, a 'field close' (meadow) of $7\frac{3}{4}$ acres, $53\frac{1}{2}$ acres of arable, $11\frac{1}{2}$ acres of ley and $6\frac{3}{4}$ acres of annual meadow. He had common for six cows, eighteen horses and one beast. The average rent on holdings in this group was £35 7s 8d. Here, then, we have a group of small to middling farmers whose holdings did not necessitate second occupations, although, as we shall see, some did in fact operate a dual economy.

Those in the final group can be called 'large farmers'. The six holdings in question ranged from 158 to 253 acres, and were similar in structure to those of the previous group, although most of them had an additional field close. The largest farm was tenanted at this time by Thomas Bacon. He had a homestead of 65 acres, a meadow field-close of $7\frac{1}{2}$ acres, an arable field-close of $8\frac{3}{4}$ acres, 99 acres of open-field arable, 44 acres of open-field ley, and $26\frac{1}{2}$ acres of annual meadow. His common right was stinted at four cows and thirty-five horses, and he held the right to half of Rippingale's estrays (that is, the right to appropriate half of the number of unclaimed stray animals). His rent was £116 14s. In this group we have the class of tenant farmers in the classic sense, working on a capitalistic basis with employment of wage-labourers. This, then, was the structure and distribution of holdings, in 1791-2.

The next stage in the history of Rippingale's field system was the creation of new enclosures under the Act of 1803. Other than the Enclosure map, which provides only the boundaries of large blocks of redistributed land, and the First Edition

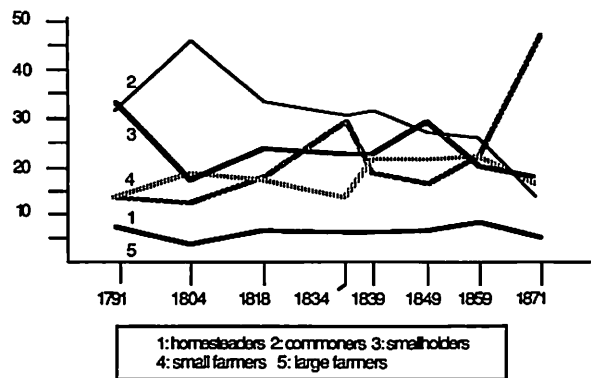


FIGURE 2

Categories of Rippingale tenants as a percentage of total holdings

of the 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey series, which is unreliable because it was surveyed over one hundred years later, there is very little evidence of the effect of the enclosures.⁷⁹ However, some idea can be gleaned from the Glebe Terrier of 1822.⁸⁰ This shows that a single enclosure of 336a. 2r. 15p., covering half of North Field and most of Dowsby and Dike fields, awarded in 1803 in lieu of tithes, was subsequently leased to William Houghton, who agreed to sub-divide it into ten pieces with hedges. This had been completed by the date of the Terrier.

The effect of the enclosures upon the landholding status of the villagers is difficult to determine. Figures 2 and 3 show a mixed picture.⁸¹ After 1804, the first estate survey following the Act, the homesteaders, smallholders and large farmers increase in both relative and absolute terms, whereas the commoners and small farmers decline, the commoners quite markedly. From the end of the French Wars to the period of the Crimean conflict, the changes are confused. This is followed by a period (1859 to 1871) when all of the groups except for the home-

⁷⁹ LAO, Parish Plans, Enclosure Map, Rippingale, 1803.

⁸⁰ LAO, Glebe Terrier, 1822.

⁸¹ LAO, 1 Anc VI/A/6/c; LAO 3 Anc 6/12; LAO 3 Anc 4/10, 11, 12, 16; LAO 9 Anc 1/A/16/1, 5, 8, 14.

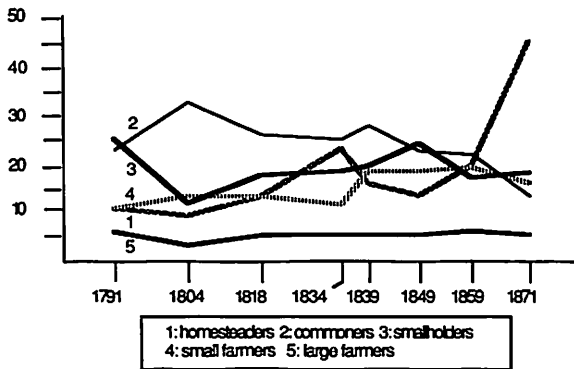


FIGURE 3

Absolute numbers of Rippingale tenants by category of holding

steadlers suffer a decline in relative terms, though in fact the trend for the smallholders is very marginally upwards in absolute terms. Over the whole period the striking feature is the loss of dominance by the commoners and smallholders in favour of a great increase among homesteaders. Much of this increase came from migration across parish boundaries and change in fertility and mortality rates, but some must be attributed to commoners giving up their commons, which were allotted in the nineteenth century as they had been in the eighteenth but were now apparently operated in severalty. This would have the effect of revealing vacant commons where tenants were unable to stock them, a situation which on open pasture or fen would only benefit other tenants by reducing the number of animals on the common land, but which would result in wasted land under enclosure, unless carefully regulated. As the area allotted for commons was included in the total acreage of the holdings from 1804 onwards, the abandonment of commons would mean a decrease in the total size of the holding, relegating the tenant in question to the homesteader group.

The meaning of this for individuals concerned is unclear. It obviously represents a redistribution of resources

towards other tenants, smallholders and above, and loss of land which would perhaps be difficult to replace should the need arise. The important issue is the extent to which the commoners' rights had been exercised in the period before the enclosure of 1803. If the commons were regulated as effectively then as they were after 1803, then we must assume full use of the commons and their post-enclosure loss by some tenants must be seen in terms of changing agrarian practices or diminishing viability of holdings based only on a homestead and common rights. If, on the other hand, the commons were not being fully used, then the implication is that this type of holding was already proving unworkable in the late eighteenth century, and that enclosure simply crystallized the situation, resulting in a more effective distribution of land resources without actually penalising anyone in real economic terms. We lack the evidence to assess the picture in a realistic way.

The management of the commons can be seen in the estate surveys of the nineteenth century, where discrete parcels of land are allotted in 'the Meadows', 'Cow Commons' are allotted in multiples of 3 roods 35 perches, and the pre-enclosure references to horse and beast commons have disappeared. The careful distribution of the land comes to light in a letter to the Earl of Ancaster from his agent:⁸²

Rippingale
Apr. 1879

Sir,

I take the Liberty to send you word about the commons in the Aslackby field. Colam as 1 acre against Wm Williamson Jun that works for Mr H Franks he as but 2 acre for 2 cows he would like 1 more —

Michael Elsoms is against Tazzymans but he has two and dose not want any more —

Mark Vickers would like it —

Herreman would like Colams mown land in bottom Middow 1 acre 3 rd and 2 acre in Top

⁸² LAO, 9ANC/2/C/3/8.

midow in graze – as he as plenty of buildings Marke Vickers would like one in top midow to graze –

Grummit Law would like Michael Elsom's 2 commons in Top midow for Grazeing as he as a very good home sted & it requires some one that is in a good position to stock the Top midow as it takes about 16 to stock 1 common –

Edward Williamson would like Michael Elsom's 5 rood in bottom midow as he as only 3 acre of mown land to his cottage –

I have send you all the names that can do with more land & as got surficient Buildings for it & I think all as been good L.....s [?] since I have known them –

William North would like Elsom's Paddock if Exton dose not have it.

Your Humble
Servant
John Wortley

One further development in the wake of the enclosure was the creation of 'sixteen poor men's gardens from Lady Day 1824 at 20 perches each', which was planned from 1818. The land was taken from a field occupied by John Nunnalee, who farmed almost 124 acres.⁸³ This would certainly have been more beneficial to a poor homesteader than the use of commons. Unfortunately, the background to this development is not known. In 1818 sixteen tenants would have represented just over a fifth of the total number, exceeding by three the number of tenants falling into my category of homesteaders. This was therefore a very significant step in support of the least well off in the parish. One inference that might be drawn from this is that by 1818 the post-enclosure administration of the commons had resulted in the redistribution of land mentioned above, and that this had raised the question of the viability of homestead holdings, either because loss of commons affected the viability directly or because the reorganisation served to highlight an existing problem.

In trying to establish a clear picture of the developments of the nineteenth cen-

tury in Rippingale we are hindered by lack of evidence. A rough idea of the situation in the eighteenth century, bearing in mind that a more detailed picture would show changes during that period, is given by Figures 4 and 5, which are based on wills and inventories of Rippingale tenants from 1701 to 1798. There is

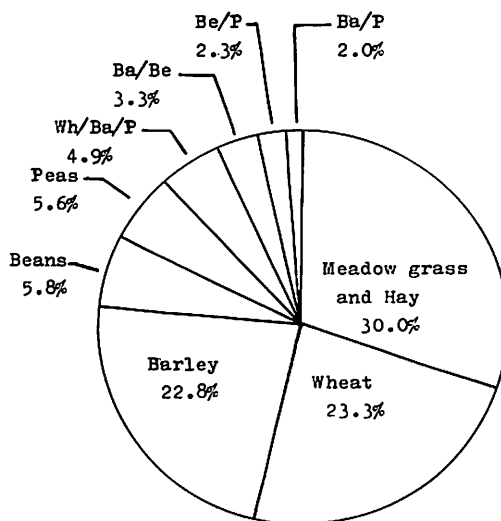


FIGURE 4
Undifferentiated crops: Wh – wheat, Ba – barley;
Be – beans; P – peas

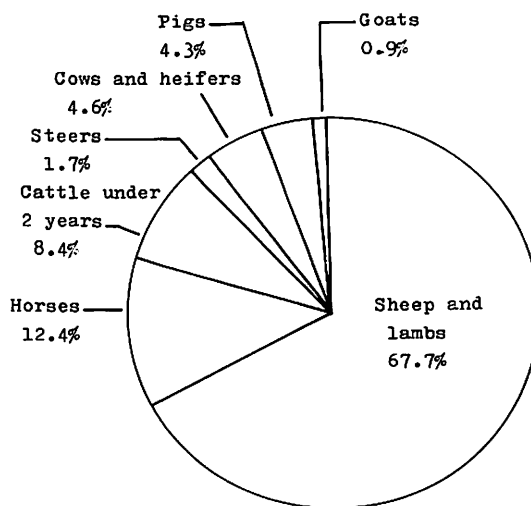


FIGURE 5
Stock, 1701-1798

⁸³LAO, 3 ANC 4/12.

then a total absence of information until the Agricultural Census of the late 1860s onwards: Figures 6 and 7 summarize the information from the returns of 1869 and 1870. Using these sources we can at least glimpse the trends in Rippingale's farming between the beginning and end of our period.

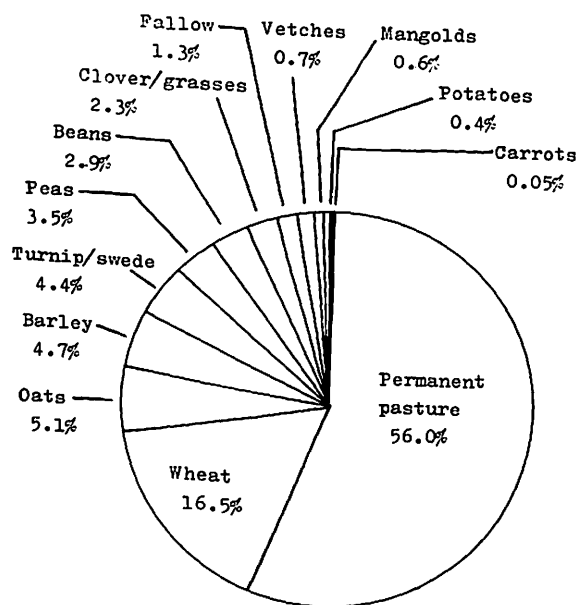


FIGURE 6
Crops, 1869-70

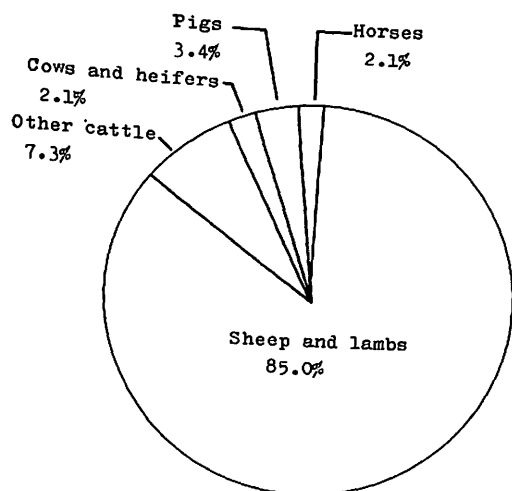


FIGURE 7
Stock, 1869-70 (average)

During the eighteenth century dairy farming was of relatively little importance. The overwhelming interest lay in sheep farming, with horse-rearing a poor second. The interest in sheep was maintained even by the smaller tenants, although horses and cattle tended to more relative importance on their holdings than on those of the large farmers. Robert Collinwood, a labourer, left in 1707 two cows, a calf, a pig, and two lambs.⁸⁴ In accordance with this interest, land devoted to producing a hay crop accounted for almost one third of the arable, and every inventory records either a stored hay crop or standing meadow grass.⁸⁵

By the end of our period the old cropping system based on wheat, barley, beans, and peas had given way to a greater variation. The main field crops had been joined by oats and turnips or swede. All these together were far outweighed by pasture. Small amounts of potatoes, carrots, and cabbage were being grown, probably on garden plots (although the Census was based on holdings of over a quarter of an acre, so some of this could represent a market gardening interest). Sheep had gained in importance, mainly at the expense of horses. By 1870 no mares were being kept at Rippingale for purely breeding purposes, and of the 133 horses found there in that year, 106 were draught animals.⁸⁶ The trend towards sheep was apparently shared by all categories of holding. Comparison of the Agricultural Census returns for 1866, which record holdings of over five acres, with those for 1867, which record all holdings, shows that over half of the total sheep population existed on holdings of under five acres. In 1866, among the ten Fen-edge parishes in the Wapentake of Aveland, Rippingale's sheep population ranked among the top

⁸⁴ LAO, INV 201/106.

⁸⁵ LAO, Rippingale Probate Inventories 1701-1798. See full list of primary sources.

⁸⁶ PRO, MAF 68/249, Agricultural Census, 1870, Parish Summary.

three in size. In that year the huge parish of Bourne had a sheep population of 5475. Rippingale and Morton were the only other Aveland parishes with over 3000 sheep, the average for the ten parishes being 2321, and that for the seven neighbouring upland parishes being 1357.

At the start of our period there were already strong indications of a pastorally oriented economy, based on holdings in severalty of which the homesteads were the nucleus. By the 1870s, helped on by the enclosure of 1803, Rippingale appears to have become overwhelmingly pastoral at all levels.⁸⁷ We have seen the broadest outlines of the structure and distribution of holdings against which this development took place. We must now add to this by looking at the occupations and general economic structure which complement the agricultural perspective to provide an overall view of Rippingale's society.

(ii) AGRARIAN STATUS, OCCUPATION AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

What relationship if any existed between the agrarian status of the people of Rippingale, and their broader economic activity? The first stage in answering this question is to establish the extent of any mobility which operated within the structure of agrarian status which we have identified. A high degree of mobility would suggest immediately that relationships between status and 'secondary' occupations were tenuous.

One way of measuring the extent of mobility is to take the percentage of tenants experiencing degrees of change in their status as defined by the categories we have identified, for each of a number of periods, and to average the results. The

results of this are shown in Figure 8, and even allowing for the distortions which might be introduced by the use of varying periods in the comparisons, the main conclusion is absolutely clear: the overwhelming majority of established tenants in any given period could expect no change in their status. Figure 9 shows the inverse relationship between the percentage of tenants experiencing no change, and the percentage of new tenants in any period, but when this is set against the percentages experiencing change the impact of new tenants upon the status of established tenants is seen to be very small.

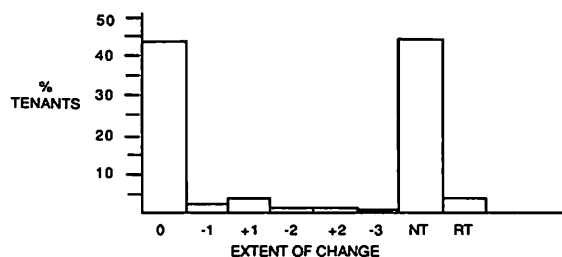


FIGURE 8
Average percentages of tenants experiencing change of status, 1791-1871, as measured by movement across categories. O = no change; NT = new tenants; RT = returned tenant

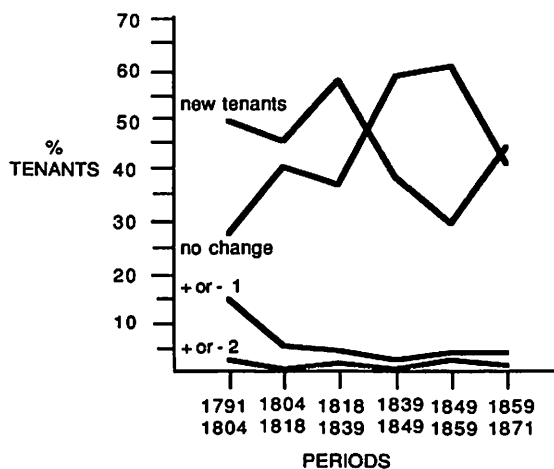


FIGURE 9
Percentages of tenants experiencing change of status during each of six periods: 1791-1804, 1804-1818, 1818-1839, 1839-1849, 1849-1859, 1859-1871

⁸⁷ LAO, Rippingale Probate Inventories 1701-1798. See full list of primary source. PRO, MAF 68/41,42,135,192,249. Agricultural Census, 1866-1870, Parish Summaries.

The turnover in tenants was high. For example, forty-five per cent of the tenantry of 1871 had arrived since 1859. Between 1791 and 1871 the average number of new tenants per year was three. Once settled, though, the landholding status of the new tenants, like that of their previously-established fellows, was unlikely to alter. So unlikely, in fact, that one case of dramatic alteration in circumstances merited a comment on the Estate Survey of 1818.

William Bavin is first recorded as a large farmer with 183 acres, six cow commons and thirty-three horse-commons, in 1791. In 1804 there is no mention of him. Then in 1818 he reappears as a commoner with just under four and three-quarter acres. The Survey comments that 'Bavin was formerly a considerable farmer in the parish of Rippingale, succeeded Nichols in this cottage in 1817'. Sixteen years later he still occupied the cottage, as did his widow and son after his death. It is tempting to see Bavin's story as related in some way to the Napoleonic Wars, but no evidence of this has been found. Whatever the cause, Bavin's case appears as an exception proving the rule that mobility of status during a lifetime was unusual in Rippingale at this time. We shall see later, however, that mobility in terms of general economic (i.e., not just agrarian) status *was* a major force in the development of Rippingale society, and that it occurred within families *between* generations, through the medium of inheritance.

We can begin to see something of the relationship between land-holding status and the more general economic activities of the villagers by examining the estates and occupations given in wills and inventories for the period. A total of sixty-seven wills dating from 1721 to 1854, and nineteen probate inventories dating from

1701 to 1722 (with a late one dated 1798), were examined.⁸⁸ Of these, thirty-five wills and one probate inventory could be matched with records from other sources to obtain the land-holding status of the

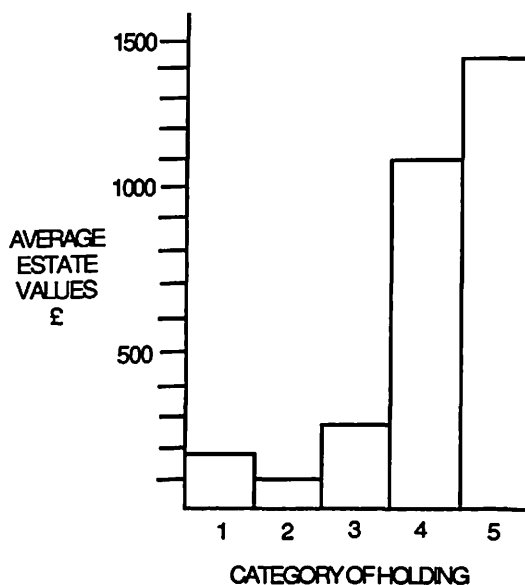


FIGURE 10
Average estate values of wills

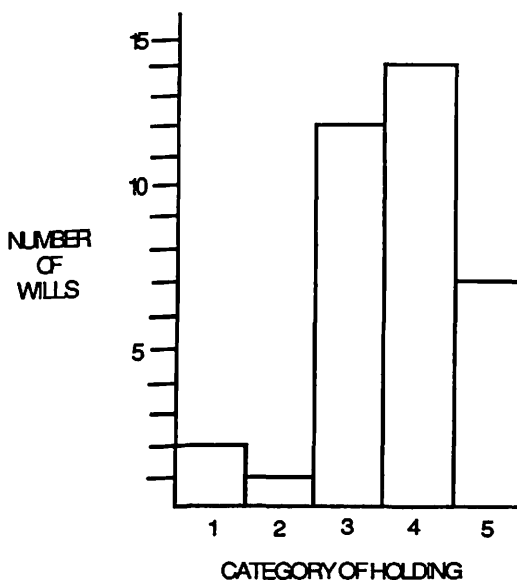


FIGURE 11
Numbers of wills by category

⁸⁸Detailed references to primary sources in this section are listed at the end.

individual. Figures 10 and 11 show clearly that there was a strong polarization of the large and small tenants in two areas: the average value of their estates and the tendency to make wills. It is interesting to notice that the smallholders, i.e., Category 3, although closer in respect of their estates to the commoners and homesteaders, were very much more inclined to make wills, reflecting perhaps a consciousness of the role of inheritance in family fortunes coupled with possession of significant economic resources. Certainly, so far as wealth is concerned there was a very marked division between the large and middling farmers on one hand, and the small tenants on the other.

A further polarization is found when the occupations of the same individuals are matched to their land-holding status. This is shown in Table 1. With one exception all of the 'farmers' come from Categories 4 and 5. The smallholders are revealed as 'cottagers' or as tradesmen and craftsmen, confirming a strong tendency within the group towards dual economic activity, and strengthening the identification of smallholders, tradesmen, and craftsmen as a single socio-economic

grouping. A similar analysis can be done for the nineteenth century, by comparing Census returns with estate surveys and matching the occupation and land-holding status of individuals who appear in both. When this is done, the rather neat pattern of the eighteenth-century evidence breaks down somewhat, though the overall conclusions remain broadly true (Table 2).

In Category 1, where the holdings were homesteads of less than 2r. 20p., the householders were engaged in wage-work (overwhelmingly), or employment by hire, or in self-managed business based on a trade or craft. The economy excluded any family labour being used in agriculture for subsistence or the market, except

TABLE 2
Occupations by category of holding among
tenant-householders appearing in the Rental
1849 and Census 1851

	Category				
	5	4	3	2	1
<i>Occupation</i>					
Farmer	5	5	2	1	
Farmer/Blacksmith		1			
Gen. Practitioner		1			
Miller		1			
Miller/Innkeeper		1			
Innkeeper		1			
Annuitant				1	
Publican's widow				1	
Cattle dealer				1	
Baker/Grocer				1	
Cottager				5	4
Shepherd				1	
Bricklayer				1	
Cordwainer					1
Licensed victualler					1
Butcher					2
Grocer/Draper/Brewer					1
Carpenter					1
Schoolmaster					1
Widow					1
Ag. labourer's widow					1
Ag. labourer				2	5
Drover/Grocer					1
Drover					1
Fiddler					1
Charwoman					1

TABLE 1
Occupations by category of holding among
a sample of will-makers matched against
rentals, 1701-1854

	Category				
	5	4	3	2	1
<i>Occupation</i>					
Farmer	4	9	1		
Grasier	1	2			
Gentleman	1				
Widow	1	1			
Husbandman		1			
Publican		1			
Yeoman			2		
Cottager			5		
Butcher			1		
Victualler			1		
Wheelwright			1		
Tailor				1	2

perhaps for the working of a cottage garden.

In Category 2, where the holdings were increased by common rights to between one and five acres, the householders often described themselves as cottagers, and the proportion of households dependent on wage-work was less than half what it was in Category 1. Dual economic activity was important for this group which contained a number of trades and crafts people.

In Category 3 the cottagers predominated. Those occupying between five and twenty acres and giving their occupations as shepherd, grocer, or cattle dealer provide evidence that dual economic activity was significant for this group. Wage labour was present among these households, but of little significance.

Category 4 shows itself to be mainly concerned with farming, with proportionately fewer heads of households being involved in dual economy. The large farmers of Category 5 were apparently engaged entirely in one economic activity.

The spread of dual-economy households and family-labour farming across the categories serves to point up the fact that at this time in Rippingale there was a widespread opportunity to involve the family in more than one occupation, where family labour on the holding did not absorb totally the labour output, or did not provide sufficient income to the household. This is only a way of saying that the focus for the head of the household was not his or her own occupation alone, but the household itself, in just the manner of the European peasantry down the centuries. His or her occupation was part of the household economy, and the head of that household was, in Franklin's phrase 'chef de famille/chef d'entreprise'.

Another dimension of the household economy of Rippingale's tenants is the balance between direct family members and non-family members of the house-

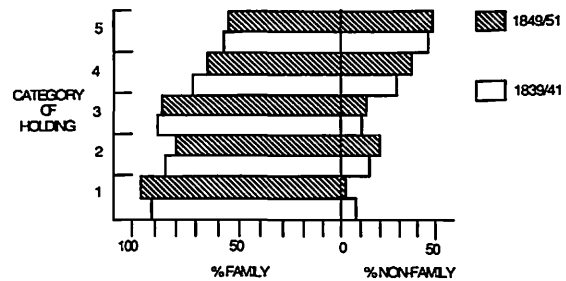


FIGURE 12
Family membership of households

hold. Because those not directly of the family might often be servants, labourers, journeymen, or apprentices, the balance is a function of the general occupational structure. It is a simple process to identify non-family household members from the Census and relate the percentages of family and non-family members to the category of holding held by the head of the household. Figure 12 summarizes this information for heads appearing in the Rentals of 1839 and 1849, and Censuses of 1841 and 1851.

The high proportion of non-family to family members in the households of the largest farmers is of course caused by the presence of male and female servants living in on yearly contracts. This is a radically different situation from that of the homesteaders, where the presence of non-family members was an exception. The commoners and smallholders of Categories 2 and 3 appear to have shared a similar situation, in which the non-family members of the household, where they existed, were in most cases people who worked with and alongside the head, as well as for the head: journeymen, apprentices, labourers. The percentage of people thus involved was still very small, however, and relationships within the smallholder's household, like those in the homesteader's, were primarily blood-relationships. The heads of these households relied almost totally on family labour, it seems, and although evidence of holding size and

employment of labour is limited to the Census of 1851, it appears from the twenty-three cases of smallholders recorded there that none of that category employed hired labour, except for those engaged in a craft, and then on a small scale. In Category 4 the employment of non-family labour was more extensive, but not so far that family labour ceased to be a major element of the household economy, as it did in the case of the large farmers.

What overall conclusions can we draw from this profile of Rippingale's socio-economic fabric? First, it is clear that the socio-economic structure in Rippingale was far more complex than the accepted picture of English agrarian social history would lead us to expect of the modern period, with a whole range of holding sizes from the almost 'landless' to the large farmer, and a far from simple relationship between holding size and occupation. Secondly, we see that the community displays the social characteristics of the peasantry of Europe, in which the family operated as a labour unit organized by the family head, who combined that role with the role of head of a secondary enterprise, or off-holding work of his own, in many cases.

We have seen that there was not, in the period under consideration, a simple, dichotomous social structure based on agrarian capitalism and wage-labour. Labourers were present in Rippingale in numbers which increased noticeably from around 1840, if not earlier, and were employed on the larger farms of the Heathcote tenantry, but this relationship between the labourers and farmers was only part of a larger set of relationships in which a very important role was played by the smallholders and smaller farmers with their dual economy. The labourers with smallholdings were less dependent upon wage-labour than their fellows who occupied only a homestead or 'cottage and

yard', and they may have been hopeful of an eventual betterment of their position. On the other hand those families who worked land, kept sheep, and ran a craft or trade, were far more independent of wage-labour altogether, and were in fact the backbone of the community in the sense that they provided the services upon which continued existence of Rippingale as an open community depended.

The five-category analysis of Heathcote's rentals and surveys has given insight into the framework of land-distribution within which these dual-economy, family-labour households operated. In reality, and presumably in their own eyes, the distribution of holdings and related social status and wealth may well have appeared more as a continuum with only the very few large farmers set apart from the rest by the size of their holdings and the level of their wealth, on one hand, and perhaps the 'landless' wage-labourers distanced to some extent by their dependency upon wage-labour, and the fact that most of them were (apparently) not direct tenants of Heathcote, and thus of very low land-holding status. The evidence has indeed suggested that the lesser tenantry of Rippingale formed such a continuum, but one which was defined by the size-range of holdings, household structure, employment of family labour, and frequent pursuit of dual economic activity: a sufficiently clear definition when set against the labourers and large farmers to mark out a distinctive social grouping.

Comparing what we know of this grouping with the features of the classic European peasant economy which were discussed earlier, it seems reasonable to propose that the term 'worker-peasants' and the set of concepts associated with it should be applied to Rippingale's dual-economy, family-labour households. This crystallizes the position of the grouping in relation to both the contemporary com-

munity and its long-term historical development.

The grouping formed a socio-economic sub-structure within the overall structure of the community, a sub-structure having pre-capitalist roots and one which can be seen as historically opposed to the socio-economic structure of agrarian capitalism. The existence of such a sub-structure was, in economic terms, a pre-condition for the growth of large-scale capitalist agriculture, since it provided crucial services in the manufacture of equipment and its maintenance, and in the operation of a local market for sale of produce, some of which was brought into the community by the tradesmen, but much of which was produced within the community by the smallholders. Without such services being available in open villages such as Rippingale, neither these nor the dependent closed villages which were the focus of agrarian capitalism, would have been able to sustain the necessary population of virtually landless labourers and farm servants.

Yet by providing the basis for a growth of capitalist social and economic structures, the worker-peasant sub-structure created the conditions for its own demise, its smallholdings becoming less viable in the new economic environment, and the households themselves being pushed towards a single economic activity based on the more intensively worked smallholding or on the off-holding occu-

pation — wage-labour, trade or craft. It is difficult to put a time-scale or period to this process in Rippingale, but the evidence suggests that the community remained relatively backward in its agriculture throughout the period, with new techniques beginning to be applied somewhere around the middle of the nineteenth century, while land distribution retained an unchanged character throughout the period with the exception of the reorganization of the commons in the early 1800s. This, and the evidence of the social structure itself, strongly suggests that Rippingale remained in an essentially pre-capitalist, or transitional, stage until the last decades of the nineteenth century, even though the number of intermediate-sized holdings of twenty to fifty acres, which could be seen as the modified remnants of full peasants' holdings, was already small by the start of our period.

The test of this view is whether the 'worker-peasant sub-culture' can in fact be identified through the lives of its alleged subjects, and be shown to be on one hand distinct from the sub-structures within which wage-labourers and capitalist farmers lived their lives, and on the other similar to worker-peasant socio-economic structures and cultures which have existed elsewhere. We can apply such a test by looking at the evidence from the core of long-standing and well-represented families in Rippingale.

4. Status and Inheritance in Rippingale⁸⁹

(i) HOMESTEADERS, COMMONERS, LABOURERS

Will-making was relatively uncommon among labourers in this period, but in 1763 Robert Elsome described himself as a labourer and thatcher in his will. He left a shilling each to his brother Edward, two sons and two daughters, and £1 to his third daughter, Abigail, plus a house and a bed. Of these children only his eldest son, Robert, has left any record. He appears in the survey of 1791/2 and the rental of 1804 as tenant of a Category 2 holding. On his demise Mary Elsome, probably his wife, entered the holding, and by 1834 it had shrunk to merely a homestead. The picture following this is confused by the presence of two Michael Elsmes after 1840. One, who appeared in the 1839 rental and thereafter until 1871 with a homestead, was also noted in the 1841 census as an agricultural labourer. The other appeared in the 1849 rental with a homestead, and was recorded in the 1841 census as an agricultural labourer; by 1851 he had become a drover with four acres of land. His entry in the 1859 rental reveals him as a commoner. The evidence suggests a father-son relationship between the two. By 1851 the younger Michael had seven children and Dinah, his wife, was working as a laundress. This family provides a good example of a household economy based on the sale of its labour: labouring, driving cattle, laundering, or thatching. We can see these occupations as being uniformly low down on a scale of economic operations.

Like the Elsmes, the Tazzyman family was remarkable for the consistency of its social status. Thomas Tazzyman held a Category 2 tenancy from 1791/2 to 1818

when it passed to William, who still occupied it in 1871. He was an agricultural labourer in 1841 and 1851, and the latter census gave his holding as four acres. His son Samuel was also a labourer in 1851. As with the Elsmes we have here a family for whom a small amount of land acted as an aid to subsistence rather than as a platform for growth. Labour power rather than land remained the focus of economic life for at least three generations of this family.

Many such homesteaders and commoners whose only resource was their capacity for labouring must have found themselves in a vicious circle from generation to generation, as exemplified by the Extons. Thomas Exton was a commoner in 1859, but had been in the village since at least 1841, when he appeared in the census as a cottager. In 1851 he was recorded as a labourer with four acres of land. Robert and Mary Exton (probably Thomas's children) appear in the rental of 1871 with a homestead each. Joseph and Elizabeth Exton both appear in 1841 as labourers, and in 1851 as a labouring pauper and a charwoman. William Exton was a labourer in 1851. No single member of the family appears to have inherited what small amount of stock or implements Thomas Exton may have left, or to have applied it to the working of the Category 2 holding. The implication of this is that Thomas saw his holding as an aid to subsistence, and not as a patrimony to be increased over the generations into a family interest. The latter view would have resulted in some form of non-partible inheritance, detectable through evidence of a continuation of at least a Category 2 holding on which the stock or equipment could be employed. But if his resources

⁸⁹See preceding footnote.

were as thin as Robert Elsome's, then inheritance practices would have been almost meaningless. The most his children could expect would have been small cash bequests and a sharing out of any stock and equipment. Thus they would have to develop their own holdings from scratch rather than hope to inherit resources. Only when a member of the family succeeded in overcoming the many difficulties and attained a smallholding on which there could be some growth of resources, could the next generation hope to inherit the advantage thereby gained, and maintain or even improve it.

We do, however, have an example of one member of a family breaking out of this cycle of impoverished miniature holdings. Mark Vickers had a homestead in 1804. A generation later in 1841 we find Thomas, Jane, and Elizabeth Vickers, all landless labourers, the two women noted as pauper-widows. In 1851 another family member, John, appeared as the head of a labouring household. However, in 1871 a second Mark Vickers was recorded with a smallholding, and was making an obvious attempt to build up a farmable holding judging by the letter of 1879 which was quoted earlier, in which he is shown to be asking for more land among the vacant 'commons'.⁹⁰ Facing serious diseconomies of scale, such holdings must have been precarious where only labouring was available as a second source of income. The difficulty of maintaining such holdings is illustrated by the Taylor and Williamson families.

In contrast to the Vickers, the Taylors were involved in smallholding operations in the early part of our period, starting with Samuel, who occupied a Category 3 holding in 1791/2 and called himself a farmer according to his probate inventory, although his estate amounted to only £52 4s. This he left to his wife Elizabeth

TABLE 3
Extracts from the Probate Account of
Samual Taylor, 1798

	s	d
Paid to James Wells for hedging	1	6
Paid James Sympton for Meat and thread for thatching	2	6
Paid Mr Franks for two Cows Bulling	5	0
Paid Joseph Williamson, 3 days thatching	10	6
Paid to Joseph Younger for threshing wheat	9	0
Paid do for a Pig	12	6
Paid Mark Vickers for 1 days labour and Nails etc.	4	0
Paid the Mason for repairing the house	9	0
Paid to John Tinsley for Shoes and for Shoes mending	5	6
Paid Mrs Caswell for goods	10	6
Paid Mr Ward for Stockings etc.	3	6
Paid for Ewes tuppings	1	0
Paid for wood kidding	1	4
Paid the Cow Doctor	4	0

on his death prior to 1798. He rented land worth £5 9s 6½d in total from three people other than Heathcote himself. On his death he had two cows, a heifer, a calf, four ewes and five pigs, £2 8s in wheat, 6s in barley, £1 10s in beans, hay and fencing worth two guineas, and 10s worth of wood. He occupied a thatched cottage which comprised a parlour, 'house', dairy, and two chambers. He also held a house worth £1 in rent. The Account of Disbursements paid by his widow reveals a wide cash network within the village, with labourers and craftsmen readily available for hire. One imagines that in normal, able-bodied circumstances, Samuel Taylor would have done many of these jobs himself (Table 3).⁹¹

Joseph Taylor, possibly Samuel's brother, appears in the rental of 1778 as a commoner. By 1804 the holding seems to have passed to one Henry Taylor, presumably Joseph's son, and then by 1818 to Mary [his wife?] and her son in the customary manner whereby the widow

⁹⁰ LAO, 9ANC/2/C/3/8.

⁹¹ LAO, LCC, Admons 1798/108.

held the tenancy either until she died or until the son came of age. Finally, in the 1841 and 1851 censuses an Edward Taylor is recorded whose occupation was that of agricultural labourer. He was born in 1795/6 and may be the 'son' who is mentioned in the rental of 1818, in which case he had somehow lost the smallholding since then, for there is no reference to him in the rentals and no holding mentioned in the 1851 census.

The Taylors' story appears to be one of economic decline. This can be illustrated by placing the family in the web of economic relationships described by the Account of Disbursements. In the 1790s Samuel and Elizabeth, as smallholders, occupied a place at the centre of a modest web in which they might employ labour as needed, purchase goods from the local traders, and hire expertise from local craftsmen. By the time their great nephew or grandson reached his middle age the family had moved to the periphery of the web, and were now among the ranks of those selling labour rather than hiring it.

The Williamsons present an uninspiring picture. In 1778 Robert Williamson had a homestead. By 1791/2 he had become a commoner. He died between then and 1804 leaving the holding to be occupied first by his widow and then by his eldest son, Robert, who held it from some time before 1818 until after 1839, when Rebecca his wife took it over. Some time before 1859 their son William entered upon the tenancy and occupied it until at least 1871. A second William appears in the rentals of 1859 and 1871 with a smallholding. In 1851 he gave his occupation as 'cottager with seven acres and agricultural labourer'. He may have been the son of the first William.

In 1804 one Joseph Williamson (the one noted in Elizabeth Taylor's Account of Disbursements), perhaps Robert's brother, held a Category 2 tenancy which had increased to a smallholding by 1818. By

1834, and until 1849, this had contracted to a commoner's holding and was being run by a second Joseph, son of the first. By 1851 this second Joseph was aged sixty and was, according to the census, an agricultural labourer with four acres. By 1859 the holding had shrunk to a homestead, and was being run by a third Joseph, grandson to the first, who continued in the tenancy until at least 1871, when he was recorded as an agricultural labourer. Three other members of the Williamson family, possibly brothers, were all agricultural labourers. John first appears in the records in 1841. By 1859 he had a homestead. Edward appears on record in 1851 with a smallholding, and James appears in the 1841 census only, with no land at all.

With one exception then, the members of this widespread family worked as labourers. In the 1790s old Joseph apparently combined labouring with the work of thatching, as Robert Elsome had done in the 1760s. The younger William was clearly rather less dependent upon the sale of his labour, having a smallholding to provide additional resources, and in calling himself 'cottager' he seems to have placed himself above the rest of his family in status, and to have taken a first step in what he may have seen, despite our retrospective knowledge to the contrary, as a '*carrière ouverte aux talents*' of peasant land-holding. His predecessors, back to Robert in the 1790s, certainly seem to have husbanded their holding, perhaps with eventual increase as the aim, whereas, after the second Joseph, the holding in that branch of the family appeared to break up. This is, of course, conjecture, and one must beware of constructing a convenient picture from fragmentary evidence. The main point is the similarity of occupations among these small tenants, and conversely the infrequency of individuals who, for whatever reason – inheritance, hard work – were able to begin to break away from wage-labour and into

the land-based economy. A stark example of this is the Ward family, which produced six male heads of household between 1841 and 1851, every one of them a labourer.

One can well understand the difficulties which opposed any attempt to acquire land by those whose only asset hitherto had been their labour-power. To rent and stock land would require a heavy and long-term commitment of earnings, while working the land or stock to produce a saleable or consumable commodity would involve a reduction in immediate wage-income, even if one's children were given the work on the holding. There would be a constant struggle to subsist while aiming at the same time to acquire more land: years of sacrifice and hardship greater than necessary even for a labourer, in order to arrive at a viable holding. When the children who had contributed to this effort reached an independent age they would expect to be able to look forward to some share in the fruits by inheritance, though this would bring with it the danger of the holding being broken up. Second, third, and subsequent generations might accept primogeniture as an established practice, but why should independent children of the first generation continue to work for a prize of which they would eventually be dispossessed by the eldest? Thus even inheritance posed a problem because the holding was unlikely to become sufficiently large within one generation to remain viable under partible inheritance.

In a community like Epworth where land was readily for sale, careful savings over many years might conceivably lead to a foothold on the land-holding structure. Saving could take place *ad hoc*, without the desperate commitment of a rented holding. In Rippingale, where land was rented, the chances of breaking away from a labouring life were, it seems, minimal. We can see that wage-labour under such circumstances might produce an outlook

in which 'betterment' referred to self and immediate family, rather than the family over generations, so that the concept of 'household' or 'domus' discussed earlier as a central feature of peasant culture, would come to lack meaning, and in the context of a life focused on the sale of one's labour, the land itself would cease to be seen as the basis of existence. From this section of the community would come a rural proletariat, detachable from the land and the home village, providing a pool of mobile labour necessary for the development of both agrarian and industrial capitalism.

If economic ascent was virtually barred from Rippingale's labouring families, descent was wholly possible, as in the case of the Taylors. This downward pressure on the lower levels of the community was a necessary aspect of the development of agrarian capitalist structure since it provided the immediate human resources on which the large farmer drew for his labour. Even in the absence of a large 'landless' population, there would always be the tenants of less than viable holdings to offer their labour as a boost to their income.

(ii) FARMERS

The farmers themselves were, of course, equally subject to these economic forces, and entangled in a structure of which they might find themselves beneficiaries or victims. The Bacon family were old-established members of the large-farming interest in the village. Thomas Bacon died in 1712, leaving an estate worth £975. He had a flock of almost 550 sheep, 30 horses, and 60 head of cattle. He had 125 acres of meadowland and 51 acres of arable. His daughter Phebe had, by the time of her death, bought land of an unspecified area at Deeping St James from Sir James Francis Whichcote, and she left this to her nephew William Quincey of

Fishtoft. To her brother Solomon she left only £10 in cash, plus £40 to his son Solomon and £10 to his daughter Elizabeth. The elder Solomon was most probably already in occupation of the holding at Rippingale. In 1763 he left his estate to his wife Eleanor, who in making her will seven years later called herself a farmer. She had been married twice, and she left £40 to her son Henry Stennett; £80 to her daughter Mary Bacon; various items of furniture, sheets, etc., were bequeathed to her daughters Ann and Elizabeth Bacon; and the remaining goods and chattels to another daughter, Eleanor Hamm.

Solomon's son by another marriage, Solomon, appears to have himself married one Frances who was a widow by 1778, when she was recorded on the rental with a Category 5 farm. As with other cases of widowhood, Frances must have initially shared the holding with her eldest son, Thomas, since he is also recorded as an occupant of a Category 5 farm in 1778 and 1791/2. On her death in 1805 Frances left an estate of less than a £100, though this included lands in Moulton which she placed in trust for her grandchildren with her son John, who was to enjoy the residue of the rents from the estate until his own death, when his children would enter upon the inheritance as tenants in common. In addition to the land she left £5 to the poor of the village, and £5 each to her sister Elizabeth Franks, grandson William, cousin Elizabeth Boyce, and servant Elizabeth Harris. She stipulated that William's money must be invested and used to buy him an apprenticeship: an attempt to gain for him a better, or at least a more secure life than that of a freehold cottager, which was the lot of his father Robert Hather and mother Ann (Bacon). Frances's other daughter Eleanor had married William Bavin, another farmer, and so, by and large, all her four children were secure in the farming community.

John appeared in the rentals for 1818, 1834, and 1839 with a smallholding. In the census of 1841 he is recorded as a cottager of 70 years, and in his will of 1845 he is described as a yeoman. He left his entire estate, valued at less than £200, to his wife Elizabeth, who was described in 1851 as an annuitant. She shared the holding with her son Jeremiah, and some time before 1859 the holding increased to a small farm of Category 4. Jeremiah retained this until at least 1871, and in 1851 was described as a baker and grocer with eighty-two acres, employing one labourer.

Here then, we have a good example of the inheritance problems faced by the large farmers, and how they might be resolved: the eldest son (Thomas, who leaves the record after 1791/2) taking over the farm tenancy; the second son and his descendants provided with income from rents (from land purchased outside Rippingale); and the daughters married to respectable farmers, though perhaps less successfully in Ann's case. Room at the top of the economic structure was limited, however, and so some would be pushed down to a lower level by competition for land, failure to inherit, or economic failure. Once deprived of the resources with which to pursue capitalist farming the individual might be in danger of slipping to the bottom of the structure, should the much reduced holding prove insufficient as a living on its own.

Selling rather than hiring labour might then become the key to existence. One example of this is William Bavin, whom we have met already, who was farming a Category 5 holding in 1791/2, and between then and 1818 suffered such a decline of fortune that by the latter date he retained only a Category 2 tenancy, and his son was described in 1851 as a cottager with six acres. It was possibly to avoid a similar fate that John Bacon

acquired the baker's craft and grocer's trade and became a dual-economy farmer.

A good example of transition from farmer to labourer being brought about by the inheritance system is that of the Chamberlains. In a will of 1765 William Chamberlain bequeathed £15 each to his daughters Ann and Mary and his second son Joseph. The rest of his estate he left jointly to his wife Jane and his eldest son John. Therefore Joseph, like all second sons, was deprived of the holding. When Jane died in 1789 she left her two (married) daughters 1s and half of her clothes each, and £30 plus her bed and bedding to Joseph. John received all other goods and chattels. The estate was valued at £182 15s. John appears in the rentals for 1778 and 1791/2 with a Category 4 holding. By the time of his death in 1795 he had settled in Gosberton where he had acquired land which he left in trust to provide annuities for his daughters. His estate was valued at less than £600. When Joseph died in 1827 he described himself as a labourer. However, he was far from poor. He had an estate of something less than £200, and from this he left £20 each to three nephews and three nieces. He apparently had no children since the residue was left to a nephew in Peterborough, a carpenter named William Lacey. However, with the disposal of this money the last vestige of the old farming interest among the Rippingale Chamberlains was gone. It may be worth pointing out that loss of land and dispersal of resources did not happen simultaneously. Decline of status need not be equated with a disastrous loss of wealth.

The Chamberlains were by no means alone in this experience. Jonathan Gibbons occupied a Category 4 holding in 1791/2 and 1804. He died in 1810, leaving an estate valued at less than £1500. He owned mortgaged land in Morton with £200 still to pay. He left half of his estate to his wife until her marriage or death,

when it would pass to his son Jonathan, to whom he bequeathed the other half of the estate. The younger Jonathan appears in the rental for 1818 with the Category 4 holding but is absent in 1834 and reappears in 1839 with only a homestead. Perhaps the mortgage was called in and his stock had to be sold off. In any event there was no recovery from this fall. The years 1841 and 1851 find him and his son in the position of agricultural labourers lacking even a few acres.

John Green had a Category 4 holding in 1778. At his death in 1785 he had thirty-eight acres of arable under wheat, barley and peas, thirteen head of cattle, twelve ewes with five lambs, and seven mares with one colt. His estate was valued at £93. His wife Mary is also recorded in the rentals with a commoner's holding in 1778 and a smallholding in 1791. Subsequent members of the family were commoners. A younger John Green appears as an agricultural labourer with four acres in 1851. It may be that the holding was insufficient to maintain the family while the first John was alive, for his bequests were only 1s apiece to four cousins and his goods and chattels to Mary. Absence of meadowland suggests difficulty in feeding the stock (though he did have £13 worth of hay in store). Whatever the reasons, Mary was able to take on a larger holding after his death, perhaps by taking stock and equipment such as the waggons, carts, ploughs and harrows mentioned in his inventory, from John's holding and giving up the Category 4 tenancy. This also failed, however, and one is tempted to suggest that a smallholding (certainly a very small farm holding such as John's) would be unlikely to be viable without the support of a second occupation. The trouble with such a view is that the conditions obtaining on each holding and for each family were so variable. John Bacon clearly succeeded for a long time with his smallholding although his son

Jeremiah, found it necessary to 'diversify' into other occupations despite an increased holding.

The families which are well documented and were involved in large-scale farming as Category 4 and 5 tenants often reflect the polarization of economic status as seen with the Bavins, Chamberlains, Gibbons and Greens. This is important, for it implies that the economic structure of Rippingale did not operate as a sliding scale so that farmers could expand or contract their holdings according to their fortunes and needs, but that failure to maintain a position at the top of the structure resulted in a precipitate fall to the bottom: not so much a career open to talent as a game of Snakes and Ladders. Thus, within the Smith family in 1851 we find Abel, a large (Category 5) farmer on 170 acres employing two men and a boy, but also his son Abel, an agricultural labourer (not, we note, a 'farmer's son'), while in 1841 Stephen, apparently the elder Abel's brother, also worked as an agricultural labourer.

Decline, then, could be swift and perhaps rather brutal looked at from the farmer's point of view, but some families did manage to maintain their position. The Quinceys were substantial farmers before and throughout our period, starting, so far as our records show, with one Mr Quincey, a 'yeoman' who died in 1706. He had 22 acres of arable and 22 of meadowland, 148 sheep and 16 head of cattle. His total estate was valued at £431 7s 6d. In 1778 and 1791/2 his grandson [?] Edmund held a Category 5 tenancy. He left his estate, valued at less than £1000, in trust for his wife and son to be held by his brother John, who appears in 1804 and is followed by his own son up to 1839 with a Category 4 tenancy. Edmund's son Richard took over the farm tenancy in 1804 and it remained in his and his son Richard's hands until some time prior to 1871. In 1851 the

younger Richard was recorded as a farmer with 180 acres employing three men.

Like the Quinceys, the Nunnalce family held their position for at least five generations. Luke Nunnalce, a 'farmer', died in 1766 and left £100 in trust to provide an annuity for his wife Ann until her marriage or death, when it was to pass to the children of his son William. William took over the holding, which appears as a Category 4 tenancy in 1791/2. He died in 1794 leaving his estate, valued at less than £600, to his wife Catherine. His son, William Nunnalce Junior, had already acquired a Category 4 tenancy by 1778, and although there is no further record until 1818, one or other of these two holdings had by then passed into the hands of John, the son of the younger William, where it remained until at least 1841. John died between then and 1849, when his wife Sarah appears in the rental as the tenant of the holding, which according to the census of 1851 was 68 acres in extent. This acreage was probably just sufficient to occupy and maintain one household, for after John's death Sarah employed a labourer whose place had presumably been taken beforehand by John himself.

In 1851 Jane Stapleton had a Category 4 farm of 180 acres, employing two labourers. She had inherited this from her husband, who had died in 1842 leaving an estate of less than £800. This included lands in Greetham, Rutland. The Rippingale farm had been worked from 1791/2 until 1825 by Jane's father-in-law. We have met with the purchase of lands outside Rippingale in other farming families, and among well-established farmers like the Stapletons it was apparently looked upon as a secure form of investment, overcoming the fact that Rippingale land was almost entirely for rent only.

We have seen how families might decline from farmers to lesser tenants, often to labourers, or might maintain their farm holdings for generations. How did

families first arrive at the top of the structure? We observe the process through a number of cases.

One pathway was the fortuitous one of inheritance, as in the case of one branch of the Atkinsons. William Atkinson held the tenancy of a homestead in 1778, and was a blacksmith. From 1791 to 1818 his eldest son Thomas appears in the rentals as a commoner, having inherited the blacksmith enterprise. His second son William started with a smallholding in the 1804 rental and had enlarged this to a Category 4 tenancy by 1818. He kept this until some time before 1849 when his son William appears as the tenant, being recorded in 1851 as a farmer of 160 acres, employing one labourer.

Thomas, the blacksmith, died some time between 1818 and 1822, in which year there also died one Thomas Corbett, a very substantial farmer and close friend or relative of the late Thomas Atkinson, whose son William was living with Corbett. Corbett, who seems to have had no children of his own, placed William and his brother Thomas among the beneficiaries of his will, giving Thomas his lands in Rippingale and William his lands in Uppingham, Rutland, and a share with Corbett's sister of lands in Thirlby. In addition he gave £50 to Thomas and shared out £580 in sums ranging from £300 to £20 between Thomas's eight sisters. The residue of his estate, which was assessed at something less than £4000, he gave to his wife and William Atkinson.

In 1834 Thomas occupied a smallholding which had developed into a Category 4 farm by 1839. He was recorded in 1851 as a blacksmith and farmer of twenty acres. William appears in the rentals for 1834 and 1839 with a Category 4 tenancy, but some time thereafter he moved to Gosberton Risegate, and his son Thomas Corbett Atkinson entered the holding by 1849. He occupied this until at least 1871, and was noted in 1851 as farming 132

acres with two labourers. In 1854 William died leaving all his lands in Gosberton, Surfleet and Stretton, Rutland, to Thomas Corbett Atkinson. His estate was valued at less than £1000.

By 1871 Joseph, the son of Thomas the blacksmith, held a Category 4 tenancy, and another Joseph, the son of William who farmed the 160 acres, held a Category 5 tenancy. The latter had reached the top of the structure by the diligence of his father and grandfather. The former had been aided by inheritance. When we look back to the William Atkinson of 1778 with his homestead (probably, in fact, the blacksmith's shop) we can see that movement in an upward direction, though rare over a short period, was possible over generations by more than one means.

One final example, where a family appears to have established itself in the farming community by converting financial resources into land, is that of the Stennetts. Thomas Stennett was a grocer and farmer who died in 1755. The extent of his holding is unknown, but some idea of his estate can be gained from his will. To his daughter Ann he left two ewes and lambs, £60 and the cost of 'Business learning' at his sister's house. To his daughter Mary he left two ewes and lambs, £60, a silver spoon, board, clothing, and 'the profit of the Tea and Coffee selling' until twenty-one years old. To his daughter Eleanor he left £60 and a heifer, and to his daughter Pretious [sic] £60. All goods and chattels were left to his wife Eleanor and son Henry. On marriage or 'disagreement' Eleanor was to have the land which he owned and used as sheep pasture at Pointon (area unspecified) and to find another house.

Henry does not appear in the records, but by 1778 a Mrs Stennett, possibly his widow, had a Category 4 holding in Rippingale. She is followed in the 1804 rental by her son [?] Thomas, who died

in 1813 leaving an estate valued at less than £1500. He left £200 to each of three sons and £150 to each of five daughters. The rest of the estate passed to his wife Sarah and another son, Thomas. After Sarah's death, marriage, or separation from Thomas, the estate became his on condition that he make adequate provision for his brothers and sisters. In the latter two cases Sarah was to receive an annuity of £30. In fact Sarah survived unmarried until at least 1851, when she was recorded as a farmer of 150 acres employing two labourers. Living with her were Thomas, noted as a 'farmer's son'. and his brother John, as 'bailiff'.

The grocery trade had gone out of the family early on in this history, having provided, perhaps, the springboard for investment in stock and the land at Pointon. No further mention of this land is made after the will of 1755, so that it either left the patrimony with Eleanor or was sold by her son Henry (or his widow) to consolidate resources in Rippingale – though this would be the reverse of the investment pattern seen in other families.

We now have a clearer picture of some of the socio-economic structure of Rippingale. We have seen that it was not simply a 'career open to talent'. While movement out of the smallholding, dual-economic range into large-scale farming has now been shown to have been possible, far greater difficulty was experienced in escaping from 'homesteader' or 'commoner' status, where labour was the only resource, into the smallholding range. Perhaps it can be said that if indeed there was a 'ladder' leading to the upper levels of the structure, its bottom rung was only within reach of those with inheritable resources of a fairly substantial nature. We also know that the community did not fall into a clear-cut or inflexible class structure of the labourer-farmer model which certainly obtained in some villages of the period, since there must have been a con-

tinuous fall of disinherited farmers' children (so far as land and farming resources were concerned) from the upper levels, and a climbing upwards from the middle levels. This is not to deny the existence of labouring and farming classes in Rippingale, but rather to suggest that the dichotomy of these classes was modified by the strong presence of a third class, the smallholders, with their dual economy and relatively independent position.

(iii) SMALLHOLDERS, CRAFTSMEN, AND TRADERS

Farmers could not operate purely on the basis of 'raw' labour as provided by the labouring population, but relied heavily upon the skilled services of craftsmen and tradesmen. These formed a key part of Rippingale's economic structure, and we will begin this section by looking at those smallholder families which were involved in the crafts and trades.

Such a family were the Barbers, whose first recorded member for our purpose, William, was a commoner from at least 1791/2 until 1834. Six people who appear to be his children are on record as tenants and/or householders. The eldest, William, held a Category 2 holding in 1804 which, by 1818, and until at least 1839, was a Category 3 smallholding. In 1841 he was noted as a shepherd. He left his holding to his widow Mary, who was recorded as a cottager with ten acres in 1851. Their son William had only a homestead, but this was a blacksmith's shop. He was recorded as a smith in the rentals of 1834 to 1871, and was employing two men in 1851. His young brother, John, appears as a shepherd without a holding in the same year.

The other major branch of this family is that of Jeremiah, the original William's son, who held a Category 4 tenancy with a public house in 1834 and 1839. He died in 1841, leaving an estate valued at under

£200, with cash bequests of £20 to each of his two sons and two daughters, and unspecified 'lands, messuages and tenements' to his wife Jane, who was recorded in 1841 as an innkeeper. The public house was taken over some time before 1849 by Thomas Barber, not one of Jane's children but apparently a nephew, the son of Jeremiah's brother Thomas who was recorded in 1841 as an agricultural labourer and Chelsea pensioner aged fifty-five.

Other children of the original William were: Elizabeth, who had a Category 2 tenancy in 1834 and until at least 1859, and was recorded in 1851 as a cottager with five and a half acres; Michael, with a homestead in 1834 and 1839 which was occupied by his son, a shepherd, between then and 1849 and had become a smallholding by 1859; John, an agricultural labourer; and Thomas the Chelsea pensioner. In 1851 the holding with the public house which Thomas's son took over from Jane was recorded as fourteen acres in extent, but, interestingly, the new occupant was recorded as a shepherd, not as an innkeeper. His wife, Susanna, was a schoolmistress.

This family clearly came to occupy a central place in the community during our period. The majority of the first generation of children became part of the labouring population. Some members enhanced their position by acquiring the skills and knowledge of a shepherd. One established himself in a craft which was independent of the need to work a holding, while another became what might be genuinely thought of as a worker-peasant, running a trade in the form of a public house and also working a smallholding. Jeremiah's outlook, regarding his estate as a patrimony to be handed on, is reflected in his making a will in which headship of the household and enterprise passed to his wife, as in the large farmers' wills. If the assumption is correct that the Thomas who inherited the holding from Jane was

her nephew, then the desire to keep the holding within the family becomes even more apparent. The essential nature of the household enterprise continued in his hands to be a mixture of occupations providing income from the holding, Thomas's work as a shepherd, the trade at the public house (or its rent) and, at least until the arrival of the first child, Susanna's teaching. The latter, and the shepherding, were in economic terms low-level activities requiring no capital input or 'establishment' on the part of Thomas and Susanna – unlike the work of a blacksmith – but by comparison with the work of labourers, charwomen, drovers or laundresses, they were based on special skills and knowledge, and these resources were enough to enable an increase in the size of holding between 1859 and 1871 from Category 3 to 4.

The Hinds were another family providing important services in the village, and in their enterprises they closely resemble William and Jeremiah Barber. John and Robert Hind, apparently brothers, were first recorded in the rentals in 1839 and 1849 respectively. John, who was a butcher, had a Category 2 tenancy until some time before 1871 when he increased it to a smallholding. Robert had a Category 4 holding and a public house until at least 1871. In 1851 he was recorded as an innkeeper having 36 acres and employing one labourer. Another Robert Hind, who was probably the father of these two, had a homestead in 1859. In 1841 he had worked as a labourer, but ten years later gave his occupation as butcher – possibly in business with his son. In 1841 Thomas Hind, probably another brother of John, was noted as a shoemaker. He died early, and by 1851 his widow Mary was running the business and employing two men, one of whom was apparently another of John's brothers, Samuel.

Just as there was a minimum size of

holding which would support a household without a second occupation, so there were certain trades and crafts which under suitable conditions could support a household without an agricultural holding. Those of the blacksmith and the butcher were among them, but not, it seems, that of the innkeeper. (Interestingly, the keeper of the Three Tranters inn, in Hardy's 'Desperate Remedies' was known as 'Farmer' Springrove.) It is not possible to tell whether Thomas Hind and his family were operating their shoemaking activities as part of the putting-out system which had become widespread by the 1850s (and is described by Mayhew in London), but in any case, like the occupations of smith and butcher, this places them outside the agrarian economy as such, and although their clients may have been labourers, farmers and smallholders, and their raw materials – in two cases – were drawn directly from the agricultural economy, these families must be seen as part of the pre-industrial structure of family-labour craft enterprise, closely allied to, but independent of, agricultural activity. Indeed, in the event of failure of such enterprises one imagines that some or all of the family might take up agricultural work, just as many labouring families of the period added out-work to their farm labour, making gloves, nails, shoes, rush-hats, and so on.

A number of families mixed trades and crafts with farming or labouring between their households. Probably the best example of this is the Sandalls, who happen also to be the most numerous as far as heads of households are concerned. Their record begins with Robert Sandall, a weaver, who died in 1761. He left 15 cash to his son Robert of Dunsby and his daughters Mary, the wife of Thomas Corbett, and Elizabeth Barrand, 10s to his son Edward, and 5s to his daughter Ann Ellis, a widow. To his son John he left 'my Shop of Tools and Implements

belonging to the Business of a Weaver', together with various agricultural implements and his best suit of clothes. To his son Thomas he left his largest pan, to William a 'drab colour'd coat and wastcote' and 5s, and to a second Mary, an unmarried daughter, he left his chest of drawers, a dresser, and a pewter case. The residue was left to his wife Jane, provided she remained a widow. On remarrying she was to give £10 in cash to her son John. Isaac Sandall, probably Robert's brother, died in 1782. He was a tailor, and had occupied a homestead. He left one guinea each to his son and daughter and the residue to his wife. His estate was valued at less than £37. Daniel Sandall, possibly a nephew, had a Category 2 tenancy, a public house, from before 1818 until some time after 1839, but the census of 1841 identifies him as a mason, sixty years old, and his son Daniel as the publican of the Mason's Arms.

The main progenitor of the Sandall family in our period appears to be Robert's son Thomas. He had a smallholding in 1791/2 and until at least 1818, by which time he also owned a freeholding – the Land Tax Assessment for that year shows him paying three shillings. By his death in 1833 he also had lands in Ketton, Rutland, and copyhold and freehold land in Thirlby and Gosberton (the latter approximately eighteen acres). He called himself a yeoman and his estate was valued at something under £300. He left his household goods to his wife Ann, together with the free and copyhold estate in Gosberton and Thirlby, so long as she remained a widow. The estate in Ketton was left to his son Robert. All his monies and personal estate were left to his sons Thomas and William in trust, to pay his daughter Jane a legacy of £130 and any residue to his other six daughters. On Ann's death her son John was to inherit the land at Thirlby and the Gosberton land was to be divided between Thomas

and William, subject to their paying various legacies totalling £300 to their six married sisters. In the customary way Ann and John took over the smallholding from 1834 until at least 1849. Ann lived to become an annuitant of eighty years in 1851. John appears in the 1841 census as a carpenter with no reference to land. Thomas had a homestead by 1818, but by 1834 he occupied a Category 4 holding and was also a miller with occupancy of 'the Bakehouse'. In 1851 he had fifty acres and employed a labourer. William appears in the rental for 1834 to 1859 with a Category 2 tenancy including a grocer's shop, and gave his occupation in 1851 as a grocer, draper, and brewer with seven acres.

John, the brother of Thomas the yeoman, had a homestead in 1778 and a smallholding in 1791/2 and 1804. His will tells us that he was a victualler and died in 1806 leaving his goods to his wife Sarah, and one guinea to each of seven children. He kept sheep and cattle and had corn, grain and hay in store. He appears not to have continued his father's weaving despite inheriting the implements. His son William appears in the rentals from 1818 to 1859 with a smallholding which in 1818 and 1834 included a public house. By 1841 he had given up the latter, however, and was noted as a cottager. The size of his holding was given as nineteen acres in 1851. One of his sons, another William, appears in the 1841 census as an agricultural labourer. Thomas's sister Elizabeth, who remained a spinster, held a Category 2 tenancy, given as four acres in 1851, and was noted as a cottager. His brother Edward had a Category 2 tenancy in 1804 which he kept until at least 1839. His occupation, however, was given as labourer.

Most of the remaining members of this family are the children of Thomas, son of Thomas the yeoman. Of these, Robert followed the occupation of a baker, and

in 1851 he was employing one man. After the death of his father between 1859 and 1871 he took over the Category 4 holding and the mill. Elizabeth, aged twenty-five in 1841, was also a baker, living at 'the Bakehouse'. Thomas was an agricultural labourer in 1851, with a homestead in 1859 and 1871, and Catherine held a Category 4 tenancy jointly with her husband William Shield in 1871. Finally, Isaac Sandall, possibly a descendant of old Isaac the tailor, appears in the census of 1841 as a musician (with a Category 2 holding in the rental of 1871).

This family is interesting not only because of the wide range of the enterprises followed by the individual heads of households and the confirmation this gives of the existence of a section in the community which combined smallholdings with off-holding enterprise, but also because of the evidence of a tradition within a family of following wherever possible dual, if not multi-economic enterprises.

The special success in this shown by the descendants of Thomas Sandall the yeoman seems to be due in large part to his will-making policy and perhaps also to subsequent distribution of resources by his widow, who appears to have retired from direct control of the household. He divided his estate between his four sons to provide each with resources which would enable them to build up a strong family enterprise. Robert, since he is unrecorded subsequently, may well have settled on his inherited land at Ketton. William built up a retail and brewing trade together with a smallholding of seven acres. Thomas established himself in an impressive position as a farmer of fifty acres, miller and baker, an enterprise which was maintained by his children Robert and Elizabeth. John, one assumes, combined his carpentry with running, or helping to run, the holding left to his mother.

Of the entire Sandall family only three

are positively known to have occupied 'landless' and unskilled positions as labourers. Some, like Daniel the mason and Isaac the tailor, lacked land but possessed skills which placed them in the non-agricultural sector of the local economy. The overall position of the family in the local economy makes it plain that they were leading representatives of a worker-peasant tradition, employing themselves on their own holdings and in their own affairs, and occasionally employing others.

There is evidence that the members of this group tended to inter-marry. We have already noted that the first Robert Sandall's daughter, Mary, married Thomas Corbett who was probably the father of the Atkinsons' benefactor. His other daughter, Elizabeth Barrand, was a widow by 1804 and her son Joseph appears after 1834 as a shoemaker employing one man, with a Category 2 holding which grew to a smallholding by 1871. In the same generation Mary, the daughter of Isaac Sandall the tailor, married John Wyer who had inherited a smallholding by 1791/2. By 1804 this had developed into a Category 4 tenancy, though the expansion did not last, and by 1834 he was back to a smallholding. William Wyer inherited this and in the census of 1841 he called himself a farmer. By 1851, however, he was calling himself an agricultural labourer with seven acres.

Jeremiah Barber's daughter, Mary, married John Luff under interesting circumstances. John's father had a homestead in 1791/2, which by 1804 had become a smallholding. When he died some time after 1834 his wife had entered the tenancy in the usual way, so that by the time he married Mary, John was in the position of expecting to occupy the holding after his mother's death. The couple were married by 1841, but at that time John's mother was still living as a cottager on the five-acre holding, and John gave his occupation, therefore, as an agricultural

labourer. Mary, however, was in a Category 2 tenancy of her own from before 1839 until after 1859. Looked at from the census enumerator's point of view, Mary and John formed a landless labouring household, since Mary had no occupation as such to record. We know, however, that this is not a strictly accurate view, and that they were only prevented from inheriting a larger holding by the relative longevity of John's mother – she was forty-five years old in 1841. It is likely, though, that the two holdings were run as a family enterprise, helped no doubt by Jeremiah's bequest to his daughter of £20.

Another of Jeremiah's daughters, Ann, married into the North family, whose record begins in 1791/2 when Richard North had a Category 2 holding, which had become a smallholding by 1804. He was employed by Elizabeth Taylor in 1798 to do some thatching. By 1834 he was dead and his widow, Mary, entered the tenancy until after 1841, when she described herself as a cottager. At that time her eldest son, William, aged forty, was living with her, as he might under the usual practice, with a wife and four children. He was a carpenter. Some time before 1849, after an unconscionable longevity (she was eighty in 1841), Mary died and William stepped into the tenancy. He was described as a cottager with 12½ acres in 1851, but we know from the previous census and the *Post Office Directory* of 1861 that he was still also a carpenter, and by the latter date a carter too. He had at least two brothers. John had a smallholding of seven acres in 1841 and until after 1859, and was the parish clerk. Richard had a Category 2 holding during a similar period and was a carpenter like his brother. His holding was noted as four acres in 1851. It was his son, Joseph, whom Ann Barber married, probably in 1840. He too was a carpenter. Like her sister, Ann inherited £20. The evidence suggests

that this was a family in which the parents (Richard and Mary), two sons and their families, and a grandson and his wife (Joseph and Ann), co-operated together in an enterprise as carpenters while running their holdings separately. As the elder brother, Richard may have been the head of this enterprise, although William inherited the holding from his mother. In the case of the Barbers, Robert left his weaving equipment, and hence the direction of the enterprise, to John, but also bequeathed land to him, along with his brothers, upon his mother's decease. This is not strictly a comparable case, however, since Robert Barber had the ability to divide the free and copyhold land in a form of partible inheritance between all four sons, whereas the Norths' Rippingale holding could only be passed on undivided.

Catherine Sandall, whose father was Thomas the miller, held a tenancy jointly with William Shield in 1871. The entry in the rental reads 'Catherine and William Shield Sandall'. Seemingly, this is a case of a married couple retaining both surnames. It comes as no surprise to find that the Shields display the same economy as the foregoing families. Thomas Shield, a joiner, died in 1784. In 1751 his aunt, Ann Needham, had left him her estate, which included lands in Branston, Rutland, then occupied by a tenant. He appears in the 1778 rental as tenant of a smallholding in Rippingale. He left his estate, which then included the Branston lands, lands at Melthorp and Aslackby in Lincolnshire, and the holding at Rippingale, to his wife Ann, and after her death or marriage to his son, John. In the event of John not allowing Ann the use of all the household effects he was to give her £10 or its equivalence in goods, plus the cottage at Rippingale. This appears to have happened, or perhaps John moved away, since in 1791/2 Ann had the smallholding, but this falls to a Category 2 holding in 1804.

By 1841 she was described as independent and John had left the record.

Meanwhile Jasper, Thomas's second son, appeared in the rental for 1818 with a homestead. He had inherited £10 from his father in 1784 and also, it seems, the joinery enterprise, since his son Thomas was a carpenter in 1841. In 1834 Jasper's tenancy is noted as being 'with Thomas', so that Jasper (who must have been getting on in years, since Thomas was fifty-two in 1841) was by this time apparently retiring from responsibility for the holding. By 1839 he was dead and his widow Frances continued the tenancy, now Category 2, with Thomas. After this date there is no entry in the rentals for either Thomas or his son Robert, who was also a carpenter. In 1871 Thomas's widow Rachel had a homestead. It was Robert's son William whom Catherine Sandall married.

We do not know the circumstances under which William and Catherine came to share a Category 4 tenancy. One possible explanation is that Catherine's father provided the resources out of the funds produced by his mill, bakery and land. This would explain the joint tenancy, since he would presumably wish his daughter to have some control of the resources he was providing. Alternatively, William may have inherited money from the childless Thomas. There is room here for a lot of speculation. The important thing is that the marriage and shared tenancy re-established the dual economy of land and carpentry which had been pursued by the first Thomas Shield four generations earlier and had been lost when the lands and the carpentry business had been split by inheritance between John and Jasper. We can say, on the strength of this case and those of the Norths and Barbers, that such division of an enterprise was probably a standard inheritance practice among the dual-economy families of Rippingale, and represents a form of part-

ible inheritance under which the eldest and second sons, at least, might benefit more or less equally and perhaps even share the responsibility of paying legacies to younger siblings. Such advantages were balanced, though, by the relative impoverishment of the enterprises once separated into independent branches, one of land the other of trade. The solution to this problem was inter-marriage such as we have seen between the members of the dual-economy group, keeping the resources in circulation.

We have seen how some of these families acquired, through inheritance or other means, freehold lands either within or outside the village. Such holdings, where rent could become an extra element in the household economy, were clearly very valuable, and also within the reach of those families whose enterprises produced a big enough cash surplus. An early, but important example of this is the Baker family. Richard Baker died in 1716 and was described in the probate inventory as a tallow chandler. His possessions included 145 assorted sheep and lambs, 25 head of cattle, 22 horses, and £53 10s in wheat, peas, barley, and hay. His total estate was valued at £420 17s. Bridget Baker, possibly his wife, died in 1717/8. She was not given an occupation, but her inventory noted goods in a shop and warehouse totalling £49 9s, as well as 36 ewes and lambs, 16 horses, 18 head of cattle, 8 acres of standing wheat, and barley, peas, hay, and wheat, in store worth £36 5s. Her estate was valued at £301 17s 4d. This dual enterprise seems to have provided a basis for accumulation, for two generations later, in 1778, Jeremiah Baker died a farmer and grasier, leaving free and copyhold lands in Haconby and Heckington to his son Jeremiah and daughters Ann Rayner, Frances Bacon, and Elizabeth Franks as tenants in common, plus £80 each to some eight grandchildren, seven of whom were Quinceys, and £960 in

trust for the education of the youngest of these. Unfortunately we cannot observe the process of accumulation here, but the relationship between Jeremiah Baker and the Bacon, Franks, and Quincey families illustrates how accumulation, intermarriage at the same economic level, and inheritance could result in families moving to the highest levels of the local economic structure.

In general, migration of landowners into the village would enhance the possibilities for this process, while emigration to other villages by those possessed of land, like John Shield and Robert Sandall, would reduce them, as of course would inheritance of land by those who already lived away from the village. In 1785, for example, widow Mary Palmer left a cottage, close and homestead in Harmthorpe, measuring almost 4 acres, and 33 acres of land in Morton Fen to her daughter Ann Adcock of Harmthorpe. This seems to be a case of splitting the enterprise, for though there is no mention of a son, by 1818 a Thomas Palmer was in possession of a smallholding and being assessed at 2s for the land tax. He was a wheelwright, and he died in 1841 with an estate of less than £200. His eldest son, Bingham, who had a Category 4 holding of 26 acres by 1834, was excluded from any inheritance. His wife, Frances, inherited all the household goods, and his son George received all stock in trade and tools. The land was left in trust to Frances unless she remarried, when it was to be sold and the proceeds divided equally among the children. In fact the holding remained intact, and in 1851 Frances was described as a publican widow with five acres. George continued the wheelwright business and lived with his mother, unmarried, so that by 1871 Bingham's son William seems to have inherited his uncle's enterprise and the smallholding. The will of 1785, in splitting the enterprise, had reduced the prosperity of the household. Exclusion of Bingham

from Thomas's will meant that the wheelwright's business and the five acres would stay within one house, but resources were low enough for Frances to become a publican. Had the Harmthorpe and Morton Fen holdings descended to Thomas, then, two generations later, William would have inherited a far more favourable position than that which he actually did.

We began by looking at some of the more successful families within the dual-economy structure. We will end this section with examples of the rather less successful families.

The first is of a family which, having declined to labouring status, managed to re-establish themselves briefly on the lower level of the smallholding economy. Richard Johnson, who died in 1707, had been a reasonably successful small farmer. His inventory included 30 sheep, 12 cattle, 23 horses, 4 acres of wheat, 20 acres of barley and beans, and 19 acres of meadow. His estate was valued at £254. However his son Peter, who clearly did not inherit this holding, was a labourer, and left only minor goods and chattels and 2s in bequests to his sons. His grandson Peter had a homestead in 1778 and was a commoner in 1791/2. This seems to be the start of a slow accumulation, for his son John had a smallholding by 1818, which he kept until 1849 when his son took over. John described himself as a cottager in 1841, and his son Christopher was described in the following census as a cottager with six acres, and a lime-burner. This was to be a short-lived expansion though, for by 1871 his tenancy had fallen to a mere homestead and he was working only as a lime-burner. As with the labouring families studied earlier this case calls into question the ability of those with restricted resources to achieve and maintain a position in the dual-economy structure. Christopher Johnson's lime-burning would probably not have produced

enough income in proportion to time spent to allow proper use of the six acres, while his father had subsisted on the holding for over three decades.

John Briggs seems also to have thrived fairly well on a ten-acre holding which he acquired between 1791/2 and 1804, and passed on to his wife in 1826. His will of that date mentions sheep, beasts, corn, grain, and hay, and his estate was valued at less than £400. He left £90 to his son John, and £100 each to his sons Edward and Richard. A fourth son, Thomas was to enter the tenancy after his mother, and 1851 found him on the holding, occupied as a cottager.

These last two examples illustrate the existence of a number of families who were able to find a living from the larger 'cottager' holdings of around five acres and upwards, but lacked the additional resources needed for dual economic activity. They add one more dimension to the overall economic structure. At this point we can review the elements of that structure and their relationship to each other.

(iv) SOCIAL SUB-STRUCTURES

Among the families examined here five distinctive types of economic activity can be discerned.

One type was based on wage-labour with little or no land, specialized skills or knowledge. For this group economic activity was totally dependent upon employment by others, and although income might be increased by sending out more family members (i.e., children) to work, such increase was always related to ability to meet the employers' demand for labour. The balance of working for a wage and having time to attend to a holding, together with the factors explored above, such as intermarriage and inheritance, made very difficult the acquisition of resources sufficient to sustain a

smallholding and so break free of total wage-dependency, particularly in Rippingale's mainly rent-dominated land-market.

A second type was that of non-agricultural – albeit closely related to agriculture, in some cases – self-employed enterprise in the form of a trade or craft such as that of blacksmith, butcher, carpenter, tailor, mason, or shoemaker. Possession of special skills, knowledge, or access to materials and goods enabled these relatively few families to command the custom of the community, to place a premium upon their services, and thereby to acquire financial resources which might eventually be converted into land and stock, thus fostering the third type of activity, but one which represented a way of economic life in itself.

The third type was the dual-economic enterprise involving a combination of craft or trade with farming a holding which might vary considerably in size between three or four acres and sixty or more. The essence of this type was its reliance upon family labour to perpetuate the enterprise, the independence of the operation from other groups in the community, and the conservation of resources within the group by inter-marriage and inheritance, which often took the form of partition rather than simple primogeniture. This group can justifiably be referred to as worker-peasants, bearing in mind the range of crafts and trades in which they worked, and their pre-industrial nature.

A fourth type was the relatively small group of those dependent solely, or almost so, upon a smallholding of some five or ten acres in extent, who often called themselves 'cottagers'. While such holdings might provide subsistence, possibly with some peripheral wage-labour, some of the evidence above suggests that they would not be likely to produce sufficient surplus

to allow increases in the scale of the holding.

Large farmers employing wage-labour constitute the fifth type. These were locked in a mutual dependency with the labouring families of the community, sought to maximize the return from their capital, and were concerned to consolidate their holdings through primogeniture, which in turn tended to result in the 'disinherited' falling to the lower end of the economic structure.

Thus there were two main economic and social structures within the community. One was the capitalist agricultural structure with its dichotomy between interdependent labourers and farmers, in which the overall pressure was downwards, and activity tended to be mono-economic. This was the structure which became increasingly pervasive in many areas with the process of industrialization and 'agriculturization' discussed by Franklin, and which has been assumed by many English historians to have overcome the peasant structure entirely by the end of the eighteenth century. The other was the worker-peasant structure, existing in symbiosis with, but not dependent structurally upon, the capitalist structure, having an evident social cohesion of its own. In so far as they have more in common with this group than with the labourers or large farmers, it seems right to include single-enterprise craft or trade families and cottager-families within it.

The mobility within this structure was clearly more fluid than in the capitalist structure, and it must be stressed that a certain amount of movement occurred not only within but also between these two structures. Some labouring families did manage to gain a 'cottager' status; farmers' sons fell to smallholdings and to labouring; and shopkeepers and craftsmen acquired land and even rose into the large farming interest. In time, also, some trade or craft families, no doubt, would accom-

modate to industrialization and increasingly assume the relationships of mono-economic mass-industrial society. Yet this must not blind us to the underlying sub-structures upon which such movement took place, any more than such mobility would obscure the existence of the great urban classes of Victorian England.

What we see in Rippingale is a community in which the capitalist agrarian 'revolution' was far from complete even during the later years of the nineteenth

century: in which the peasant culture of family-labour farming and off-holding work continued through the age of British industrial and imperial achievement to resist the process which in some regions was already complete before Victoria came to the throne. It remains, by way of concluding this study, to focus more closely on the culture of Rippingale's worker-peasants, summarizing what we now know of such people generally, and of the more detailed evidence of their lives in this one community.

5. Some Aspects of Worker-Peasant Culture⁹²

No typical size of holding can be ascribed to this socio-economic group. In the main, Category 3 and very occasionally Category 4 holdings go with the more successful dual-economy families, but many such families had only the limited resources of a Category 2 holding, and if we include the single-enterprise craft or trade families as a modified periphery of the main group, then Category 1 homesteads also occur. By and large, though, the 'commoner' (2) and 'smallholder' (3) categories represent the landholding status of the worker-peasants of Rippingale.

A wide range of activities might be combined with such holdings. Some of the most instructive evidence regarding these comes from the records of individuals so far unmentioned because of the relatively poor representation of their families.

The craft of tailor has already been mentioned in the case of Isaac Sandall. John Shelton, another tailor, had a homestead, like Isaac, in 1778, but when he died in 1796 he clearly had land enough for more than one cow, for he left his sister his 'best cow and as much Hay as will serve this season'. He made bequests totalling £160 and left an estate valued at under £300.

Rippingale's schoolmasters were also smallholders. William Gale, who held that post between 1839 and 1859, and his successor James Dillon, had seven acres. Many Category 2 tenants had second occupations which were of equal importance to the community. John Harmston was recorded as a wheelwright in 1859 and 1871, and from 1861 he was also the

village postmaster. Daniel Pacey was recorded from 1849 until 1871 as a Category 2 tenant, but held land outside the village, for in 1851 he was noted as a butcher with fifty acres employing one labourer. John Tinsley was a cordwainer who died in 1767. He also kept sheep. Albert Wilson was a farmer of forty-two acres employing one labourer, and he was also the village carrier, going to Stamford on Fridays. William Blackwell, a bricklayer, was recorded as having a Category 3 holding in 1849 and 1859, and a Category 2 holding in 1871. This occupation may have been suited to running a smallholding by its casual and seasonal nature. The slack winter months would give time for preparation of the land. Equally suited would be Robert Barnes's occupation as a dealer in pigs and cattle (1841 and 1851). He had a six-acre holding between 1849 and 1871. A very early, but interesting example is that of John Brooks who died in 1714. His inventory calls him 'lemercier', i.e., shopkeeper: a not uncommon occupation for smallholders. He had shops in Rippingale and Folkingham, some three-and-a-half miles to the north. The Rippingale shop was the more important and contained salt, candles, buttons, threads, pots, tarpipes and tobacco, scales and weights, and other items totalling £15 in value. On his land were wheat and fallow worth 35s, peas, straw, hay, and grass in store worth £11, seven beasts, five sheep, two pigs and a mare.

William Claypole, who appears in the rentals from 1834 to 1859, had a Category 4 tenancy and a varied career. He was a miller in 1841, a miller and innkeeper in 1851, and a miller, innkeeper

⁹² See footnote 87.

and baker in 1861, when his address was the Windmill Inn. His holding was thirty acres. This provides a second example of the miller-farmer, and helps to make the point that some occupations were more conducive to accumulation of resources than others. One need hardly point out the centrality of grain in Claypole's economic activity, and the powerful combination of his roles in the local market.

In their social culture then, there was a rich vein of community-centred economic endeavour, without which the village would have been little more than a sterile collection of large farms and labourers' dwellings. That the ultimate goal of such endeavour was accumulation of household wealth should not obscure its value to the whole of the local community.

What can we tell of the family culture of the worker-peasants? We can at least glimpse the position of women and children, and the make-up of the household. Taking households which appear in both the rental of 1839 and the census of 1841, and looking at women who were wives or widows of householders, we find that in Category 2 households, six of them (30 per cent) had stated occupations. They were widows and householders in their own right on holdings of less than five acres. In Category 3 two women (16 per cent) were in the same position: one a 'cottager' on something under twenty acres and one an 'independent'. In Category 4 one woman (9 per cent) had a small farm, and in Category 5 one woman (33 per cent) was a 'widow-farmer'. In Category 1 two women (11 per cent) had stated occupations: one an agricultural labourer and the other in a trade. Even if we allow for the small size of the samples it seems that women in the smallholding categories were more able to adopt an independent enterprising role than those in the landless category, and that this was related to the presence of the smallholding itself as a means of living. At the same

time, for some at least, the fact that the possession of the holding was conditional upon their remaining in widowhood in order to protect the inheritance of their children (usually their sons) operated against personal liberties and perhaps even the enhancement of resources through remarriage. Indeed, with the presence in the household of a grown, perhaps married son, the widow may well have been a nominal head of the household only.

Worker-peasant families displayed distinctive characteristics in the relationship of their children to work. In Category 2, 18 per cent had stated occupations: six as labourers, two as housekeepers, and one in a trade. In Category 3 this figure was 72 per cent, and consisted of three labourers, three skilled non-agricultural workers, a housekeeper, and a female servant. Of the thirty-one children in Categories 4 and 5 none had any stated occupation, while in Category 1 10 per cent were noted as labourers. Even allowing for fortuitous distribution of children of working age, there is a clear pattern in which the work-aged children of worker-peasant families tended to contribute labour to the household economy, even when this involved off-holding work, whereas children of larger tenants and small tenants did so either not at all or to a lesser degree.

A further aspect of family organisation is the presence of 'non-family' individuals in the household. This was seen earlier in general terms, and Figure 12 showed the relative presence of such individuals in each category. It is worth looking more closely into this. The high number of 'non-family' members in the households of the large and small farmers is as we would expect due to the presence of farm servants living in. The Category 5 'non-family' group in 1841 consisted of six male and six female servants, a governess, and an independent woman. In Category 4 there were nine male and eleven female servants, a journeyman miller and

three independents. In both categories, then, the non-family members of the households were almost entirely employees. In the other categories the situation was more diverse. Category 3 contained two agricultural labourers, a dressmaker, a dependant, a visitor, and one person with no stated occupation. Category 2 contained three agricultural labourers, four farm servants, four shoemakers, two visitors, two dependants, and a pauper-widow. In Category 1 five people had no stated occupation, one was a shepherd, one a farm servant, and one a carpenter.

We cannot tell whether the farm servants and labourers were employees or lodgers, except the one case recorded as the latter, but it is unlikely that the holdings in Category 3 and below would support such employees. The dressmaker was a fifteen-year-old girl living and working with (and probably 'for') Elizabeth Barber, a dressmaker aged twenty-five, and her elderly parents. Three of the shoemakers were living in the household of Joseph Barrand, a shoemaker himself. They were William Musson and James Baker, both journeymen, aged thirty and twenty respectively, and Sam Chambers, an apprentice aged fifteen. The other shoemaker was also a fifteen-year-old apprentice, Samuel Hind, who probably worked for his relative Thomas Hind whom we met earlier, and was lodging with John Hinds (or Hind), a butcher. There was therefore some degree of kinship between the three, and they may in fact have been brothers. Of the dependants, one was Sarah Sandall, aged eighty, living with her son William, a cottager aged fifty-nine. The other was Mary Sneath, aged six, living with Richard Sneath, a cottager aged seventy, his wife of similar age, and their son aged forty (possibly Mary's father). These two, then, were in fact members of the families concerned. Finally, the pauper-widow was Hannah

Sewards aged eighty-five, who was living with Frances Shield aged sixty-five and also a pauper-widow. William Quincey, a labourer aged thirty-five was living in the same house. William and Hannah were therefore probably both lodgers.

Thus the non-family members of the worker-peasant households can be split into four groups: resident workers in the household enterprise; concealed family members; lodgers; and visitors. The amount of genuine non-family labour was very small. In this sample, counting the farm servants and labourers as lodgers, it amounts to 20.6 per cent of the 'non-family' group from Categories 1, 2 and 3, as against 85.7 per cent and 83.3 per cent respectively of the comparable group in Categories 5 and 4.

We saw earlier that Rippingale combined a high rate of turnover in tenantry with a low mobility of status in terms of holdings. The picture appears to be one of a core of long-settled families in possession of smallholdings, enterprises and farms, with a more mobile 'periphery' of wage-labouring families. The geographical stability of the 'core' was based on their status as small tenants rather than owners in a free land market, or substantial farmers with capital, since they could neither sell up locally and buy land elsewhere nor raise sufficient funds to buy additional land (except in rare cases). This geographical stability created strong community and kinship ties among the worker-peasant group. This kind of community has been described in northern Lincolnshire by Geoffrey Robinson, as follows:

'Andersons and Kirbys had intermarried with each other for generations and with Maitlands, Hiles, Rudkins and Atkinsons. Consequently, practically all the farmers and master-craftsmen in Heddingham were closely enough related to my grandfather to be regarded as his cousins, and that is how they sometimes addressed each other. Henry was able to call at least a dozen men in the village 'uncle', and these men and their families constituted

an inter-related group of rural bourgeoisie with a well-defined sense of hierarchy. Freehold farmers were at the top and self-employed artisans were at the bottom. There was no place within it for a labourer, nor for a journeyman who worked for a master other than his father. Body-servants were utterly beyond the pale.⁹³

Rippingale had almost no freeholders, and 'rural bourgeoisie' is a misnomer, but the general description holds good.

The common interests of this group were: maintenance of the enterprise; equitable distribution of resources through inheritance, marriage within the group, and conservation by means of the latter of resources within the community and the group itself; family labour on both holding and enterprise; and relatively little employment of non-family wage-labour. Surplus product was converted to cash savings, probably with the ultimate aim of purchasing land or extending the rented holding rather than being spent on improved standards of living. Control of the household generally passed from father to son, even when the mother was present as the nominated heiress to the tenancy and enterprise.

When we think about the relationship between this group and society in general we find that it displays yet another characteristic ascribed to peasant communities. There is no evidence of any fundamental alteration in the nature of its agriculture, holdings or enterprises throughout the period which we have considered. While much of England was experiencing an accelerating rate of economic change in terms of industrialization and 'agriculturalization', we find Rippingale in the 1870s still pursuing basically the same agriculture and crafts that it pursued in the mid 1700s and earlier, with the exception that horse-breeding had declined, sheep-breeding had increased, and a wider range of crops had begun to appear in a very small way by the late 1860s. Enclosure in 1804 had no

discernible effect upon either the holdings or the community which rested upon them, in structural terms. If the worker-peasant families were thus 'autarkical', so must have been the entire community since it was these families who provided the steering influence.

This 'autarky' was exercised against the dominant landlord, Sir Gilbert Heathcote, Lord Aveland. This is not to suggest an open and running battle over the generations between the community and the lord. Rather that the character of Rippingale during our period was the outcome of a balance of pressures between the two, in which the worker-peasants held sway, thus avoiding the destruction of small-holdings which would in turn have resulted in a class of single-enterprise crafts and trades people. The basis of this balance was probably the security afforded to smallholders by the presence of the Fen and the success of enterprises which was aided by the proximity of the major road between Peterborough and Lincoln (once a turnpike and now the A15). Where such holdings could exist it was possible to maintain a large number of rent-payers. By working out the rent-acreage equivalences from the Survey of 1791/2 we can see that Heathcote offset the smallness of the tenancies by imposing heavy rents on the smallest of them. Those on less than two roods paid the equivalent of £2 6s 8d per acre, on average. Those occupying between two roods and five acres paid an average of £1 4s per acre. Occupants of five to twenty acres, paid 13s 4d per acre; of twenty to two hundred acres, 6s 8d per acre; and of over two hundred acres, 9s 4d per acre. Thus the worker-peasants paid for their survival.

⁹³G Robinson, *Hedingham Harvest*, 1977, p 31.

6. Conclusion

I hope to have shown in this study that the peasant in England was not only a creature of the medieval and early modern periods, but remained with us in the form of the worker-peasant until at least the late nineteenth century. (There is evidence that they continued to exist in certain areas, identifiable by their family-labour farms, in the 1960s.⁹⁴) I have tried to show that such people appear to us only when certain kinds of evidence are brought together, and that past attempts to classify them simply as 'smallholders' or 'small farmers' have not done justice to their true social and economic situation.

The overall implication of this is that agricultural history must shift its model significantly away from that of the mid-

twentieth-century 'southern' school towards one which allows for the study of regional variations in post eighteenth-century agrarian society, no longer taking the growth of capitalist agriculture as its only theme; which recognizes the broad unity of European and English (and probably British) agrarian experience, rather than emphasizing its differences (despite the tendency of contemporary social terminology to obscure the existence of comparable social groups)⁹⁵; and which seeks to recover the social and economic richness of the peasant tradition in England and apply its lessons to the late twentieth century, when 'agriculturalization' is itself in crisis, and the future of rural society must be forged from our models of the past.

⁹⁴ C M Williams and J B Hardaker, *The Small Fen Farm*, Cambridge, 1966.

⁹⁵ Beckett, *op cit.* 1984.

I. List of Primary Sources

UNPRINTED PRIMARY SOURCES

1 Lincolnshire Archives Office (LAO)

a Rentals and Surveys:

1 Anc VI/A/6/c	'One Half yeares Rent of the Estate late Sr John Brownlowes purchased by Sir Gilbert and William Heathcote' (1720)
3 Anc 6/12	'Receiving book Mich 1778-Mich 1779'
3 Anc 4/10	'Abstract of the Survey and Valuation of certain Estates in the County of Lincoln Belonging to Sir Gilbert Heathcote Bart: Rippingale' (1791/2)
3 Anc 4/11	'Rental of the Estate of Sir Gilbert Heathcote, Bart' (1804/5)
3 Anc 4/12	Surveys: Rippingale 1818
3 Anc 4/16	'Particulars and Survey of the Estate of Sir Gilbert Heathcote at Rippingale' (1834)
9 Anc 1/A/16/1	Estate Survey: Rippingale 1839
9 Anc 1/A/16/5	Estate Survey: Rippingale 1849
9 Anc 1/A/16/8	Estate Survey: Rippingale 1859
9 Anc 1/A/16/14	Estate Survey: Rippingale 1871

b Probate Inventories and Wills:

INV 196/206	Thomas Claypole	1701
INV 198/217	John Polls	1704
INV 200/174	Quincey	1706
INV 201/106	Robert Collinwood	1707
INV 201/288	Thomas Weather	1707
WILLS o 111	Richard Johnson	1707
INV 203/240	Thomas Bacon	1712
INV 204/192	Richard Carter	1713
WILLS o 370	John Brooks	1714
INV 204/180	Robert Farnham	1714
INV 204/205	William Allief	1714/5
INV 205/91	John Askew	1716
WILLS o 599	Richard Baker	1716
WILLS o 917	Hesther Hyfield	1717
WILLS o 1080	Bridget Baker	1717/8
WILLS o 1371	Allief	1718
MISC WILLS H/189	Richard Spencer	1721
WILLS o 2858	John Kellem	1722
WILLS o 2874	Widow Little	1722
LCC WILLS 1725/168	Daniel Nicols	1725
LCC WILLS 1726/179	Abigail Richardson	1726
LCC WILLS 1727/182	Peter Johnson	1727
INV 207/218	John Thomisman	1729
LCC WILLS 1729	John Claypole	1729
LCC WILLS 1732/156	John Lightfoot	1732
LCC WILLS 1736/6	Ann Battes	1736
LCC WILLS 1741/29	Richard Clarke	1741
LCC WILLS 1741/48	Susanna Gage	1741
LCC WILLS 1747/9	Edward Arden	1747
LCC WILLS 1750/36	John Chamberlain	1750
LCC WILLS 1751	Ann Needham	1751
LCC WILLS 1755	Thomas Stennet	1755
LCC WILLS 1760	Phebe Bacon	1760
LCC WILLS 1761	Robert Sandal	1761
LCC WILLS 1762	Margarett Law	1762
LCC WILLS 1763	Solomon Bacon	1763
LCC WILLS 1763	Robert Elsom	1763
LCC WILLS 1765	William Chamberlin	1765
LCC WILLS 1766	Luke Nunnalee	1766
LCC WILLS 1766	John Richardson	1766
LCC WILLS 1767	John Tinsley	1767
LCC WILLS 1768	John Askew	1768
LCC WILLS 1770	Eleanor Bacon	1770

LCC WILLS 1778	Jeremiah Baker	1778
LCC WILLS 1780	Thomas Law	1780
LCC WILLS 1782	Isaac Sandal	1782
LCC WILLS 1782	Zachariah Season	1782
LCC WILLS 1784	Thomas Shield	1784
LCC WILLS 1785	Mary Palmer	1785
LCC WILLS 1785	John Green	1785
LCC WILLS 1789	Jane Chamberlain	1789
LCC WILLS 1790	John Story	1790
LCC WILLS 1791	Robert Sutton	1791
LCC WILLS 1793	John Sympson	1793
LCC WILLS 1794	William Nunnalee	1794
LCC WILLS 1796	John Shelton	1796
LCC WILLS 1797/ii	Edmund Quincey	1797
LCC ADMONS	Samuel Taylor	1798
LCC WILLS 1803/i	Joseph Hill	1803
LCC WILLS 1805/i/21	Frances Bacon	1805
LCC WILLS 1805/ii/252	John York	1805
LCC WILLS 1806/ii	John Sandall	1806
Sleaford Wills 1/344	William Draper	1805
LCC WILLS 1810/115	Baker Franks	1810
LCC WILLS 1810/119	Jonathan Gibbins	1810
LCC WILLS 1812/130	Edward Franks	1812
LCC WILLS 1812/335	Joseph Whyment	1812
LCC WILLS 1813/249	Thomas Stennet	1813
LCC WILLS 1822/60	Thomas Corbett	1822
LCC WILLS 1825/254	Stephen Stapleton	1825
LCC WILLS 1826/50	John Briggs	1826
LCC WILLS 1826/335	John Woodcock	1826
LCC WILLS 1827/67	Elizabeth Corbett	1827
LCC WILLS 1827/55	Joseph Chamberlain	1827
LCC WILLS 1828/181	Thomas Jaques	1828
LCC WILLS 1830/106	Robert Hayther	1830
LCC WILLS 1833/170	Francis Lowe	1833
LCC WILLS 1833/220	Thomas Sandall	1833
LCC WILLS 1841/23	Jeremiah Barber	1841
LCC WILLS 1841/279	Thomas Palmer	1841
LCC WILLS 1842/341	Stephen Stapleton	1842
LCC WILLS 1845/11	John Bacon	1845
LCC WILLS 1848/290	Thomas Musson	1848
LCC WILLS 1853/301	Mary Rennalls	1853
LCC WILLS 1854/13	William Atkinson	1854

c Miscellaneous:

Terrier Bundle: Rippingale - Glebe Terriers dated: 1671, 1674, 1679, 1690, 1700, 1703, 1706, 1708, 1742, 1794, 1822, and three undated, possibly late 1600s (two) and mid-1700s.

Kesteven Enclosure Award 61 (1803)

Parish Plans: Rippingale Enclosure Plan.

Kesteven Quarter Sessions: Land Tax: Rippingale - 1798, 1808, 1818, 1832.

9 ANC 2/c/3/8 Letter Book: letter dated 'Rippingale Apr. 1879' to Lord Aveland from John Wortley.

2 Public Record Office - Kew

MAF 68 (Agricultural Census, Parish Summaries)/41, /42 (1866);

MAF 68/135 (1867); 1868 missing; MAF 68/192 (1869); MAF 68/249 (1870); 1871 missing.

3 Land Registry Office - Census Room

HO 107 621 Manuscript Census Return (Population) Rippingale, 1841

HO 107 2095 Manuscript Census Return (Population) Rippingale, 1851

The Author

ADRIAN HALL took a BEd degree in History at Bishop Grosseteste College, Lincoln, in 1977. He subsequently taught for seven years. During this time he published articles on Lincolnshire farmworkers in *Oral History*, and on the use of evidence in *Teaching History*. Research on the present topic was conducted with the intention of submitting for an MPhil degree, under the supervision of Dr P Bigmore at Middlesex Polytechnic. Personal circumstances prevented the achievement of the degree, but Dr Joan Thirsk encouraged the author to publish his work. Since 1984, Adrian Hall has worked in the information technology industry, pursuing historical interests as work and family commitments allow.

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