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Forthcoming conferences

Anglo-French Colloquium

The 2nd Anglo-French Colloquium on Rural History, organised by the BAHS and the AHSR, will be held from 9–11 September 2005 at Darwin College, University of Canterbury.

The programme will include a plenary session with French and English speakers, and three themed discussions with participants from both countries on 'Producers, markets and rural change', 'Technical advances and rural society', and 'English farmers, French and British peasants'.

Discussion will be in English, and where papers are given in French, full summaries will be available in English.

This Colloquium will be open to all. Further details will be available from the Secretary, Dr John Broad (j.broad@londonmet.ac.uk) and on the Society's website, www.bahs.org.uk, from April onwards.

Advance notice and change of date

The Society's Winter Conference

This year's winter conference will be held on Saturday 10 December 2005 at the Institute of Historical Research, London, and will be a celebration of Professor Michael Thompson's contribution to the discipline. Full details will be circulated later in the year.

Please note that this is a week later than usual

The operation of lifeleasehold in south-west Lancashire, 1649–97*

by A. J. Gritt

Abstract

South-west Lancashire emerged from the civil war in need of social and economic recovery. The region was a Catholic stronghold and landlords and tenants alike had experienced the humiliation of military and political defeat and borne the financial cost of sequestration. Landlords were faced with the challenge of maintaining social stability and promoting economic growth and recovery. At the same time, many tenants were undercapitalized, markets were underdeveloped and agricultural production was hampered by the inadequacies of the drainage system. This article explores the extent to which the social and economic contract framed by the lifeleasehold system helped promote social stability and economic recovery. It is argued that although the lifeleasehold system provided security of tenure and economic recovery is evident, this was only possible through the incursion of outside money. This undermined the idealist preferences of landlords who sought to promote a strong bond between tenant nuclear families and the land.

Regional and sub-regional variations in systems of tenure have been the subject of historical enquiry for many years. Nevertheless, while the minutiae of legal differences between various forms of customary and non-customary tenure may engage a handful of subject specialists and legal historians, for the general reader such detail seems either impenetrable or superfluous. The result is that while systems of tenure lay at the heart of the social and economic structure of early modern society, they have been pushed to the periphery of historical enquiry.

Much recent work on tenure has concerned the extent to which it contributed towards economic growth in the eighteenth century. The case for low rates of mobility amongst both customary and non-customary tenants has been well made, suggesting that the majority of farmers enjoyed security of tenure.[1] It is argued that security of tenure was a crucial factor in agricultural change as it encouraged farmers to invest and improve rather than exhaust their holdings. Nevertheless, leasehold tenure was not a precondition of agricultural improvement. Husbandry clauses in leases have been shown to have had a negligible impact on the process of agricultural change in Norfolk whereas customary tenants were the promoters of enclosure

* All manuscripts cited are held by the Lancashire Record Office.

[1] David R. Stead, 'The mobility of English tenant farmers, *c.* 1700–1850', *AgHR* 51 (2003), pp. 173–89; C. Clay, 'Landlords and estate management in England', in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, V (ii), *1640–1750* (1985), pp. 119–245.

which transformed the Cumbrian commons in the nineteenth century.[2] Security of tenure, therefore, may have *facilitated* change, but it is highly doubtful whether tenurial systems *dictated* change. For tenure to determine the nature and pace of change depends upon the ability of landlords to control the agricultural activities of their tenants. It further implies that they were the font of all innovation and experimentation, disseminating their wisdom to their docile social inferiors who are thus rendered mere suggestable agents remaining faithful to the dictums of their leases.

The debate regarding the role of the lease in the process of agricultural change is as much a debate about the balance of landlord-tenant power as it is about agricultural change and the dissemination of progressive practises. This relationship was cemented by the contracts entered into between landlords and tenants, but its nature was determined by largely external factors. Indeed, the precise terms of customary and non-customary tenure depended upon the power and authority of landlords over tenants individually and collectively.[3] Tenurial systems are legal devices designed to regulate the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants, serving to protect the financial interests of both parties. Nevertheless, within any tenurial system is an explicit power structure, affirming the superiority of the lessor over the lessee. Tenure, therefore, is as much a social contract as it is an economic one, representing the convergence of social and economic forces and forming one of the fundamental building blocks of early modern society.

In purely economic terms, rent is a form of surplus extraction, but the degree of surplus extracted was always tempered by what the market would bear, and the power and authority of the landlords *vis à vis* tenants. Indeed, the extent to which landlords could increase the level of surplus extraction was determined by external factors such as food prices, land values (which were spatially and chronologically variable), the supply of labour and the supply of prospective tenants. Thus, the socio-economic relationship between landlords and tenants was dependent upon a combination of demographic, economic and environmental factors. While landlords could attempt to manipulate landholding terms in order to improve estate income, their freedom to do so was tempered by local circumstances, with added complications being presented by manorial custom. When tenants felt that their customary rights were being transgressed, they were quick to threaten litigation. Even though many customary rights were eradicated in law, this process was long, slow, and evolutionary. Flashpoints certainly existed on individual estates and manors, but the general process of change was one of gradual evolution within the context of local and national economic and demographic circumstances. The courts and the state were prepared to intervene, and various government enquiries were initiated, especially regarding enclosure and depopulation (before, but not after 1640). The fact of the matter remains that tenurial systems were a product of local socio-economic circumstances and negotiation between landlords and tenants within the context of local custom, common and statute

[2] Susanna Wade Martins and Tom Williamson, 'The development of the lease and its role in agricultural improvement in East Anglia, 1660–1870', *AgHR* 46 (1998), pp. 127–41; C. E. Searle, 'Customary tenants and the enclosure of the Cumbrian commons', *Northern Hist.*, 29 (1993), pp. 126–53.

[3] R. Brenner, 'Agrarian class structure and economic development in pre-industrial Europe' in T. H. Aston and C. H. E. Philpin (eds), *The Brenner debate* (1985), pp. 10–63.

law. Landlords did not achieve an absolutist hold over their tenants or their estates, and, as rents rose in the eighteenth century, reflecting rising land values and the power of the landlords to cream off some of the profits of agricultural change during Allen's second phase of the agricultural revolution, the increase in surplus extraction was not at the cost of the impoverishment of tenants.[4] Indeed, one of the reasons why land values continued to rise in the eighteenth century is because agricultural profits were, on the whole, attractive, and there existed a genuine competition for tenants.

This article considers the operation of one particular form of tenure in a relatively neglected region. Indeed, south-west Lancashire provides an environment within which the significance of the socio-economic context of landholding comes into particularly sharp focus. Section one provides a brief introduction to the social, economic and political context of south-west Lancashire in the second half of the seventeenth century. Section two discusses the nature of lifeleasehold in general terms, while section three raises some preliminary problems inherent in the system, discussing the administrative problems faced by the estates, the economic consequences of demographic uncertainty and the degree of individual negotiation which introduced flexibility and adaptability into the system. Section four outlines some of the social and economic aims of the estates and provides a detailed investigation of the operation of lifeleasehold, primarily on the Molyneux estate in south-west Lancashire, but with material also drawn from other estates. Section five discusses the integration of the urban and rural economies and the nature of the capital market which provided the finance for the raising of entry fines. The conclusion addresses the extent to which lifeleasehold tenure contributed to the economic recovery of south-west Lancashire in the half century after the civil war.

I

South-west Lancashire was a Catholic stronghold and, having fought and lost the civil war, this distinctive area was in need of social and economic recovery. The Royalist landlords had suffered the costs of war and then the sequestration of lands and fines of the Commonwealth.[5] Internal communications were poor, tenants were often undercapitalized, and despite the elaborate attempts to drain Martin Mere at the end of the period, the land was ill-drained, low-lying mossland, much of it subject to periodic salt-water flood.[6] Markets and trade networks were underdeveloped and, despite the growth of Liverpool, there was no town within the region which could lay claim to being a major urban centre. Little work has been done on the demography of the area, but, in common with much of the rest of England, population appears to

[4] R. C. Allen, *Enclosure and the yeoman: the agricultural development of the south Midlands, 1450–1850* (1992).

[5] J. M. Gratton, 'The military career of Richard, Lord Molyneux, *c.* 1623–54', *Trans. of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* (hereafter *THSLC*) 134 (1984), pp. 17–37; R. Hutton, 'The failure of the Lancashire cavaliers', *THSLC* 129 (1980), pp. 47–62; DDCl 1060, account of trials of Caryll, Lord Molyneux, 1694; William Blundell, *A Cavalier's Notebook* (1880); William Blundell, *Cavalier: letters of William Blundell to his friends, 1620–1698* (1933).

[6] Alison Maddock, 'Watercourse management and flood prevention in the Alt level, Lancashire, 1589–1779', *THSLC* 148 (1999), pp. 59–95; John Virgoe, 'Thomas Fleetwood and the draining of Martin Mere', *THSLC* 152 (2003), pp. 27–49.

have been declining slightly, at least in rural districts, and the area was not free from periods of crisis or near crisis mortality.[7]

This social, political and economic framework might have amounted to a crisis of landlord power. The fallibility of their authority and social standing had been exposed by parliamentary forces during the war. Moreover, despite the short-lived confidence of the reign of James II, they were stripped of public office throughout the remainder of the seventeenth century and a group of landlords, including Lord Molyneux, were tried for treason in 1694. The prosecution's witnesses were discredited and none came forward to testify, leading to the acquittal of all the accused.[8] The emergence of Liverpool as a regional centre of mercantile capitalism and the strengthening of the industrial base to the west, created demands for capital and labour at a time when population was falling and most tenants were undercapitalized. Such factors may have further weakened landlord power. The challenge facing landlords was to maintain their grip on local authority, retain a stable body of tenants and promote economic recovery. Clearly, estate administration and the tenurial system were of central significance in sealing the bond between landlord, tenant and land. These factors combine to create a region where the social and economic dimensions of tenure are readily apparent.

The particular form tenancy took in this area was lifeleasehold and it is the workings of this tenurial system – both economically and socially – which concerns us in this paper. A general survey of lifeleasehold has been offered by Clay, and although elements of his analysis are tested below, the basics of the operation of the system are already firmly established.[9] As Lancashire's agricultural revolution was at least a century away, any attempt to review the role of lifeleasehold in agricultural change would, in this period, be a very slender account.[10]

Many Lancashire estates are very poorly documented for the pre-civil war era, presumably a product of political turmoil and the sequestration of estates. Nevertheless, the archives are suggestive of an administrative response to the social, economic and political challenges of the mid-seventeenth century. In 1648, the extensive Molyneux estate (see Figure 1) began a series of contract books into which were recorded the salient details of every lease agreement entered into by the stewards and tenants.[11] The first dated entry is from February 1648/9 and the last entry is dated 16 August 1697. However, there is a gap in the data (through loss) between 6 June 1670 and 5 January 1681. The details recorded vary from entry to entry, but a typical one runs as follows:

> 11 August 1697. John Darwin of Netherton, husbandman, to have a lease of a messuage and tenem[en]t there out of lease containing eleaven acres & three rood lands. Consideration is

[7] Late seveteenth-century demographic trends remain largely unexplored. This assessment is based on the Altcar parish registers, 1664–1809 (PR 2465–7); Revd W. Warburton, 'Notes on Altcar parish', *THSLC* 47 (1896), pp. 157–207; F. Taylor (ed.), *The parish registers of Aughton, 1541–1764* (Lancashire Parish Register Soc., 81, 1942).

[8] DDM 3, appointments and royal grants; DDCl 1060.

[9] Clay, 'Estate management'; id., 'Lifeleasehold in the western counties of England, 1650–1750', *AgHR* 29 (1981), p. 84.

[10] See T. W. Fletcher, 'The agrarian revolution in arable Lancashire', *THSLC* 122 (1962), pp. 93–122; Gritt, 'Aspects of agrarian change', M. Winstanley, 'Agricultural and industrial revolutions: reassessing the role of the small farm', in C. Bjorn (ed.), *The agricultural revolution reconsidered* (1998), pp. 89–110.

[11] DDM 5/1–5 Molyneux estate contract books, 1649–97. The Molyneux estate in Sussex is not covered by these volumes.

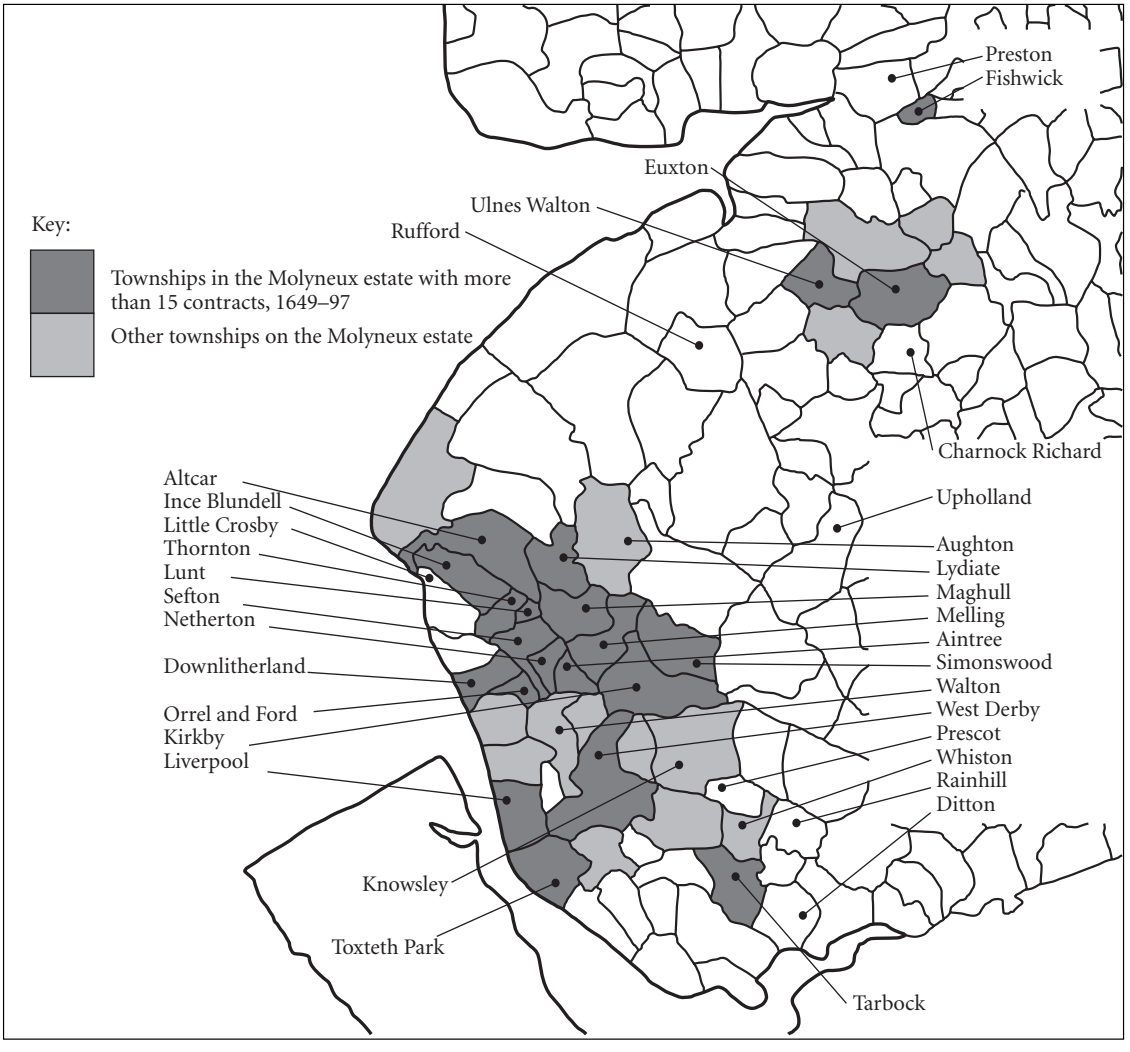


FIGURE 1. The Molyneux estate and places mentioned in the text
Not to scale. Base map courtesy of Dr Alan Crosby and the Friends of Lancashire Archives.
Note: Ellel, 6km south of Lancaster, is not included on this map.

> the fyne of £61 3*s.* 10*d.* for the lives of John the lessee, Robert Darwin his son, Jane Darwyn the daughter of Edw[ard] Darwyn of ye Bottom House, the one halfe to be paid att two months end, the other att six months end under the yearly rent of £1 0*s.* 2*d.* att Martin Mas & Penticost by equall portions. Boon[s] accustomed.

The analysis of the 1272 contracts entered in these books forms the core of this article.

The neighbouring, and much smaller, Blundell estate in Little Crosby also shows evidence of administrative reorganisation. In 1659, the estate began a series of tenants' books into which were entered not only details of lease agreements, but also much more personal and detailed

insights into estate administration and the landlord/tenant relationship. A fuller analysis will follow in a separate publication, although this material is drawn on to a lesser degree below.[12]

II

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries three-life leasehold was widespread in the western counties of England, particularly in Lancashire, Cheshire, the Welsh borders and the south-west peninsula.[13] In south-west Lancashire this remained the dominant form of tenure until the late eighteenth century when it was replaced by tenancies at rack rents.[14] There was little copyhold land in lowland Lancashire which distinguishes it from the east and north of the county.[15] The evidence of the contract books is that leases for terms of years were usually restricted to leases of the demesne and urban building leases.

Leasehold for lives was characterized by a low annual rent and high entry fines usually payable within several months of entering a tenement. The rents were ancient fixed rents, and the fine was (theoretically at least) calculated according to a formula based upon the annual value of the tenement. On entering into a contract the tenant would nominate up to three individuals who were to be the 'lives' on the lease. The tenement was then leased to the tenant for a term of years, usually 99, which was determinable on the lives of the three individuals. The expectation was that at the death of the first life, the tenement would pass to the individual named as the second life, and after their death, it would pass to the third life. The fine was only payable at the start of the lease term, when the lease was renewed or when lives were added or changed. No fine was payable on the death of the tenant or the landlord.[16]

It is not doubted that three-life leasehold provided security of tenure.[17] Indeed, leases could last a remarkably long time. One tenement on the Eccleston estate fell out of lease in 1767, some 72 years after the lease was issued.[18] When Thomas Dalrymple Hesketh inherited his estate in the early nineteenth century, it was said to be 'very much incumbered with leases for lives', many of which had been in existence for 'upwards of 50 years'.[19] On the Molyneux estate 80 out of 176 tenements entered in the 1802 rental for Altcar (a parish and manor of about 3,500 acres) had been held by leases for lives for more than 25 years. Nineteen of these leases had been in being for more than 45 years.[20] Table 1 shows that of the 110 leases current in Altcar in 1697, almost 80 percent had been issued 10 or more years before, with over 30 per cent being issued more than thirty years earlier. With a mean duration of 23 years and a median of 21 years, these unexpired leases are clear indications of a stable body of tenants.

[12] DDBl 54/41 Blundell tenants' book, 1659–1728, transcribed by Mr David Lodge. I am grateful to the trustees of the Mark Fitch fund for a grant towards the research on this volume.

[13] Clay, 'Lifeleasehold', p. 83.

[14] See Gritt, 'Aspects of agrarian change', ch. 4.

[15] H. R. French and R. W. Hoyle, 'The land market of a Pennine manor: Slaidburn, 1650–1780', *Continuity and Change*, 14 (1999), pp. 349–83; J. T. Swain, *Industry before the industrial revolution. North-east Lancashire, c. 1500–1640* (1986), p. 70; G. H. Tupling, *An economic history of Rossendale* (1927), pp. 72–3.

[16] DDBl 54/41–2; Clay, 'Lifeleasehold', pp. 82–3.

[17] Clay, 'Lifeleasehold'.

[18] See A. J. Gritt and J. M. Virgoe (eds), *The memoranda books of Basil Thomas Eccleston, 1757–1789* (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 139, 2004).

[19] DDHe 82/8.

[20] DDM 12/54–121.

TABLE 1. Duration of tenancies, Altcar, 1697

Duration of tenure	*No of leases*
Under 5 years	11
5–9 years	12
10–19 years	26
20–29 years	26
30–39 years	17
Over 39 years	18
Total	110

Source: DDM 14/9

III

At this theoretical level three-life leasehold is a relatively uncomplicated system providing security of tenure at a low annual rent not only for the life of the original lessee, but also for the lives of sons, daughters and wives, or whoever was nominated as the lives in the lease. In reality, however, administering the system was much more complex. As individuals who were named on the original lease died, married, or had children, lives were changed and added so that in many cases there was little chance of the individual nominated as the third life ever occupying the land themselves as tenant.[21] Keeping track of the individuals named as lives was not always an easy task and presented an additional challenge to the estate. A small manor might have several hundred individuals named as lives in leases; a large estate might have several thousand individuals each with a potential claim to become tenant. For instance, the 1697 survey of Altcar named more than 200 individuals as lives in leases.[22]

Landlords and their agents were all too aware of the difficulties. One problem arose when a child died in infancy and a subsequent child shared the same name as the deceased sibling.[23] More distant relatives, non-relatives, 'strangers' and people who had migrated away from the immediate vicinity caused greater problems. Estates were suspicious about the true identity of strangers who claimed to be the individual named as a life on a lease. Such a situation occurred on the Hesketh estate in Rufford as late as 1833 when a 74 year old man claimed to be the individual who had been named as the third life on his father's lease in 1769 when aged eight weeks. The estate was reluctant to accept him as the legitimate third life, even when a copy of his baptism entry was forwarded to the estate along with the personal testimony of the local incumbent. The estate finally did accept him as tenant, but the landlord, Thomas Dalrymple Hesketh wrote, 'although I still doubt the fact as to the identity of that person yet I cannot under such circumstances at present *disprove* it'.[24]

The duration of any given lease for three lives was obviously dependent upon life expectancy,

[21] DDM 10/2.
[22] DDM 14/9.
[23] DDBl 54/42.
[24] DDHe 77/36a, Thomas Dalyrmple Hesketh, Leamington, to John Welsby, Ormskirk, 22 July 1833. Emphasis in original.

and there was a large degree of demographic uncertainty in this system. Chaste widows were usually entitled to one-third of their deceased husband's estate, which effectively prolonged the lease term into a fourth life if the wife was not one of the original lives.[25] But the duration of widowhood was unpredictable and could last for a short time or for several decades. Widows inevitably died, but it was a matter of chance whether they remarried or were unchaste. Either way, they would forfeit their widows' rights.

Demographic uncertainty goes much deeper than this, however, and in many ways pervaded the whole system.[26] For instance, a tenant could pay a high entry fine for a three-life lease only to see those lives exhausted one after the other in quick succession. A local mortality crisis could herald a sudden upsurge in estate income through the payment of fines for the addition of new lives to existing leases, or for the issuing of new leases where previous ones had expired. At the same time, loosing lives in quick succession could be financially devastating for individual tenants. On the other hand, with demographic good fortune a lessee could acquire a tenement on favourable terms and benefit from fixed rents and security of tenure for several decades without any lives being added or fines being paid to the landlord in the meantime.[27]

The system of leases for three lives gave tenants security of tenure, but even if rents were low, entry fines were high. A lease for three lives might cost a tenant upwards of 12 year's annual value of the tenement by the mid-eighteenth century, and the majority of tenants had to go into debt to raise this money.[28] Even under normal demographic and economic conditions, it could take them many years to free themselves of this debt, and it could be crippling if the nominated lives failed to live long enough to ever farm the land themselves. Moreover, tenants who had paid heavy entry fines could find their capacity for investment in stock, tools and capital projects severely restricted, as most of their profits could be used up paying off their debts. Richard Latham of Scarisbrick, for instance, borrowed the money in 1728 to pay the £40 fine for the renewal of the lease of his deceased father's nine-acre tenement. His accounts show that it took two decades to clear this debt. In 1732, at a time when there were four young children in the household and his wife was pregnant with their fifth child, over 70 per cent of his expenditure went to his creditors.[29] Had Latham needed to renew his lease in the first two decades of its duration due to the death of one or more of the lives, he might never have recovered from the burden of debt under which he would undoubtedly have been placed.

Although lifeleasehold was not customary, it retained many features of customary tenure.[30] Rents were fixed, entry fines were supposedly calculated according to formulae, and the boons attached to individual tenements were determined by custom. Nevertheless, there is some

[25] B. Todd, 'Freebench and free enterprise: widows and their property in two Berkshire villages' in J. Chartres and D. Hey (eds), *English rural society, 1500–1800* (1990), pp. 175–200; B. Holderness, 'Widows in pre-industrial society: an essay upon their economic functions' in R. M. Smith (ed.), *Land, kinship and life-cycle* (1984), pp. 431–5. Clay, 'Lifeleasehold', p. 93.

[26] J. V. Beckett, 'Landownership and estate management', in G. E. Mingay (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, VI, *1750–1850* (1989), p. 611.

[27] A. J. Gritt, 'Marriage, business and family fortunes: the Goores and Balshaws of Altcar, Lancashire, during the agricultural revolution', unpub. paper, 2003.

[28] DDBl 54/41–2, DDM 5/1–5; DDCl 377, Rules for leasing and abstract of surveys, 1749; See also Gritt, 'Aspects of agrarian change', ch. 4.

[29] L. Weatherill (ed.), *The account book of Richard Latham, 1724–1767* (British Academy Records of social and economic history, 15, 1990), *passim.*

[30] Clay, 'Estate management', pp. 203–4.

evidence to suggest that the tenurial systems on the estates of south-west Lancashire were not static, and that the precise contract between landlord and tenant was subject to individual negotiation.[31] Both landlord and tenant reserved the right to dispute the contracts, occasionally to the cost of the landlord, but most often to the cost of the tenant. It was in the tenant's interest to serve the will of his lord in the hope of future favours and benefits not bestowed on less loyal tenants.[32] But tenants were not afraid to challenge when they thought that landlords were breaking custom or treating them harshly. For instance, litigation followed an attempt to break custom by replacing fixed rents and fines with arbitrary fines on the Earl of Derby's estate in the 1660s.[33] Litigation was not always necessary, however. A group of 'refractory' tenants on the Derby estate in the Fylde was unhappy over changes to their leases in 1637. It was remarked in correspondence, probably by the Earl of Derby, that 'they have brought back to my officers the draught of the lease with many curious, needeles, marginal exceptions. I have qualified more than in reason I neede which they except unto'. This did not please him and in private correspondence the Earl declared that the tenants' actions 'will entreate me to be a severe landlord w[hi]ch I am loath to be'. Nevertheless, the leases were redrawn before they were offered to the tenants on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.[34]

The more usual course of action, however, was for people to challenge the estate as individuals. In 1681, for instance, a Lancaster merchant was in negotiation with the Molyneux steward for a tenement in Ellel. He thought the rent and fine sought by the estate were too high and he requested a revaluation of the tenement before he committed himself.[35] However, there is no suggestion that the estate was breaking custom. In this particular case it is possible that the Lancaster merchant had a more reliable knowledge of fluctuations in local land values than the estate's agents. Contemporary comment by William Blundell suggests that tenants in Little Crosby had paid more severe entry fines than they ought to have done as, by his own admission, he had not been fully aware of a reduction in the value of land.[36]

The notion of fines being calculated according to the value of the tenement is rather tenuous in the light of the evidence. On the Blundell estate in south-west Lancashire, fines were assessed in several different ways.[37] One method was to estimate an average value of land on the estate and base the entry fine on five, seven or ten years' value depending on the number of lives to be added. However, William Blundell did not consider if the land was arable, meadow or pasture or in what proportions they were held. He argued that the most accurate method, and the one he advised his heir to adopt, was to employ the services of a trusted tenant to ascertain the rent paid by sub-tenants in the belief that this was a better indicator of the market value of individual tenements. A third method favoured by Nicholas Blundell in the early eighteenth century was to ask tenants themselves to offer an entry fine, which he would

[31] DDM 5/1–5; Clay, 'Lifeleasehold', pp. 87–8; E. Hopkins, 'The re-leasing of the Ellesmere estates, 1637–1642', *AgHR* 10 (1962), pp. 14–28.

[32] DDBl 54/41.

[33] DDK 1624/1.

[34] DDF 2438/118, Earl of Derby, Knowsley, to Mr Farington, 15 Oct. 1637. See also B. Coward, 'A "crisis of the aristocracy" in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries? The case of the Stanleys, Earls of Derby, 1504–1642', *Northern Hist.* 18 (1982), p. 71.

[35] DDM 14/1, John Hodgson to Mr John Farnworth, Lancaster, 27 Nov. 1681.

[36] DDBl 54/41.

[37] The following discussion is based on the tenants' books, DDBl 54/41–2.

then consider. This latter system was similar to that adopted on the Bridgewater estate in Shropshire on the eve of the civil war.[38] Which ever method was employed, the fines were not fixed, nor was the calculation scientific in any way. The estate administration was not sophisticated enough to assess fines and rents that were consistent or equitable to all tenants. Indeed, the favoured methods of ascertaining the rent paid by sub-tenants or asking tenants to offer fines themselves put the onus on tenants, which, while reducing the power of the estate, probably succeeded in extracting higher entry fines from tenants.

A similar *ad hoc* process also seems to have existed on the much larger Molyneux estate. Here a clear system of negotiation between steward and tenant determined the entry fines and the rent, and the relationship between fine and rent varied widely between tenements as the diverse rights, liberties and obligations of both the landlord and tenant were taken into consideration.[39] This process of negotiation was obviously seen as being quite normal, and, by introducing a degree of flexibility and adaptability into the system, probably prevented much dispute on the estates. As negotiations were carried out on an individual basis, and rents, fines, rights and obligations were component parts of individual contracts, landlords did not often find themselves in dispute with a large body of their tenantry in this period. Even enclosure was carried out in an *ad hoc* fashion as individuals took small portions of the waste into cultivation over many years.[40] Only when landlords attempted sweeping changes across their estate did the tenantry have a collective voice that would stand in opposition to the landlord.

IV

The social aims of the Blundell estate, and their manipulation of the lifeleasehold system to that end, are clear enough. Throughout the second half of the seventeenth century they promoted a distinct policy of encouraging individual tenements to remain within Catholic nuclear family groups, and it was with undoubted pride that in 1688, William Blundell boasted that Little Crosby '"had not had a Protestant in it" for several years'.[41] The Blundells rewarded good behaviour and loyalty by offering reduced entry fines to known families.[42] In 1728, Nicholas Blundell explained that his grandfather, William Blundell, used 'to demand about seaven years valew from an old tenant for puting in 3 lives, & from a stranger he would have tenn years vallew or more for a fine'. Moreover, William Blundell gave the heirs of deceased tenants first refusal on their ancestral lands when leases had expired. Also, at the point of negotiating a new lease he would offer tenants a sum of money equivalent to the entry fine as a gesture of good will in order to extinguish their claims of inheritance should they wish not to renew, even though they had no right in law to compensation. In practice, most tenants renewed their leases on favourable terms, but some, such as Henry Morecroft of Little Crosby accepted William Blundell's offer of £40, thereby freeing Blundell to lease the land to a new tenant. Morecroft signed a statement declaring that he gave his 'free consent that he [Blundell] do dispose of the

[38] Hopkins, 'Ellesmere estates'.

[39] DDM 5/1–5.

[40] See Gritt, 'Aspects of agrarian change', ch. 5.

[41] B. G. Blackwood, 'Plebeian Catholics in later Stuart Lancashire', *Northern Hist.* 25 (1989), p. 158.

[42] The following examples are again taken from the tenants's books, DDBl 54/41.

tenement abov[e]said according to his best advantage'. The clear aim of these estate policies was to retain a stable body of loyal, Catholic tenants, ensuring strong community bonds and the minimal intrusion of strangers. However, this was less successful than Blundell would have liked. By the early 1670s he was bemoaning the fact that the turnover of tenant families was more rapid than he would wish:

> The names of tenements will be changed according as the name changeth of the tenant thereof (which hath allready often hapened in the space of 13 years since I began this book) so that in 40 or 50 years more, it will not be known what tenement those are which take their names, in this booke from Garstan, Geare, Griffith, Hatton, Hey, Norman, Rice, Mareby, all which & one or two more, have lately changed their names and sondry others are lik to chang before it be long. To help this growing confusion you must mention allwaies, upon what terms & tyme the chang of names happens.

The Blundell's estate was considerably smaller than the neighbouring Molyneux estate, and their grip on local power and demand for loyalty and deference may have been more acute than that of the Molyneuxs. Blundell, for instance, had a long standing dispute with the Kenyon family. He explained that 'William Kenyan was one of those 3 men whoe farmed my demesne in Ditton from the state for many years together, without my consent and to the great impoverishing of my land and of my self, by long and deepe plowing'. In 1719 some tenants in Ditton intended to force Nicholas Blundell to serve the office of constable. Such difficulties were not faced by the much wealthier and more powerful Molyneux family.

Nevertheless, whilst the Molyneux estate contract books provide us with very detailed information about the operation of lifeleasehold, there was considerably less personal involvement of Lord Molyneux and we have no clear statement of estate policy comparable with the Blundell estate. Estate policy therefore has to be inferred from the evidence of the contract books.

To begin the analysis, Table 2 shows the place of residence of contractors for land in 23 townships on the Molyneux estate between 1649 and 1697. This is based on the 1095 contracts relating to property in the main townships on the estate, representing 86 per cent of the contracts made in these years.[43] For these calculations, it was assumed that where no place of origin was given for the contractor, they were resident in the community where the property was situated. Table 2 shows that non-native lessees were in the minority and that a historic link with a given community was the most important factor in determining where individuals leased land. Indeed, there is considerable evidence to suggest that the Molyneuxs controlled population movement on the estate. More than 87 per cent of contractors on the Molyneux estate in this period originated from within the estate. Only in Ulnes Walton did this figure fall below 75 per cent and in eight townships more than 90 per cent of contractors were from townships where the Molyneux estate owned a substantial proportion of the land. In practice, the majority of these individuals would have been known to the estate. Blackwood's analysis of Molyneux leases in the period 1646–54 show that 22 lessees were old tenants or their relatives while nine were

[43] That is, those townships on the Molyneux estate with more than 20 individual contracts in the period 1649–97.

TABLE 2. Place of origin of contractors for land, Molyneux estate, 1649–97

Place	*N*	*Percentage from same place*	*Percentage from other 'major' township*[a]	*Total*
Aintree	29	79.3	13.8	93.1
Altcar	130	65.4	10.0	75.4
Downlitherland	81	88.9	11.1	100.0
Ellel	58	82.8	1.7	84.5
Euxton	59	84.7	1.7	86.4
Fishwick	24	75.0	0	75.0
Ford	23	78.3	17.4	95.7
Ince Blundell	25	80.0	4.0	84.0
Kirkby	126	83.3	6.3	89.6
Liverpool	19	78.9	5.3	84.2
Lunt	21	85.7	0	85.7
Lydiate	33	87.9	9.1	97.0
Maghull	54	74.1	14.8	89.9
Melling	24	79.2	8.3	87.5
Netherton	28	92.8	7.1	99.9
Orrell	26	53.8	34.6	88.4
Sefton	70	77.1	15.7	92.8
Simonswood	73	79.5	9.6	89.1
Tarbock	48	83.3	2.1	85.4
Thornton	22	51.6	45.5	97.1
Toxteth	57	63.2	17.5	80.7
Ulnes Walton	44	65.9	6.8	72.7
West Derby	21	66.7	23.8	90.5
Total	1095	76.9	10.3	87.2

Source: DDM 5/1–5.
Note: 'Major' townships are those townships contained in this table where the majority of the Molyneux estate was situated. These are all represented by more than 15 entries in the contract books.

strangers.[44] The estate was probably actively encouraging its own tenants to contract for land within the estate boundaries. It was not unknown for tenants from south-west Lancashire to contract for land in the distant satellite of Ellel, on the outskirts of Lancaster, and vice versa. For instance, in 1696, Richard Garner of Knowsley contracted for a one-acre tenement in Ellel for the lives of himself, his wife and son. In 1690, Thomas Lowe, an Ellel husbandman,

[44] The proportion of 'strangers' was higher on the Molyneux estate that on other Royalist estates in the same period. The leases of six other Royalist estates from the period 1632–57 show that 15 leases were issued to 'strangers' and 57 were issued to old tenants or relatives. B. G. Blackwood, 'The Lancashire cavaliers and their tenants', *THSLC* 117 (1966), p. 20.

contracted for a 20-acre tenement in Ulnes Walton which had the life of a widow in being. The new lease, for which Lowe paid £40, was for the lives of the widow, Thomas Lowe, and his wife.

However, the situation is more complex than Table 2 shows, for not only is the geographic origin of contractors important, but the relationship between the lives in the lease is also significant. Clay holds that the lives in a typical three-life lease 'were those of the tenant himself, his wife, and his eldest son, or of himself and of two children'. He further suggests that leases were usually kept topped up with their full complement of three lives and only if a leaseholder was utterly unable to afford the fine, or had no heirs to succeed him, would he fail to keep his lease 'filled up'.[45]

Table 3 shows the relationships between the three lives in the 1272 contracts entered into between 1649 and 1697. Although the relationships are dominated by immediate nuclear family members, there is also a preference for certain relations to be nominated as the second and third lives. For instance, whereas wives and sons were the most likely to be named as the second life on a lease, and sons were the most likely to appear as third lives, daughters were much more likely to be named as a third life than a second life. Extended family members were rare, although there was a slightly greater tendency for lessees to name extended family as the third life. Further extended family members may be concealed by those individuals who shared a common surname but for whom no relationship is determinable.

Although immediate family dominates, and the range of extended family called upon is impressive, other, more complex patterns emerge. A high proportion (15.5 per cent) of leases were only issued for two lives, with a handful (3.7 per cent) only issued for one life. Whether this was due to the inability of tenants to raise the fine for three lives, or because kin was not available, is not clear. The former, however, does seem to be the more likely reason. On the other hand, it could be the case that people were prepared to risk having a lease for only two people, on the grounds that if one died, another one could be added. If money was scarce, or if the entry fine could only be raised by borrowing money, then it would not be unreasonable to contract for land naming only two lives if money was needed for sustenance or farm investment.

There are a significant number of people who are named as lives who were not relatives of other people named in the lease. Of the 1225 second lives, 11.4 per cent were not related to the first life in the lease. Of the 1074 third lives, 24.5 per cent were not related to the first life and 16.9 per cent were not related to the second life. Non-relatives were consistently preferred to female relatives for the second and third lives. Indeed, although the third life was most likely to be the son of the first life, non-relatives comfortably outnumbered daughters, wives, brothers and sisters. Although the relationship between the third life and the second life is dominated by brothers, sisters and sons together, non-relatives outnumbered each of these individually.

Table 4 shows the relationships that existed between the different lives in the leases, distinguishing between leases where the lessee was also the first life, leases where the first life was a relative of the lessee and leases where the first life was not a relative of the lessee. The dominant form was for the lessee to appear as the first life and the large number of wives and sons indicates that most of this group conformed to the 'typical' pattern of immediate nuclear family

[45] Clay, 'Lifeleasehold', pp. 83, 84.

TABLE 3. Relationships between the three lives in leases entered in the contract books, Molyneux estate, 1649–97

Relationship	*Life 2 to life 1*		*Life 3 to life 1*		*Life 3 to life 2*	
	No	*%*	*No*	*%*	*No*	*%*
Aunt	1	0.1	3	0.2	4	0.3
Brother	190	14.9	90	7.1	206	16.2
Brother in law	1	0.1	1	0.1	13	1.0
Common surname	41	3.2	66	5.2	58	4.6
Cousin	2	0.2	5	0.4	5	0.4
Daughter	57	4.5	150	11.8	66	5.2
Daughter in law	1	0.1	12	0.9	5	0.4
Extended family	1	0.1	0	0.0	2	0.2
Father	4	0.3	6	0.5	1	0.1
Father in law	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	0.3
Grandaughter	3	0.2	4	0.3	2	0.2
Grandfather	0	0.0	1	0.1	3	0.2
Grandmother	1	0.1	2	0.2	5	0.4
Grandson	6	0.5	15	1.2	5	0.4
Great grandmother	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.2
Husband	0	0.0	2	0.2	0	0.0
Mother	25	2.0	17	1.3	15	1.2
Mother in law	0	0.0	2	0.2	7	0.6
Nephew	5	0.4	6	0.5	13	1.0
Niece	1	0.1	1	0.1	2	0.2
No second life	47	3.7	n/a	–	n/a	–
No third life	n/a	–	198	15.6	198	15.6
Non-relative	140	11.0	263	20.7	216	17.0
Sister	101	7.9	106	8.3	211	16.6
Sister in law	2	0.2	2	0.2	5	0.4
Son	315	24.8	295	23.2	194	15.3
Son in law	1	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Uncle	1	0.1	4	0.3	10	0.8
Wife	326	25.6	21	1.7	20	1.6
[Total]	1272	100.0	1272	100.0	1272	100.0

Source: DDM 5/1–5.

Notes: The figures refer to the frequency of different relationships between life 1, life 2 and life 3 on the leases. The first column gives the relationship of life 2 to life 1, expressed in that way. Therefore, "daughter" means that the individual named as life 2 is the daughter of the individual named as life 1, and so on. 'Common surname' refers to lives who share a common surname, but for whom no relationship between the individuals is determinable. 'Extended family' includes extended family members not covered by any other relationship. This includes one lease where the lives consist of the lessee, his aunt and his wife; one lease where the lives consist of the lessee, his nephew and his daughter in law; one lease where the second life is given as being the 'next relation' of the first life, although they have different surnames.

TABLE 4. Relationships between the three lives in leases entered in the contract books, categorized by lessee, Molyneux estate, 1649–97

Relationship	*Where lessee is also the first life*			*Where first life is a relative of the lessee*			*Where first life is not a relative of the lessee*		
	L2:L1	*L3:L1*	*L3:L2*	*L2:L1*	*L3:L1*	*L3:L2*	*L2:L1*	*L3:L1*	*L3:L2*
Aunt	1	1	1	0	2	2	0	0	1
Brother	51	36	109	107	41	63	26	11	26
Brother in law	0	1	12	0	0	1	1	0	0
Common surname	23	40	30	5	10	11	7	8	10
Cousin	1	1	2	1	4	3	0	0	0
Daughter	37	113	56	8	25	3	12	9	6
Daughter in law	0	12	4	1	0	1	0	0	0
Extended family	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
Father	4	5	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Father in law	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0
Grandaughter	1	1	1	2	2	1	0	1	0
Grandfather	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grandmother	0	1	4	1	0	1	0	1	0
Grandson	2	9	5	1	5	0	2	1	0
Great grandmother	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Husband	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Mother	18	12	10	3	2	1	2	2	3
Mother in law	0	1	7	0	1	0	0	0	0
Nephew	3	3	10	2	3	3	0	0	0
Niece	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1
No second life	4	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
No third life	0	100	100	0	28	28	0	28	28
Non-relative	63	133	127	22	55	47	49	66	34
Sister	26	21	85	58	71	98	14	11	24
Sister in law	0	1	4	2	0	1	0	1	0
Son	226[a]	263	176	57	20	8	24	7	9
Uncle	1	1	7	0	1	1	0	1	1
Wife	313	19	15	3	2	1	7	0	3
[Totals]	774	774	774	276	276	276	147	147	147

Source: DDM 5/1–5.
Notes: See Table 3 for explanation of relationships.
[a] Includes one son in law.

members. For the second group, the large number of brothers and sisters indicates that the typical pattern was for the lessee to name three children as the lives. The final group shows comparatively weak kinship links between the lives in leases with leases much more likely to be issued for only two lives and large numbers of unrelated individuals filling the lives. Across the three groups there is an increasing tendency for the third life to be unrelated to the first life, forming 19.7 per cent of such relationships for the first group, 21.3 per cent for the second group and 55.5 per cent for the third group.

It is clear from the evidence presented so far that although lessees were more likely to name themselves, their wives and sons as lives in leases, this was not the only form and a significant proportion did not conform to this pattern. Indeed, a large number of lessees did not name either themselves or members of their immediate family as lives. However, so far we have only looked at the relationship between the lives in the leases in the aggregate. Also of significance are the combinations of different relationships appearing on leases.

Table 5 shows the combinations of lives in leases. For leases where the lessee appeared as the first life (group 1), two dominant combinations emerge. Most common was for the lessee's wife and child (usually son) to occupy the second and third lives (27.3 per cent); slightly less common was for the lessee to name himself and two of his children as the three lives (18.5 per cent). Those lessees who did not name themselves as a life on the lease (group 2) again showed a preference towards nuclear family members with almost 40 per cent of such individuals naming three children as the lives, and 14.9 per cent naming their wife and two children. Out of the 1,050 leases in the first two groups, 48 per cent of lessees named some combination of themselves, their spouse and their children. However, this is perhaps not as high a proportion as one might expect and certainly causes us to doubt the existence of compact family groups bound to each other, the land and the landlord. Indeed, the nuclear family does not appear to be a particularly secure group as even within the group of lessees who named themselves as the first life, more than half could not fill a three-life lease with three members of the nuclear family. One in eight of such leases were granted for only one or two lives; almost one in five named a non-relative as one of the lives. Lessees who named a relative as the first life were more likely to fill the three lives with only one in ten of such leases being issued for two or three lives; however, almost one in four named a non-relative as one of those lives. For the group of lessees who named a non-relative as the first life, the blood ties between the three lives were very weak. Although 15 per cent named three individuals who were siblings, almost one in five contracted for fewer than three lives and over 45 per cent named non-relatives. Overall, some 22.6 per cent of the leases represented in Table 5 named non-relatives and a further 12.7 per cent were issued for only one or two lives.

The complexities apparent in the combinations of relationships between the individuals named as lives are fundamental to an understanding of the economy of the leasehold land market of south-west Lancashire in the seventeenth century. The relatively high numbers of non-relatives are important and it is necessary to address the question of why they were present. The focus so far has been exclusively on the relationship between the lives and the lessee. However, the lessees themselves were a complex group. They were not necessarily the head of a nuclear family contracting for land for their own or their family's use in the parish in which they resided. Indeed, one in four lessees were not contracting for land in their place of residence

TABLE 5. Combinations of relationships of lives in leases, Molyneux estate, 1649–97

			(1)		(2)		(3)	
Life 2 to life 1	*Life 3 to life 1*	*Life 3 to life 2*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Child	child	sibling	143	18.5	41	14.9	10	6.8
Child	relative	relative	39	5.0	6	2.2	1	0.7
common surname	common surname	common surname	3	0.4	1	0.4	2	1.4
common surname	common surname	relative	10	1.3	1	0.4	2	1.4
no second life	no third life	no third life	4	0.5	2	0.7	2	1.4
non-relative	no third life	no third life	11	1.4	3	1.1	5	3.4
non-relative	non-relative	non-relative	16	2.1	5	1.8	7	4.8
non-relative	non-relative	relative	19	2.5	9	3.3	30	20.4
non-relative	relative	non-relative	12	1.6	3	1.1	2	1.4
other non-nuclear	other non-nuclear	other non-nuclear	15	1.9	5	1.8	8	5.4
Relative	common surname	common surname	24	3.1	8	2.9	3	2.0
relative	no third life	no third life	78	10.1	11	4.0	17	11.6
relative	non-relative	non-relative	90	11.6	36	13.0	23	15.6
relative	relative	relative	24	3.1	11	4.0	3	2.0
sibling	no third life	no third life	4	0.5	12	4.3	3	2.0
sibling	relative	relative	13	1.7	10	3.6	4	2.7
sibling	sibling	sibling	31	4.0	109	39.5	22	15.0
spouse	child	child	211	27.3	1	0.4	3	2.0
spouse	other relative	other relative	27	3.5	2	0.7	0	0.0
[Totals]			774	100	276	100	147	100

Source: DDM 5/1–5.
Notes: See Table 3 for explanation of relationships.
Column 1 shows the frequency of each combination of lives on leases where the first life was the lessee. Column 2 shows the frequency of each combination of lives on leases where the first life was a relative of the lessee. Column 3 shows the frequency of each combination of lives on leases where the first life was not a relative of the lessee.

(Table 6). However, the majority of lessees who were contracting for land in their native township were, apparently, heads of family groups and almost 70 per cent of the second and third lives were filled by family members. Non-relatives were not a major feature of these leases, forming 8.6 per cent of first lives, 13.7 per cent of second lives, rising to 19 per cent of third lives. However, over 15 per cent of these leases were issued for only two lives. For the native contractors, therefore, 34 per cent of third lives were either unfilled or filled by non-relatives.

The non-native contractors show a different pattern of lives. A smaller proportion named themselves as one of the lives and, conversely, they named a much higher proportion of non-relatives as lives. Indeed, 18.5 per cent of first lives named by the non-native contractors were not related to the lessee, 21 per cent of second lives were not related and over 27 per cent of third lives were non-family members. However, non-native contractors were more likely to contract for a lease for three lives with only nine per cent of third lives being unfilled.

TABLE 6. Relationship between contractors and the lives in the leases, native and non-native contractors, Molyneux estate, 1649–97

Relationship	*Native Contractors*			*Non Native Contractors*			*Total*
	L1	*L2*	*L3*	*L1*	*L2*	*L3*	
Lessee	576	7	3	198	6	3	793
Relative	165	671	501	116	282	223	1958
Non-relative	72	115	159	74	84	109	613
Common surname	24	37	47	12	22	29	171
No second life	n/a	7	n/a	n/a	6	n/a	13
No third life	n/a	n/a	127	n/a	n/a	36	163
Total	837	837	837	400	400	400	3711

Source: DDM 5/1–5 Molyneux estate contract books, 1649–97.
Notes: The lives in this table are measured in terms of their relationship with the individual who contracted for the tenement with the Molyneux estate. The figures do not refer to the relationship between the different lives in the lease.

V

It was the demand for capital that was largely responsible for the complexities apparent in the three-life lease system of south-west Lancashire in the second half of the seventeenth century. The estates were demanding high entry fines which many smaller tenants could not afford. Some tenants were also suffering under composition fines for their recusancy, and despite their loyalty to the Catholic faith and the encouragement of plebeian Catholicism amongst the tenantry, the Blundell estate were not prepared to pay composition fines for their tenants.[46] However, burgeoning trade within and beyond the region generated a surplus of capital for those engaged in the trades and professions. Indeed, capital investment and credit was largely responsible for the increased integration of the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, and it was through credit that the leasehold landmarket in south-west Lancashire was increasingly locked into a capitalist economic system from the mid-seventeenth century. Stobart has demonstrated the links between urban centres and the rural hinterland in the first half of the eighteenth century in south Lancashire, and it is clear from his analysis of probate records that the urban system was well integrated with rural settlements.[47] However, his analysis of probate materials does not indicate the nature of the links between settlements. For south-west Lancashire, many of these links were undoubtedly based upon a credit network which was dependent upon Liverpool wealth. However, the credit network was more complex than this and urban centres elsewhere within Lancashire – as well as London and other places further afield – were also contributing to the economic recovery of south-west Lancashire.

[46] DDBl 54/41.
[47] J. Stobart, 'Regional structure and the urban system: north-west England, 1700–1760', *THSLC* 145 (1996), pp. 45–73.

The early capital market in Lancashire, as elsewhere, is usually seen as being the preserve of the money-scrivening attorneys, individuals such as John Plumbe, a Liverpool attorney whose early experience of the operation of rural society was gained in the service of Nicholas Blundell. By the 1720s he had built up a substantial landed estate using money which he had acquired through his legal practice, and widespread involvement in money lending.[48] Plumbe was only one of many attorney-financiers, and there is evidence to suggest that money lending and credit networks were becoming more intricate and extensive in the decades after the civil war.[49]

The contract books show that credit was being supplied by a much wider group of individuals than attorneys. The complex relationship between contractors, lessees and lives in leases testifies to an intricate social structure bound together by economic interaction and integration. What was the motivation of individuals such as Edward Sutton, a Liverpool blacksmith, who in 1655 contracted for a tenement in Altcar? Or Richard Maudsley, a carpenter from Rainhill who contracted for five acres of moss in Kirkby in 1661? Or George Croft, a Liverpool merchant who in 1666 contracted for a messuage and tenement in Toxteth? What interest did Mr John Hindley of Horsham in Sussex have in a 60-acre messuage and tenement in Altcar? What caused Francis Ireland, a 'gent' from London, to contract for three roods of land in Aughton in 1684? And what caused the complexities apparent in the lives in leases? Ireland named himself as the first life, his wife as the second life and one Robert Godfrey of Aughton as the third life who was described as being the 'constant inhabitant'. Five years earlier one Mary Eccleston of Charnock Richard had contracted for a messuage and tenement in Ulnes Walton naming herself as first life, Ann Malory, the wife of a London gentleman as second life and John Clark, son of Henry Clark of Long Preston (Yorkshire) as third life. In 1687, a Liverpool gentleman named John Winstanley contracted for a messuage and tenement in Ellel containing six and a half acres, on behalf of his grandson, John Winstanley, an infant. The second life on the lease was an apothecary from Preston called Joseph Winstanley, who may have been related to the contractor and his grandson. The third life was one James Sutherne, a mariner from Liverpool. It is unlikely that any of the four people would farm this land themselves, and family connection was strong in this case, but the geographical spread between the land and the individuals is remarkable. The location of the land was not a major consideration, the land serving merely as an investment.

A rather different case is the contract entered into by Richard Marcer in 1693. Little is known about him, but it is fair to assume that he was either a tradesman or merchant, given that he was contracting for a tan house in Liverpool.[50] The first life on the lease was his 20 year old

[48] B. L. Anderson, 'The attorney and the early capital market in Lancashire' in J. R. Harris (ed.), *Liverpool and Merseyside* (1969), pp. 50–77; A. J. Gritt, 'Plumbe, John (bap. 1670, d. 1763)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

[49] M. Miles, 'The money market in the early industrial revolution: the evidence from West Riding attorneys, *c.* 1750–1850', *Business Hist.*, 23 (1981), pp. 127–45; B. A. Holderness, 'Credit in English rural society before the nineteenth century, with special reference to the period 1605–1720', *AgHR* 24 (1976), pp. 97–110. It has also been argued that 'the growth of both the government and the economy [between the late seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries] was intimately connected to borrowing'. J. Hoppit, 'Attitudes to credit in Britain, 1680–1790', *Historical J.* 33 (1990), pp. 305–22. See also R. G. Wilson, 'Merchants and land: the Ibbetsons of Leeds and Denton, 1650–1850', *Northern Hist.*, 24 (1988), pp. 75–100.

[50] A will was proved in 1710 for a Richard Marcer of Liverpool who was described as a tanner, although it is not certain if both documents relate to the same individual. WCW, Richard Marcer, Liverpool, 1710.

son, the second was the 16 year old son of a tanner from Kirkby, and the third was the 28 year old son of a yeoman from Upholland. Again, the geographical spread is remarkable, and here the integration of the agricultural and industrial economy, and the rural and urban economy, finds clear expression in a single contract.

Cases such as these were in the minority, but nevertheless, large numbers of leases did not conform to the simplistic nuclear family model. The most common group of people who appear on leases, usually as third lives, without having any apparent relationship with any other of the lives in the lease, are gentlemen, yeomen, and tradesmen, or members of their families, who do not appear to have any historic or familial link with the land or the other lives. Such individuals as Thomas Dewhurst, a salter from Walton who appears as the third life in a Fishwick lease in 1649; Sarah Glover, the wife of a mercer from Prescot who appeared as the third life of a Tarbock lease in 1669; Richard Percival and Henry Lathom, the sons of a Chetham (Cheshire) merchant and Whiston gentleman respectively who were the second and third lives on a 44-acre messuage and tenement in Toxteth in 1681. There was clearly an established credit system that financed the active leasehold land market, where individuals loaned the money required to pay the entry fine, inserted a name as the third life as security, and received the loan money back at interest. It seems likely that much of the loaned capital evident in probate inventories of the period was for the raising of entry fines. Such a situation occurred in 1694 when John Johnson of Downlitherland paid the £216 entry fine for Katherine Walley, an infant, for a 26-acre messuage and tenement in Walton near Liverpool. The contract book specifies that 'hee shall hold & enjoy the s[ai]d tenem[en]t towards the raising his money w[i]th lawfull interest'.[51]

The relationship between non-agricultural money, that is, the wealth of urban merchants, urban and rural tradesmen and craftsmen, wealthy farmers and yeomen, and the smaller farmers and weaker members of the agricultural sector, was highly developed. It may have been exploitative, in as much as interest was payable on the capital, but it no doubt allowed smaller farmers to access land that they would otherwise not have been able to afford, it gave them access to capital which could be invested in their agricultural activities, and the agricultural sector and the urban, or trades sector, were increasingly integrated through this process. Individuals regularly invested in other people's farms, rather than investing in their own. The Fazakerley family contained several individuals who were engaged in this type of activity. In the 1650s, Edward and Nicholas Fazakerley, who were probably father and son, were both employed by the Molyneux estate.[52] In 1653, Edward Fazakerley was described as an estate 'officer' while the following year Nicholas was entrusted with collecting the rents from Molyneux tenants in Sussex, and dealing with Molyneux's debts in London.[53] Edward was worth just over £1221 when he died in 1676, of which £874 was money owed to him.[54] Both individuals are recorded as contracting for land on behalf of other people, and they also named family members as third lives in the leases of non-relatives.[55] Undoubtedly they continued this activity during the 1670s when there is a gap in the contract books. However, both individuals were also continuing to farm

[51] DDM 5/1–5.
[52] DDM 5/1–5; DDM 14/9.
[53] DDCl 629, 638.
[54] WCW, Edward Fazakerley, 1676.
[55] DDM 5/1–5.

themselves as well as loaning money to other people. At the time of his death in 1676, Edward had livestock valued at £188 and corn and hay valued at £31, thus making him one of the more substantial farmers.[56] Nicholas outlived Edward and in 1685 contracted for a tenement of 99 customary acres in Altcar, apparently for his own use, which put him at the head of the landholding hierarchy in Altcar. Indeed, this contract took his total landholding in Altcar to more than 460 statute acres, land that he still held in 1697.[57]

This pattern is repeated across the estate, and there are numerous individuals who were very frequent contractors for land, and named family members on the leases of others. One such individual was Edward Darwin, described in the contract book as a yeoman from Sefton. Over a forty-five year period his name is associated with 19 leases in Sefton, Simonswood, Netherton and Ford, including six leases for a messuage and tenement, one for a tenement without a house, one for a parcel of a tenement, and eight for moss ground. The other three are not specified. With a total acreage in excess of 135 customary acres, and the fines amounting to more than £509, this would make him one of the more substantial and wealthy farmers in this vicinity. He was of higher social status than the majority, but the pattern of lives in the leases informs us that he was not farming this land himself, neither was he merely letting land out to subtenants. Rather, some of the land was probably farmed by himself, whereas in other cases he was loaning money for the raising of the fine. When he died in 1693, around 30 people owed him almost £210 out of a total inventory value of £510. Some of these debts were only for small amounts, but nine people owed him ten pounds or more, sufficient to pay the fine on a small tenement.[58]

Darwin's wife and son both appear as third lives in leases of non-relatives. On several occasions he was associated with non-natives who were contracting for land on the Molyneux estate, and he was a regular negotiator on the behalf of other people. How the contacts with these non-natives were made is not apparent and people with whom he entered an agreement were scattered across urban and rural south-west Lancashire. Sometimes these people were local widows or infants, people who were either not able, or were unwilling to negotiate for themselves. Such individuals probably benefited from using the services of a regular negotiator who was known to the estate and trusted by them. For instance, it might have affected the entry fine, if, through skilled negotiation, a better deal was struck for the tenant. The most likely explanation, however, is that widows and infants did not have the means to raise the entry fines themselves. By entering into an agreement with the local miller, blacksmith, carpenter or wheelwright, the tradesman would do the negotiating because it was his money that was securing the lease. In this respect, these individuals were acting not only as negotiators, but also as guarantors to the Molyneux's agents if they were unsure as to the financial position of prospective tenants. The system of loaning the money for the entry fine limited the risk taken by the estate while placing it on the negotiator. The negotiator in turn had the insurance that he, or more usually his wife, son or daughter, was named as the third life on the lease and therefore

[56] WCW, Edward Fazakerley, 1676.

[57] DDM 14/9.

[58] WCW, Edward Darwin, Sefton, 1691. Both the will and the inventory are damaged and many of the names of people who were indebted to Darwin are unfortunately illegible.

had a greater chance of seeing a return on the invested capital even if the individuals on whose behalf the negotiating was done either died or proved unable to repay the capital. Out of Edward Fazakerley's loaned out capital, £35 8*s.* 1*d.* was classified as 'debts owing to the decedente without specialty sperat and desprat' with the remaining £839 3*s.* 7*d.* said to be 'debts owing to the decedente by specialtys to bee paid by yearly paiments'.[59] Although there was some risk of losing capital, therefore, the credit system, and the state of the economy was sophisticated enough to keep this risk to a minimum.

However, the credit that the larger farmers extended to the smaller farmers had the effect of protecting the smaller farmers from the economic forces that might otherwise have forced many of them out of farming. In the low-pressure, low-rent system of the period 1650 to 1750, the larger farmers were not consolidating their landholding by squeezing the smaller farmers out as they did elsewhere in England in the same period. Indeed, the 460-acre farm in the hands of Nicholas Fazakerley was not the result of land acquisition at the expense of small farmers. He inherited 236 acres from a lease his father had taken out in 1668; 218 acres came from the contract he entered into in 1685, land which had previously been held as a single unit by a Miss Werraly; a further lease for seven acres had been taken out in 1680, but the previous history of this piece of land is not known. The Fazakerley family, however, and other large farmers of south-west Lancashire were not aggressively acquiring land at the expense of others. Rather, they were prolonging the existence of the smaller farmers by loaning the money to raise the entry fines. The larger farmers were avoiding risk and obviously preferred to secure a steady return on capital in the form of interest rather than make uncertain investments in their own farming. Yet farmers were not the only individuals investing in the agricultural economy. Tradesmen, merchants and professional men were each lending capital to small farmers and thereby provided the tenants with the means to access land and provided the landlords with their major source of income.

VI

How typical south-west Lancashire was is not clear. Certainly the issues affecting the landlord-tenant relationship and the need for social stability and economic recovery are not unique, and much more detailed research needs to be carried out in other regions. It is clear that three-life leasehold provided security of tenure for the tenants of Lancashire's royalist landlords in the second half of the seventeenth century. The financial position of estates was probably healthier in 1700 than it had been in 1650. Landlords had not faced an internal challenge for their authority and the majority of tenants appear to have been deferential, although their external political influence was much reduced and most landlords carefully avoided any involvement in the 1715 Jacobite uprising. Nevertheless, this economic recovery, and the evident longevity of tenure, was only possible through the incursion of outside wealth and a complex credit network that was necessary to raise the money for the entry fines. However, the relationship between the individuals named as the lives on the leases was clearly much more complex than

[59] WCW, Edward Fazakerley, 1676.

Clay suggested. Indeed, the nuclear family-land bond was a preference of landlords that detailed investigation shows to be mere theoretical fancy. The management of the system required complex record keeping and while the estate management of the Blundell family was personal and very hands-on, the much larger Molyneux estate required less personal management by stewards. Whilst the two systems were very different, and the Blundells actively discouraged the commodification of land characteristic of agrarian capitalism, the basis on which tenants were selected suggests that personal familiarity and religious empathy remained more important than their farming skills or degree of capitalization. Even on the Molyneux estate, familiarity with a tenant's family was an important factor in selecting tenants, and the incursion of non-agricultural and distant wealth was a product of the under-capitalization of many tenants.

Nevertheless, external money provided farmers with access to land without which the majority would have suffered impoverishment. Despite the fact that lifeleasehold fines stripped tenants of capital at the start of the lease term, increased levels of capitalization would not necessarily have led to more productive use of capital within the farming sector. In this period innovation was not capital intensive, although the gradual enclosure and improvement of the mosses, and the large-scale marling of land, was undoubtedly labour intensive for the family farmers.

Despite the inability of many tenants to fill a lease with three members of the nuclear family, and the high turnover of tenants so disapproved of by the Blundells, there was clearly sufficient stability within the tenant families, and a wide social gulf between the mass of smallholders and their landlords. Consequently, there was a large core of plebeian Catholics who had also suffered the privations of war, and they needed the protection of their Catholic landlords. Indeed, any attempt by the tenants to destabilize the local economy and social structure would hardly have served their best interests. In many cases, despite the assistance of outside capital to provide the money necessary for the entry fines, this did not result in the large scale incursion of 'strangers', or individuals and families whose cultural values differed from their own. Indeed, although the external wealth was necessary and resulted in a high proportion of non-relatives and strangers as the lives on the leases, the occupancy of tenements and the day to day farming operations were undoubtedly carried on in the context of a community with shared cultural values and the bond of Catholicism between themselves and their landlords.

On landlord-assisted emigration from some Irish estates in the 1840s*

by Desmond Norton

Abstract

This article utilizes the recently-discovered archive of a firm of Irish land agents to investigate landlord-assisted emigration from some of the firm's client estates during the 1840s, and during the famine years in particular. Such emigration was not merely a response to starvation in Ireland: much of it was also a precondition for improvement of estates, especially in western parts of Ireland. It is concluded that landlord-assisted emigration during the famine was probably on a larger scale than modern historians have hitherto assumed: however, precise and verifiable estimates of the numbers involved will remain an impossibility.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the author acquired about 30,000 hitherto unknown letters written during the decade of the great Irish famine, part of the papers of the business of James Robert Stewart and Joseph Kincaid. During the 1840s, their firm was the most important land agency in Ireland. Addressed mainly to Stewart and Kincaid's office in Dublin, most of the letters were written by landlords, tenants, the firm's partners and its local agents. After about 200 years in operation as a land agency, the firm in which members of the Stewart family were principal partners – called Messrs J. R. Stewart & Son(s) from the mid-1880s onwards – ceased business in the mid-1980s.

During the 1840s Stewart and Kincaid had management responsibilities for estates in about half of the thirty two Irish counties. Most of the letters concern matters which one might expect: rents; distraint; poverty; 'voluntary' surrender of land in return for 'compensation' from the landlord upon peaceably quitting; formal ejectment; petitions from tenants; major works of improvement; applications by Stewart and Kincaid, on behalf of client proprietors, for government loans to finance improvements; recommendations of agricultural advisers hired by Stewart and Kincaid, etc. Finally, many of the letters refer to landlord-assisted emigration and it is these which form the core source for the present article.[1]

* I thank the Graduate School of Business at University College Dublin for financial assistance in the larger project from which the present article has been drawn. For many helpful suggestions which greatly improved an earlier submission of this paper, I thank the editor of this journal and two referees.

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, all correspondence cited is from the Stewart and Kincaid archive which remains in the author's possession. Details on other aspects of their estate management can be found in my draft book, provisionally entitled *Landlords, tenants, famine: business of an Irish land agency in the 1840s*. Unless otherwise indicated, the details which follow are drawn from that draft.

For some decades before the 1840s, the intensity of Irish emigration had become exceptional in the context of contemporary Europe. About 100,000 people are thought to have left Ireland for North America between the 1780s and 1814, and about a million Irish emigrants crossed the Atlantic between 1815 and 1845.[2] Even emigration on this scale did not reverse population growth. But a century of substantial decline began in the late 1840s, when emigration became a more important agent of depopulation than famine mortality. In 1841 the population of (the island of) Ireland was 8.175 million. From 6.55 million in 1851, it declined in every census to 1936, when it amounted to 4.25 million.[3] Thus, the famine (which commenced following the partial failure of the potato crop in the autumn of 1845) did not merely reverse rapid population growth: through its dynamic effects it perpetuated further declines for very many decades.[4]

Writing of the period before the famine in the years after the establishment of the Irish Free State, Pomfret wrote that 'the landlords [of properties in Ireland] as a class were alien and absentee, and had little interest either in the welfare of the peasants or in improvement of their property'.[5] These views are still widely held in Ireland, though probably not to the same relative extent by historians. The Stewart and Kincaid correspondence indicates that taken as a group, the firm's client proprietors during the famine decade did not fit the caricature of lazy, uncaring and inhumane owners of Irish estates. In their treatment of tenants who remained at home, some of the Stewart and Kincaid client landlords were notably benevolent.[6] In regard to landlord-assisted emigration, some of the motivation was undoubtedly humanitarian: ejectment without any 'compensation', or death in Ireland from starvation or disease, were alternatives. But among the destitute in arrears of rent, formal ejectment on estates managed by Stewart and Kincaid was relatively rare.

Humanitarian feelings aside, landlord-assisted emigration during the famine years was an important aspect of programmes of estate improvement, implemented by the firm on behalf of all, or almost all, of its major clients. But even before the famine, there were major improvements on most of the estates managed by Stewart and Kincaid. Until *c.* 1840, most of the properties mentioned in the discussion that follows were held by middlemen, who set the land in rundale. This was a communal mode of occupation under which each tenant might, from time to time, occupy several tiny detached plots. It was inefficient. By the mid-1840s, and reflecting initiatives by Stewart and Kincaid, many of the firm's client proprietors had begun to abandon the old rundale and middleman systems and had rationalized the structure of holdings by amalgamating the tiny plots – the so-called squaring of the land. Thus, in order to avail of scale economies, and to ensure that each tenant would have a quasi-permanent interest in improving the land, policy was now to allocate each tenant a single plot under the head landlord. The squaring often meant that impoverished cottiers had to go. Even before the famine,

[2] David Fitzpatrick, 'Emigration, 1801–70', in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A new history of Ireland*, V (1989), p. 565.

[3] Commission on emigration and other population problems, 1948–54, *Report* (Dublin, 1955), statistical appendix, Table 1.

[4] The forces behind population movements out of Ireland have often been classified as 'push' (economic conditions within Ireland) and 'pull' (relatively attractive conditions outside Ireland) factors. Push factors were obviously paramount during the late 1840s. For discussion of dynamic effects of the famine emigrations, as well as of push and pull factors, see Fitzpatrick, 'Emigration', pp. 600–07.

[5] John E. Pomfret, *The struggle for land in Ireland, 1800–1923* (1930), p. 27.

[6] This group included Jane Coleman who owned land in Kildare, John Hamilton of Donegal and Gertrude Fitzgerald whose estate was in Limerick.

the agency assisted some of them to move to North America; others were compensated for peaceable surrender and migrated or emigrated. However, extreme population density remained, especially in the western counties. The famine provided opportunities and increased incentives for substantially greater population clearance. Much of the assisted emigration reflected economic calculation by Stewart and Kincaid rather than by the proprietors themselves. Note however that both before and during the famine, many tenants begged the agents for assistance to enable them to go to North America.

Stewart and Kincaid's clients benefited in various ways from large-scale assisted emigration during the famine. First there were the savings in not having to finance (directly, or indirectly through extra taxation) the relief of starving tenants who were induced to emigrate.[7] Second, within a few years, many of those who had emigrated were remitting substantial sums to their relatives who had stayed in Ireland, and some of those monies accrued to landlords who would not otherwise have received rents. Third, large-scale population clearance was essential for the creation of holdings which could be viable in the long run. In 1847 and 1848 substantial tracts of land on Stewart and Kincaid's client estates lay idle. During the same years, Stewart and Kincaid applied for government loans to finance improvements on the lands of virtually every proprietor for whom the firm acted as agent. In almost every case, they received the sums sought on behalf of the proprietor. Most of these monies were spent on drainage and sub-soiling. Following speedy implementation of such works, some of the improved lands were operated as farms on the landlords' own account under the immediate management of Stewart and Kincaid's local agents. Most of the latter properties were probably rented out as soon as viable tenants – on farms larger in size than those newly squared in the earlier 1840s – could be found.

I

During the 1840s, the overwhelming bulk of the emigration assisted by Stewart and Kincaid was from impoverished districts in the northwest, in the Midlands near the river Shannon and in the southwest, on an arc of a curve moving from Sligo in the northwest to Clare and Limerick in the southwest. They are the estates to be discussed in what follows. Extracts from letters pertaining to several estates will be provided. These reveal the agency's attitudes, and in some

[7] High levels of poor rates during the famine years forced many landlords into debt, or increased their existing indebtedness. In the late 1840s landlords were administratively liable for payment of poor rates on land with an annual valuation of less than four pounds. Some historians have stated that this particular arrangement gave landlords special incentives to clear their estates of small tenants. I cannot accept this view as really substantive. First, we know from economic theory that in competitive markets the incidence of a tax on transactions – the question of who ultimately pays it, after part of it is possibly 'passed on' – is independent of who (the supplier or the demander) administratively pays it. Second, the theory of economic rent indicates that the incidence of a tax on land values is on the landowner. Third, note that the poor rate had to be paid whether or not there was a tenant on the land. Although the high levels of poor rates in 1847 increased the incentives of landlords to clear their estates, it should also be recognized that the 'Quarter Acre Clause' of the Poor Law Extension Act (June 1847) increased the incentives of many small tenants to emigrate, if financially feasible. The clause indicated that any occupier of more than a quarter of an acre of land would not be deemed destitute, and was therefore ineligible to receive relief financed through the poor rates.

cases those of landlords for whom the firm acted, towards the tenantry in general and on assisted emigration in particular. It will be concluded that the extent of landlord-assisted emigration in and around the famine era was probably much greater than historians have hitherto assumed or estimated; furthermore, even if we had an exact listing of all those tenants who received payment (in cash or in kind) from their landlord after surrendering their holdings, it would still be impossible to estimate the volume of landlord-assisted emigration with any degree of precision. It will also be shown that although most of the landlords of the estates in the sample to be considered (not selectively chosen) were absentees, as a group they did not have the characteristics claimed for them by Pomfret.

The third Viscount Palmerston (1784–1865), who owned lands in counties Sligo and Dublin, was one of Stewart and Kincaid's most important clients. He was British foreign secretary for most of the 1830s (until 1841) and from 1846 to 1851. He became prime minister in 1855. Palmerston first came to his Sligo estates in 1808 and he closely monitored developments there from *c.* 1820 onwards.[8] He visited his north Sligo properties in 1841 and again late in 1845. Through Anglo-Irish landlords like Palmerston, the English establishment of the late 1840s had hands-on knowledge of the problems of Irish agriculture.[9]

Palmerston's assistance to tenant emigration from County Sligo commenced before the famine, albeit on a relatively small scale. The early emigrants came from the very north of the county, but many of those who left in the late 1840s originated from Palmerston lands in southern Sligo. Palmerston's early assistance was intimately related to rationalization of the structure of holdings – his abandonment of the middleman and rundale systems, and their replacement by a more efficient mode of tenure which involved squaring the land. In the early 1830s, several of the leases to middlemen on Palmerston's north Sligo estate were for the life of King William IV who died on 20 June 1837. Kincaid saw this as providing an opportunity to get rid of pauper undertenants. In a letter to Palmerston dated 24 June he indicated that he hoped that he would be supported by him 'in the endeavour to thin the estate of a portion of the population and create larger farms'. On the front of this letter Palmerston entered the following observations:

> Kincaid recommending me to thin the population on the townlands of which the leases have expired … I have long ago made it my mind not to do so unjustifiable an act. I have never yet acted on so cruel a system and shall certainly not begin now … If any [tenants] can be persuaded to emigrate voluntarily well & good; but not a single creature shall be expelled against its will.[10]

In November 1837 Kincaid wrote to Palmerston about the lands out of lease and referred to

[8] For Palmerston's views on overall management of his Sligo estates, see Desmond Norton, 'On Lord Palmerston's Irish estates in the 1840s', *English Historical Rev.* 119 (2004), pp. 1254–74.

[9] In March 1848 Palmerston observed in a cabinet memorandum: 'Ejectments ought to be made without cruelty … but any great improvement in the social system of Ireland must be founded upon an extensive change in the present system of agrarian occupation … This change necessarily implies a long continued and systematic ejectment of Small Holders'. See extract from Palmerston in G. P. Gooch (ed.), *The later correspondence of Lord John Russell 1840–1878* (2 vols, 1925), I, pp. 224–5. Thus, although the number of small holdings had greatly decreased, Palmerston's thinking on them had hardened between 1838 and 1848.

[10] Broadlands (BR) archive at the University of Southampton, BR 145/9/15.

amalgamation (squaring) in order to make them sustainable. He indicated that he had offered the tenants there assistance to emigrate to North America.[11] The squaring of Palmerston's north Sligo estate was nearly complete by the autumn of 1846. In comparison with what was soon to come, relatively small numbers of Palmerston's tenantry on those lands secured assistance specifically to go to North America between 1837 and 1846.[12]

Destitution during the famine, combined with high rates of property taxation associated with local authority relief, greatly accelerated Palmerston's drive for efficiency in the structure of holdings. As will be seen below, others among Stewart and Kincaid's client landlords responded to increased incentives to improve their estates in a manner similar to that of Palmerston. Early in 1847 the agents provided Palmerston with a clear cost-benefit analysis of a structured programme of assisted emigration which they urged him to adopt. Palmerston responded by opting for an emigration scheme even larger than that originally contemplated. A letter from Kincaid to Palmerston of 23 March 1847 indicates some of the reasoning behind the programme adopted.[13] Kincaid commenced with an estimate of the costs of the new system of poor relief outside the workhouses in the absence of emigration: 'More than three fourths of the amount will be payable by your Lordship [through property taxes] … It cannot fall much short of £10,000 for the next 7 months calculating 1000 heads of families making 6000 [persons] at 1/- per day for 200 days'. He went on to indicate that he had recently applied for a loan of £2000 for drainage work, but added that Palmerston would 'have to pay the largest proportion of the expense of feeding the people whether they work or not'. Turning to the alternative of emigration, Kincaid stated that he had made a list

> of those who are desirous of emigrating from your Lordship's estates [in Co. Sligo after] surrendering their holdings [and] being taken out to Quebec. The list is not yet complete but I think it … 150 families comprising 900 individuals who occupy 500 Irish acres of land and the expenses of their transport would be about £2500 … I have already chartered two vessells [which] will sail in less than a fortnight … and the only difficulty that now presents itself to me is … what 400 shall I take out of the 900 candidates all of whom are desirous to go. The poor creatures … see nothing but misery and starvation before them if they stay where they are.

Kincaid calculated the cost of supporting 150 families 'for the next 7 months' as at least £1500 and after that they would still be 'on the property as dead weights'. He therefore recommended that Palmerston sanction an even larger programme of assisted emigration.

In 1847 nine chartered ships left Sligo carrying about 2000 Palmerston-assisted emigrants, destined for British North America, and it is thought that another vessel sailed from Liverpool to Quebec carrying about 480 emigrants from Palmerston's estates.[14] Some of those ships arrived in North America only after the harsh winter there had set in. Passengers on the last

[11] BR 145/9/42.

[12] Some details can be found in Desmond Norton, 'Lord Palmerston and the Irish famine emigration: a rejoinder', *Historical J.*, 46 (2003), pp. 155–65.

[13] BR 146/9/3.

[14] John C. McTernan, *Memory harbour, the port of Sligo* (1992), pt two, pp. 27–31; Tyler Anbinder, 'Lord Palmerston and the Irish famine emigration', *Historical J.*, 44 (2001), pp. 441–469; Norton, 'Palmerston and the Irish famine emigration'; id., 'Palmerston's Irish estates'.

ships to sail were poorly clothed and could not find work when they arrived. According to Anbinder, 'it was cruel to send out emigrants whose only option upon arrival in Canada was residence in an almshouse or begging in the streets ... Stewart and Kincaid knew perfectly well that the emigrants' pleadings [to be taken to North America] should not have been the deciding factor in determining whether or not the last ships should have sailed'.[15] These views on Palmerston's Irish agents seem unfair: three letters from late in 1847, written by Stewart to Kincaid (and hence unknown to historians until very recently), indicate that the partners in the firm did care about the well-being of the emigrants. However, one of those letters attributes blame to their own ignorance, rather than to any indifference or malice. As Stewart reminded Kincaid in reference to the passengers aboard the *Aeolus*, which berthed in New Brunswick on 2 November: 'We did not inform ourselves enough of the circumstances of the place they were sent to & the suitable seasons'.[16]

1847 was not the last year in which Palmerston assisted his tenants to go to North America. Although on a much smaller scale than in 1847, his financial support for emigration to America was maintained up to the decade of his death (in 1865).[17] Within Stewart and Kincaid's files on the Palmerston properties, one of the letters of the late 1840s is particularly interesting. The following is drawn from a petition to the agents from a Palmerston tenant named Scanlon, who wrote that he had ten acres 'of which he has been dispossessed'. He had 'a family of ten persons [and] begs to recal to your recollection a promise ... that you would give the means of emigrating to six of his family', as well as money to buy clothing. He indicated that some tenants on a neighbouring estate were 'going on Friday next', and that he and his family 'would like to be with their former friends'. This was written on 26 December 1848, a Tuesday. Thus Scanlon indicated, if given the assistance sought, that his family hoped to leave three days later. Similar examples of the speed at which tenants sought to leave Ireland, if assisted by their landlord, can be found elsewhere in the correspondence.

II

Apart from Palmerston's properties, Stewart and Kincaid managed estates in County Sligo on behalf of Edward Wingfield and Sir Alexander Crichton. Wingfield, son of the third Viscount Powerscourt, owned substantial tracts of land near the river Moy in the western part of the county. His main residence in Ireland was in Co. Dublin, but from time to time in the 1840s he stayed at his house overlooking the Moy estuary. He also spent much of his time in England, where his twin brother had property. Rationalization in the structure of holdings on his lands – squaring – was implemented in the early 1840s and appears to have been largely completed by the end of 1846. The process of squaring meant that some tenants had to leave. It seems that some received assistance to go to North America, while others (probably former undertenants) received 'compensation' which, by itself, would have enabled them to go no further than Britain. Thus, in February 1844 one of Wingfield's tenants sent a petition to Stewart and Kincaid pointing out that he was 'one of the persons whom you were pleased

[15] Anbinder, 'Palmerston', pp. 464–5.

[16] See Norton, 'Palmerston and the Irish famine emigration', p. 164.

[17] See Norton, 'Palmerston's Irish estates'.

to dispossess when you were dividing [i.e. squaring] the lands'. He reminded the Dubin agents of their 'promise to give as much money as would bear the expense of him and family [in all eleven persons] to America' and he indicated that he thought that '£40 would … do so'. In March 1845 William Ormsby, Stewart and Kincaid's local agent, reported that another tenant had 'given up his holding' and he added: 'I … told him I would give him £10–10–0 … which he consented to'. In August 1845 a note from Ormsby observed that he had 'to pay about ten cottiers … one pound each'. The latter payments were presumably made merely to get rid of them peaceably. Because squaring was extended into the early months of the famine, it is likely that some similar payments were made in 1846.

Wingfield financed a structured programme of emigration in 1847. Evidence for this is contained in a letter in which he referred to a request that he sign a document proposing a project on the Moy near his lands. The proposal seems to have been to make the river navigable up to Ballina, through use of public funds (which would presumably have entailed further taxation of local property). Wingfield responded to Stewart and Kincaid in December 1848 as follows:

> Was this project to advantage the property or give any permanent or reproductive employment to the people … I should certainly sign it … Some years ago Mr Nimmo [who built many harbours in the west of Ireland] expended several thousand pounds … to establish a harbour … & also to cut away ledges of rock to make the Moy navigable [from the sea] to the town of Ballina which proved to be a complete failure & throw away of money & what was then done suffered to … be carried away by the … seas … A grant for such a purpose would be the means of bringing back the idle population which I paid so much to get rid of by transporting to America [in 1847].[18]

MacDonagh has noted that Wingfield did implement a programme of assisted emigration in 1847, while McTernan indicates that families from Wingfield's estates sailed from Sligo for British North America on board the *Marchioness of Perth* in June of that year.[19] There is also evidence indicating that other Wingfield tenants might have been on board one or more of the ships which carried Palmerston's emigrants to North America in 1847.[20] We have no definite idea of the numbers involved. However, given the foregoing details, and given the knowledge (from the Stewart and Kincaid correspondence) that large tracts of Wingfield land lay idle in the first half of 1848, it is reasonable to infer that Wingfield directly assisted the emigration of a significant number (perhaps hundreds) of persons from his estates in 1847.

A letter to Kincaid dated December 1848, from a tenant named Wills whose rental payments were in arrears, indicates that there was probably a very small amount of assisted emigration

[18] It might be inferred from the final sentence in this passage that Wingfield lacked humane feelings toward his tenantry. However, several of his letters to Stewart and Kincaid indicate the contrary. For example, in October 1846 he instructed the agents to 'consider where charity is to be dispensed, among my tenants … & assist them accordingly everywhere, in the best manner'.

[19] Oliver MacDonagh, 'Irish emigration to the United States of America and the British colonies during the famine', in R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams (eds), *The great famine* (1957), n. 17; McTernan, *Sligo*, pt two, pp. 26, 34.

[20] J. R. Stewart to J. Kincaid, 17 May 1848.

from the Wingfield lands in 1848/9. Wills requested: 'Allow me what you said you would for sending my sisters to America … I wrote [to Wingfield] a letter by this post, requesting of him … either to give me employment or to allow you to let me go as you are letting part of the tenants go with the littel things they have'. Thus it seems that the only assistance received from Wingfield by most of the tenants to whom Wills referred was that although they were in arrears of rent, they were allowed to sell whatever property they had in order to finance their departures – probably migration to Britain in most cases. In fairness, however, the correspondence reveals that Wingfield was in financial difficulties by the early part of 1848 when, it seems, he had fallen into deficit in his accounts with the firm of Stewart and Kincaid.[21]

Sir Alexander Crichton, once Physician-in-Ordinary to the Emperor of Russia, resided in Kent. Most of his townlands in Sligo were in the south of the county, where Palmerston also owned some properties. Apart from those townlands, Crichton owned about 2000 acres further south, in the adjacent county of Roscommon. For some years before 1848, his properties in Ireland had been managed by his son Alex. However, following several murders and attacks on landlords and their agents in 1847, Sir Alexander feared for his son's safety. Among those murdered was Major Denis Mahon of Strokestown House in Co. Roscommon (on 2 November 1847). This case was regarded as so serious that it was debated in the House of Lords. Mahon was not one of the firm's clients, but his murder was committed on, or contiguous to, Crichton's Roscommon property.[22] Like Palmerston, early in 1847 Mahon had asked many of his tenants to surrender their holdings 'voluntarily' in exchange for assisted emigration, and during the summer of 1847 he sent over 1000 of such persons, including their families, to America aboard four ships.[23] Following the outrages of 1847, Sir Alexander temporarily withdrew his son from Ireland and, around the end of the year, he appointed Stewart and Kincaid as his principal agent.

Early in 1848 Edward Smyth, the firm's agent in Sligo town, began to apply policies on the Crichton lands in southern Sligo akin to those which he was simultaneously implementing on the Palmerston properties in the same district: the Crichton townlands were subjected to squaring and other works of improvement, and to some clearances of their population. Compensation was given to some of the tenants or former undertenants who left the lands to be newly squared. On 24 April 1848 Alex Crichton (Sir Alexander's son) wrote to Stewart and Kincaid: 'I do not know what particular claim Jane Supple has to … assistance to emigrate to America'. He continued: 'Biddy Davy … has better claim to assistance'; however, 'for every £5 you give, you will I think have five additional claimants'. He added: 'I will with your leave first try what can be done with the Misses Supple & Davy … William Shaw [a middleman] … says

[21] Edward Wingfield to Stewart and Kincaid, 28 Mar. 1848.

[22] Police reports dated 4, 5 and 7 Nov. 1847 are in error on the location of Mahon's murder. These errors explain why some modern historians are also mistaken on the same point. In support of these assertions, see Desmond Norton, 'Where was Major Denis Mahon shot?', *Co. Roscommon Historical and Archaeological Society J.*, 9 (2003), pp. 54–8.

[23] Woodham-Smith states that 'Mahon chartered two vessels to take them to Quebec'. See Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The great hunger* (1962), p. 324. More recently, Raymond Browne has provided details of four ships which carried Mahon's emigrants to America. See his draft chapter 'From the Union to the famine' in Raymond Browne (ed.), *A history of Kilbride parish, Co. Roscommon*, currently near completion.

the ladies he expects will be satisfied with two or three pounds'. In a letter to Stewart and Kincaid dated at the end of April, Shaw referred to persons 'that sent up petisians to your honer' and he indicated that 'if I got the money [for them] the[y] would go off'. In regard to 'Bridget Davey', who wanted the agency to pay her passage to New York, Shaw informed them that 'there is a man' from the district 'going out on the eleventh of May and Miss Davey said that nothing would pleas her beter than to be out with him'. A week later Shaw wrote to Stewart and Kincaid: 'I will give Jane Soopple two pounds ... There are a great deal of the cotters [who had probably been undertenants] that are speaking to me concerning compensation. Will I give it to every person that throws [down] the house and go'.

It seems likely that in 1848 Stewart and Kincaid did assist some Crichton tenants in south Sligo, specifically to emigrate. But even if we had a list of all of those in the district who received money from them, we would still have a fundamental problem in estimating the extent of assisted emigration from the Crichton lands there. Elsewhere I have written in reference to Palmerston properties:

> Assisted emigration ... in 1848–9 may have been associated with squaring [in south Sligo]. The scale of such emigration is impossible to determine, partly because one cannot clearly distinguish between 'assistance' to emigrate and 'compensation' of tenants who peaceably departed. Smyth's letters of 1848 make references to 'compensation' of tenants who would leave without causing trouble. But in most cases, the 'compensation' was probably no more than would facilitate migration to Britain (not then regarded as 'emigration').[24]

The same observations are applicable to Stewart and Kincaid client proprietors generally, including Sir Alexander Crichton.

Moving further to the south, none of the letters referring to Crichton's properties in Roscommon refer to assistance specifically to emigrate. The correspondence indicates that large numbers of his Roscommon tenants, or undertenants on those lands, departed in the late 1840s. It seems that only some of them received 'compensation'; furthermore, it seems that the sums which the latter group received would have enabled them to migrate (within the United Kingdom) only. However, it should be recognized that Sir Alexander Crichton's financial position placed him very close to the doors of the bankruptcy courts in the late 1840s.[25]

III

The firm also managed many thousands of acres in Roscommon on behalf of two other proprietors, Daniel Ferrall and George Nugent, the Marquess of Westmeath. It is not surprising that there was no organized programme of assisted emigration from Ferrall's lands: in order to avoid imprisonment in Ireland for nonpayment of debts, he was 'on the run' under a false name in England during the early years of the famine, and to avoid imprisonment for nonpayment of substantial new debts incurred in England, he fled to France at the end of 1848.

[24] Norton, 'Palmerston and the Irish famine emigration', p. 162.

[25] See, for example, Alexander Crichton to Stewart and Kincaid, 13 June 1849. Many encumbered estates were broken up and sold in the late 1840s and early 1850s.

In 1847–8 there was a vigorous programme of depopulation, to be attained mainly by 'voluntary' surrender and departure, to anywhere off the Ferrall lands, in exchange for small sums of money. Stewart and Kincaid paid such sums to many of Ferrall's own tenants, perhaps to some of the late tenants of former middlemen, and in some cases to squatters on Ferrall land. It seems that hundreds of families were involved, and that the agency gave many or most of them from £1 to £1 10*s.* each. That the depopulation of the Ferrall lands was intimately related to a desire to improve his estate is clear from a letter from Ferrell to Kincaid of 27 January 1847 in which Ferrall instructed:

> Give moderate sums to such of the tenantry as are willing to … quit and, if we can by such means remove a part of the overpopulation, we can then borrow money from the Government as you propose, or devise other means of improving the land, and recovering the losses we may sustain by those advances etc to defaulting tenants, who may emigrate.

It is unlikely that many of Ferrall's tenants received enough in 'compensation' to enable them to go to North America.

The financial position of a majority of those cleared off the Roscommon estates of George Nugent (who resided in Co. Westmeath in the Midlands) was similar to that of Ferrall's small tenants: in most cases, the sums given to them in 'compensation' were small.[26] But Stewart and Kincaid did assist some of Nugent's tenants specifically to go to America. In April 1847 Stewart wrote to Kincaid referring to 'the poor creatures in Kilglass [in east Roscommon contiguous to the river Shannon]. [It] is indeed a charity to help them away from the scene of death and destitution. I think that probably more will go soon'. In October 1847 Stewart wrote to Kincaid that some of Nugent's tenants were talking 'about going to America and giving up', and in May 1848 Nugent requested Stewart to send him 'the accounts of the expenditures including sums given for emigration'. Finally, in apparent reference to Nugent's tenantry in the Kilglass district, Stewart wrote to Kincaid in October 1848: 'Several applicants for emigration who would give up some land. Shall we start them off?'. Thus, whereas it seems that a large number of Nugent's tenantry probably went to Britain through the small sums which they received in 'compensation', an unknown number went to America through more structured schemes organized by Stewart and Kincaid.

In the 1840s Edward Pakenham, third Earl of Longford (whose principal residence was in Westmeath), owned at least 18,500 statute acres in counties Longford and Westmeath, both of which are in the Irish Midlands. There was a small amount of emigration to America from the Westmeath estate in the early 1840s. In March 1842 Stewart and Kincaid's local agent there wrote about 'Pat Kieran who I hear is about going off to America', and he added: 'I think it was ten pounds that was promised him on giving up his land'. In fact, Kieran was paid £16,

[26] George Nugent had financial problems throughout his life. First, the family estate was burdened with debt, much of which went back to 1796 when his father had divorced his mother for adultery. Second, there were the financial consequences of George's sexual adventures and of a fifteen-year legal battle which followed the first of his three marriages. His second marriage was in 1858 when he was aged 73, but four years later he again resorted to litigation in order to obtain a divorce because of his young wife's adultery. See Lawrence Stone, *Broken lives* (1993), ch. 12.

some £8 of which was paid by four incoming tenants; thus, the remaining £8 was 'assistance to emigrate' rather than 'compensation for improvements' or for Kieran's sale of his interest in the land he held. In the Stewart and Kincaid correspondence, the earliest indication of emigration from Pakenham properties in Longford is in a petition from Catherine Curren dated August 1846, which stated: 'Pet[itione]r is under ejectment for nonpayment of rent ... With the depressed state of times, my husband and son were obliged to go to America ... which left your pet[itione]r and eight helpless children ... Pet[itione]r humbly prays for mercy as she does not know the day or hour she may have relief from her husband and son'. Stewart and Kincaid assisted Curren to emigrate – presumably to join her husband in America. On 12 November she wrote from Longford town to the agents: 'I beg ... that ye will be pleased to remit me 3£ in addition to the 2£ already given. I had to release some articles I had to pawn ... Myself and children are in want of clothing to fit us out for the voyage and to procure some sea store and to pay our travelling expenses to Dublin'. She added: 'We will be in Dublin on Tuesday or Wednesday next ... We cannot leave here unless ye are pleased to send us the sum now claimed which will be the last till I am in Dublin'.

Assisted emigration from Pakenham's Longford estate was probably low until 1847 when, on an unspecified date, Stewart wrote to Kincaid in Longford town: 'I hope you got on ... well [collecting rents] in Longford but some there the small farmers will not be able to pay up. Get some of them off to America if you can & soon. The price to New York now is only £3 or £3 3*s.* for adults'. Early in 1848 Stewart and Kincaid implemented a programme of emigration among Pakenham's tenants. This is inferred from the fact that in February of that year Stewart informed Kincaid: 'I accepted a bill [of exchange] for Miley [American packet agent in Dublin] for £400 ... for L[or]d Longfords emigrants'. This sum paid to Miley would have covered the cost of transporting about 170 persons (including children as well as adults) to America.

John Wingfield was twin brother to Edward Wingfield, whose properties in west Sligo have already been discussed. In 1802 he assumed the additional surname of Stratford and became known as such. He owned over 2000 statute acres in the south-western county of Clare. To the south of Clare he also owned over 2000 acres in the Robertstown district of north-west Co. Limerick.[27] Stratford had no residence in Ireland during the 1840s: he dwelt at Stratford Place in London and at Margate in Kent.

Assisted emigration from the Stratford lands in Clare in the pre-famine 1840s was low. Thomas Reidy was one such emigrant. In January 1842 the local agent on the Clare estate wrote to Stewart and Kincaid that Reidy 'has his mind made up to remove to Van Diemans land with his family, ten in number ... If he had his [land] rent free he could badly support & clothe his long family by the produce of it ... He expects your Hons. will have the kindness ... of sending off himself & family. He has no means'. Kincaid responded favourably. In April, the same local agent informed Kincaid that Reidy 'requested that I would state to your Hon[ou]r as vessils were not going out to Australia; that he has his mind made up to enjoy the offer your

[27] Details on these estates can be found in Desmond Norton, 'Progress and distress on the Stratford estate in Clare during the eighteen forties', *The other Clare*, 26 (2002), pp. 50–7; id., 'Stratford's Robertstown estate during the 1840s', in Thomas J. Culhane, *The Barony of Shanid* (2003).

Hon[ou]r was very kind to promise, to send himself & family to America which is only 8 now, as two of his children died since he wrote first to your Ho[no]ur on the subject'. Having received some small assistance from Stewart and Kincaid, another named tenant and his family sailed to America from Galway on 1 April 1846.[28]

The correspondence on the Clare estate contains only a single letter written in 1847. But it contains important information, namely, that a programme of assisted emigration from the estate was implemented in the spring of that year. Thus, early in May, Stewart wrote to Kincaid: 'You see by the enclosed ... the numbers sent from Col. Stratford's Clare estate. [Arthur] Vincent [their local agent on Stratford's Robertstown estate across the Shannon from Clare] gives a piteous account of their wretched appearance & want of clothing. I only wonder. He did not venture on two or three pounds to get them some, but he don't venture far *without orders*'. This batch of emigrants probably left from the city of Limerick, possibly along with some others from the Robertstown district.

Following the termination of a lease for the entire Robertstown estate, the agents began to square that district in 1841–2. This implied getting rid of many former undertenants. In December 1841 Arthur Vincent wrote to Stewart and Kincaid: 'You have given me the liberty of assisting those poor cottiers to emigrate ... What struck my mind to offer, is, one pound to each member of the family ... £100 or £150 in this way would clear off a good many paupers'. But the levels of payment contemplated by Vincent did not satisfy the cottiers. Vincent therefore suggested that they should be offered more. In January 1842 he informed Stewart and Kincaid: 'There are six families [on a named townland] comprising in all 37 individuals who look to us for assistance to emigrate. I ... told them that they might expect £1 each ... They say we may keep this much as it would be of little or no assistance to them [to go to North America]. The very least which I think will quiet them is £2 each ... I would be for giving it'. How much was paid to emigrants from the estate in 1842 is unknown.

It seems that there was some assisted emigration from Stratford's Limerick estate early during the famine: in February 1846 Vincent wrote to the agency: 'A few of the cottiers on the Robertstown estate are inclined to emigrate. Will you allow me to give them some allowances on getting their holdings thrown down. I think it would be well to lessen them'. In March, Vincent again referred to the cottiers:

> With respect to the allowances you would give the cottiers on giving up their cabins I cannot get one who will accept of £5, as all their other effects when sold would not make as much as would pay their passage to America. What they look for is £2 for each member of the family ... I think £100 could not be better converted than in thinning the poorer portion of cabins on this property.

Apart from the cottiers early in the year, emigration from the Robertstown estate in 1846 seems to have been low. But there may have been some assisted emigration from that district in 1847. The only subsequent reference to emigration from the estate is in a letter to Kincaid dated December 1848, posted in the city of Limerick by J. R. Stewart. In this he indicated that he had

[28] John Blackwell to Stewart and Kincaid, 3 Apr. 1846.

just come from the Robertstown estate, and he added: 'I have arranged for exporting 3 or 4 families & if we were merely wanting to get people off could send lots more. But of course I only send those who have land & whose rent which they are unable to pay would [from new tenants] soon come to the cost of emigration'.

The agency managed two other estates in Co. Limerick. These comprised the properties of Gertrude Fitzgerald on Mount Blakeney and Thomastown townlands and of Sergeant Warren near Ballingarry.[29] Both of these estates were to the south of Robertstown. Their proprietors resided at Whitegate in south-east Co. Cork and in Co. Dublin, respectively. Stewart and Kincaid commenced management of the Fitzgerald estate around the beginning of 1844. The lands of middlemen whose leases had expired were then squared, and at least some former undertenants were compensated for surrendering their holdings. In one case in 1844, Stewart and Kincaid gave assistance specifically to emigrate from the estate. Thus, in April, a tenant who had surrendered his land wrote that he had 'not words to express my gratitude for your kindness'. He indicated that he had engaged a firm in Liverpool 'to carry us out' but he added: 'I had not sufficient money to buy clothing' and he hoped that 'your honor will forward me your order'.

Several of the letters about Mrs Fitzgerald's estate in 1848 refer to assisted emigration. On 20 March she wrote from her residence at Whitegate House to Stewart: 'Miss Russel [whose brother was apparently John Russell of Thomastown] arrived [at Whitegate House], to say that you & Mr Kincaid had signified your intention of enabling two other sisters to emigrate to America … Please write by return of post as Miss R said that the packet is to sail for Dublin on Monday & that she and her two sisters … will come down to me from Cork [city] on Saturday to know your decision'. This was written on a Monday. The fact that the Russell sisters hoped to leave Cork one week later again illustrates the speed at which emigrants were willing to leave. Two or three of the Russell sisters left Cork, on route to America via Dublin, on or close to the date which they had planned for their departure. It seems that they were content with whatever assistance they got from Stewart and Kincaid on behalf of Mrs Fitzgerald who, on 27 March, informed Stewart: 'I have just had a second visit from *Miss Russell* the *elder*, & one of her sisters, they are well satisfied now with your decision … You will smile when I deliver a message from the elder Miss R, namely to request that you will desire the physician on board the ship in which her sisters are going to America, to take particular care of the eldest of the two as her health is delicate'.

The emigration of the Russell sisters was not an isolated event: in the spring of 1848 Stewart and Kincaid organized a programme of emigration from Mrs Fitzgerald's estate. On 18 March 1848 Stewart informed Kincaid: 'Sankey [an employee of Stewart and Kincaid] getting out a lot of the Mt Blakeney people, but it will cost a good deal'. Two days earlier, Sankey had reported to Stewart:

> I went … to Mt Blakeney yesterday … John Bernard and his wife are ready to go but want 30*s.* for clothes. They certainly are very poor and must get some assistance … David

[29] Further details on these estates can be found in Desmond Norton, 'Distress and benevolence on Gertrude Fitzgerald's Limerick estate in the 1840s', *North Munster Anti. J.*, 42 (2002), pp. 21–34; id., 'The Limerick estate of Sergeant Warren during the great famine', *NMAJ* 43 (2003), pp. 75–83.

> Fitzgibbon is anxious to go but his wife being in the family way he will not be ready to start for 6 weeks. He will require some money for clothing as he and his family (in all 4) are naked … I next visited Finns and saw Thomas' family in all 7. I offered £10 on the part of Mrs Fitzgerald if the brothers would give the balance … of cost of sending them out … But I fear when the cost of clothing be added, that £40 will hardly cover all … I think I may increase Mrs F's donation to £15 … As the 2 [Keefe] families number 14 it will take about £70 to send them out … Money must be given for clothing but I think a small sum in this way will induce many to go.

On the following day, Sankey noted that he was 'surrounded by emigrants'. In the same letter he mentioned the names of two further families to be taken to America, largely or entirely at Mrs Fitzgerald's expense. In the agency's surviving correspondence, the last letter requesting assistance to emigrate from Mrs Fitzgerald's estate is dated April 1848. The writer sought the agency's 'generous assistance' to enable his family of nine to go to America. He added that 'of course we could not be pennyless on landing in a strange country that we should have something to carry us into the interior'. The correspondence lists the names of many tenants on Mrs Fitzgerald's estate in the 1840s. The relevant *Valuation* indicates that few of them were there in 1851.[30]

Developments on Sergeant Warren's townlands were similar to those on Mrs Fitzgerald's. Again there was considerable assisted emigration. In May 1847 Stewart wrote to Kincaid that he feared 'we shall have to pay the increased rate [of transatlantic passage] for Sergt Warrens people'. Much of the correspondence about the estate in 1848, a year at the end of which Stewart reported that 'the Ballingarry estate is in a most wretched state', pertains to assisted emigration. Early in 1848 the agency had a tenant on the estate, John Scollard, imprisoned for nonpayment of debt: Stewart and Kincaid claimed that he was £85-odd in arrears. In mid-March, Scollard wrote to them that he would 'give you up the possession' of his land 'by your assisting me and family in going to America … I would wish to prepare for the first of April, in procuring some clothes'. Stewart and Kincaid's response was favourable. This may be regarded as surprising, in view of the extent of Scollard's debt to the firm. On 22 March, Scollard wrote to them: 'I have made up my mind with Mr Sankey … to go to America … He told me that you would not give us any clothing until we would go to Dublin', but Scollard added that he hoped to be ready to leave for Dublin 'from the 10th to the 12th of April if we get the clothing and some cost' [for travel to Dublin].

Also on 22 March 1848, Sankey wrote to Stewart and Kincaid that 'David Dunworth [a Warren tenant] has been begging with me to be sent to America. I offered to send 6 of his family'. Sankey's letters make no further reference to him until several weeks later, when Sankey wrote to Stewart: 'I know he wants me to send out 6 of his family which will cost £35 and then I calculate £10 for James Dunworth and his wife. Shall I do this?' Sankey was on the estate on 23 March, when he took possession from Patrick Guiry and from other tenants. On the same date he reported: 'I know not whether you will think I have gone too far but when I looked over his [Guiry's] farm and saw the good state it is in at present I settled on giving him £40 and £10 to

[30] *Primary valuation of tenements, County of Limerick, Barony of Coshma* (1851), pp. 69, 70.

Brosnaghan'. Sankey added: 'Fitzgeralds gave up quietly and I have arranged with Michl. in case he does not go to America that he is only to get £20. His brother Pat will not go so I gave him £8 and £5 settled the two cottiers'. Thus, in 1848, it was not the case that all of those on the estate who received significant sums upon surrendering their land went to America.[31] The correspondence lists the names of about fifty tenants on Warren's estate, mainly in 1845–6. It is probable that these included almost all those heads of households who were immediate tenants to Warren. The relevant *Valuation* indicates that only about nine of them were still on the estate in 1852.[32]

The above-mentioned estates aside, evidence of landlord-assisted emigration from the properties of the agency's other client proprietors in the 1840s is less clear-cut. This is partly because the files concerning most of those estates are relatively thin. Though none of them refer to organized programmes of emigration, several letters in those files do refer to instances in which, on behalf of the landlord, Stewart and Kincaid offered money to individuals upon leaving an estate, and in some cases the sums offered were quite large. Thus, the evidence is that probably a majority of the client landlords gave meaningful assistance to some of their tenants – large or small in number – to emigrate in the 1840s, and during the famine years in particular. Although very many tenants did beg for assistance to emigrate, on some of the estates the decision to implement such measures probably reflected the policy of Stewart and Kincaid, and the initiative probably came from them rather than the proprietors alone. It is likely that Stewart and Kincaid were doing a job which they found distasteful, but that they regarded it as necessary for the viability of the estates under their care and in many cases for the survival of existing and former tenants. No claim is advanced here that a majority of other land agents or other landlords in Ireland in the 1840s thought along the same lines as Stewart and Kincaid. Furthermore, in a great many cases 'voluntary' surrender of land, in return for assisted emigration, was hardly 'voluntary' in any acceptable interpretation of the word: ejectment without much 'compensation' must often have been the only immediate alternative.

IV

The Stewart and Kincaid correspondence does not enable us to make even an approximate estimate of the number of persons from the totality of the estates under the firm's management who were 'assisted', specifically to emigrate, during the famine; however, it is reasonable to infer that several thousands of people were involved, and that the landlords' direct costs in pounds (including expenditures on clothing and food over and above ship rations) were probably about four times the number of beneficiaries. In addition, it must be recalled that large numbers of tenants on estates managed by Stewart and Kincaid were 'compensated' for surrender of their holdings. Some of those people presumably used the monies to migrate to Britain, and an unknown proportion used them to go to America. It seems that most of those

[31] Michael Fitzgerald probably stayed in Ireland. In Sept. 1848 Sankey wrote to Stewart and Kincaid, 'Michl. Fitzgerald is an invalid and unfit to go to America. He wants £20 the amount formerly offered him in case he stays at home'.

[32] *Primary valuation of tenements, County of Limerick, Barony of Connello Upper* (1852), pp. 9, 21, 24, 25, 93, 94.

who left estates managed by Stewart and Kincaid in 1846–8 received 'compensation' or benefited from 'assistance'.[33] But the distinction between the two is nebulous.

It is difficult to see how one can sensibly attach much confidence to the estimates of 'assisted emigration' presented by some modern historians. Oliver MacDonagh was cautious when, in the 1950s, he wrote that 'in 1846–52, landlord-assisted emigration must have been very small; it can scarcely have exceeded 50,000 in extent'.[34] In a note, MacDonagh was careful to add: 'This is my own estimate ... It is put forward most tentatively ... It must be remembered how difficult it was to decide exactly what amounted to "assistance" '.[35] MacDonagh also remarked that 'an offer of "assisted emigration" often meant no more than eviction and a small sum' of money 'which could not possibly have paid the fare'; thus, whether he regarded some of the 'compensation' as a form of 'assistance' remains an open question.[36] Although MacDonagh provides the names of several landlords who financed 'assisted emigration' during the famine, those names include only three of the landlords mentioned in this paper (Palmerston, Wingfield and Warren). Serious doubt is therefore cast on MacDonagh's upper bound estimate of 50,000 for 'landlord assisted emigration' over the seven years 1846–52.

Some of the more recent writings of historians have expressed no caution, or less caution, than MacDonagh on 'assisted emigration' during the famine. In 1994 Christine Kinealy wrote with apparent certainty that 'landlord-assisted emigration accounted for only about 5 per cent of the total'.[37] In 1999 Cormac O'Grada referred to 'emigrants whose passages were paid by landlords or by the state' and he added: 'Only a small share of all passages overseas were so financed, certainly no more than 4 or 5 percent'.[38] O'Grada cites MacDonagh's estimates, and research by David Fitzpatrick, as his sources. Fitzpatrick had reported in 1989 that 'references were found to ... cases of assistance by individuals (usually landlords) or groups, who probably aided at least ... 22,000 [emigrants] between 1846 and 1850'.[39] Fitzpatrick's principal sources are similar to those of MacDonagh. It is inferred that assistance specifically to emigrate from some of the estates managed by Stewart and Kincaid is absent from Fitzpatrick's calculations. In providing a map indicating his lower bound estimates of privately assisted emigration from each county in Ireland, he states that those estimates are for 'the number of emigrants receiving any financial assistance from landlords or other non-official benefactors'.[40] But apart from his apparent exclusion of assisted emigration from some of the estates discussed in this paper, it seems that Fitzpatrick also excludes the very many (at least on estates managed by Stewart and Kincaid) who received only 'compensation' upon surrendering their holdings, even if they allocated such funds to finance emigration. If the Stewart and Kincaid correspondence had

[33] The fact that payments in cash or in kind appear to have been given to most of the tenants who departed from estates managed by Stewart and Kincaid in the 1840s, suggests that so-called tenant right was more prevalent than historians have hitherto assumed. On the tenant right issue, see *Evidence taken before Her Majesty's commissioners of inquiry into the state of the law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland* (1845), pts I to III, and W. E. Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants in mid-Victorian Ireland* (1994), ch. 4.

[34] MacDonagh in Edwards and Williams (eds), *Great famine*, p. 335.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 475.

[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 335, 336.

[37] Christine Kinealy, *This great calamity* (1994), p. 304.

[38] Cormac O'Grada, *Black '47 and beyond* (1999), p. 115.

[39] Fitzpatrick, 'Emigration', p. 592.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 622.

been available when Fitzpatrick conducted his research, it might well have induced him to raise his lower bound estimate, and it seems likely that this consideration, along with appropriate attention to MacDonagh's caution, would have led those who wrote on the subject in the 1990s to express less of a sense of precision in their estimates.

On the matter of 'assisted emigration', Tyler Anbinder probably moved in the direction of realism when, in 2001, he wrote in regard to the famine era that 'about 6 to 8 per cent of emigrants in this period left Ireland ... as the result of assistance from governments, religious and charitable organizations, or landlords'.[41] Anbinder does not distinguish between those people who were assisted specifically to emigrate, and those who were 'compensated' upon surrender of their holdings (an unknown proportion of whom also emigrated).

Apart from the point that some modern historians appear to have underestimated the approximate extent of assisted emigration during the famine era, the Stewart and Kincaid correspondence of the 1840s yields the following overall impressions. Even before 1846–7, the agents recognized that some assistance to emigrate was desirable and they attempted to facilitate such departures with humanity and even with compassion. Thus, given that little or no net cost would be imposed on the landlord in the long run, the small-scale emigration supported by Stewart and Kincaid in the pre-famine years reflected a concern for tenant welfare. But although Stewart and Kincaid continued to bear the well-being of the tenantry in mind, in 1847 and 1848 the welfare of client landlords became paramount in the firm's thinking and actions: population growth was now to be abated, not through occasional assistance to emigrate on a case-by-case basis, but through substantive programmes of estate clearance which involved 'voluntary' surrender of land on the part of many tenants, most of whom appear to have been 'compensated' before leaving an estate or 'assisted' to leave the British Isles entirely.

[41] Anbinder, 'Palmerston', p. 445.

'Never-to-be-forgotten acts of oppression … by professing Christians in the year 1874'. Joseph Arch's Agricultural Labourers' Union in Dorset, 1872–4*

by Jo Draper

Abstract

Dorset was notorious in the mid-nineteenth century for its low agricultural wages and the poverty of its labourers. This paper traces the first years of union activity in the county, 1872–4. It is based largely on reports carried by a short-lived but sympathetic newspaper which are extensively quoted to give a flavour of the source and the extreme hostility the Union provoked. Particular attention is paid to Milborne St Andrew where in 1872 the farmers appear to have accepted at least some union demands for higher wages but dismissed pro-union labourers after the harvest of that year. A new strike in the spring of 1874 was countered by a lockout and evictions. The background to the much-reproduced photographs of the evictions at Milborne St Andrews is explained.

Rural trades unionism was slow to develop in England, then came in a sudden rush in the years before the formation of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union in 1872.[1] That year, and 1873, were both ones of agitation and local strikes as the labourers' unions took root and pressed for higher wages and a shorter working week. By the beginning of 1874 the National Union had somewhere in the region of 86,200 members: the labourers' unions which remained outside of NALU may have had 49,000 more.[2] As there were over a million agricultural labourers, the unions' hold over their constituency was never great. In 1874 the NALU became embroiled in a strike and lockout, sustained by the union's ability to offer strike pay. The Revolt of the Field, as it came to be known, was particularly widespread in East Anglia having started at Exning in Suffolk in February. By mid-Summer some six thousand men were on strike pay: but the financial costs proved to be too great and on 27 July 1874 the Union recommended that its members return to work.

* I am grateful to the editor for his help in bringing this paper to publication.

[1] For accounts of the early days of rural trades unionism, see P. Horn, 'Labour organisations', in G. E. Mingay (ed.), *The Victorian countryside* (2 vols, 1981), II, pp. 580–90; J. P. D. Dunbabin, *Rural discontent in nineteenth-century Britain* (1974), esp. chs 4 (by Dunbabin) and 5 (by Horn) from which the following is largely drawn.

[2] Dunbabin, *Rural discontent*, pp. 75–6.

The idea of agricultural labourers' unions was decidedly in the air after 1870. By this time the idea of organised labour was much more established than it had been: statutes of 1869 and 1871 had removed any remaining question of the legality of unions. The formation of labourers' unions was a rural echo of the urban labour unrest of 1871–2 and the largely successful movement for a nine-hour working day. When the Warwickshire labourers began to combine in February 1872, forming the Warwickshire Agricultural Labourers' Union a few weeks later, they were only one of several regional labourers' unions. The Warwickshire union, led by Joseph Arch, a hedgecutter and Primitive Methodist preacher, drew other unions into its orbit and emerged as the largest single union. The NALU never achieved a monopoly position as the labourers' representative: other unions – including the Lincolnshire League – steadfastly maintained their independence from Arch's union. The development of urban trades unionism also provided a framework of support for their rural brethren, not least in the collections made on behalf of striking farm labourers which sustained the strikes of 1874. Moreover, aspects of change in the countryside were also tending to radicalise the labourer. There was a greater access to the outside world through the circulation of cheap newspapers; and a greater ease of travel. Labourers may also have been unsettled by the knowledge that higher wages and greater status could be secured through migration or emigration abroad. One of the roles of the first generation of unions was assisting migration and emigration both to allow its members to secure a higher standard of living but also to place rural employers under pressure by encouraging rural depopulation. Arch toured Ontario in late 1873 at the invitation of the Ontario government to assess the prospects for employment; and when he spoke at Dorchester and Birmingham in December of that year, it was in the company of Colonel Denison, the 'Emigration Representative of the Government of Ontario'.[3]

The question of what the Union achieved during its sudden efflorescence has been the subject of much debate amongst both contemporaries and historians. Some have been dismissive of the its achievement, arguing that wages would have edged upwards in the 1870s even without union action. The union claimed that it had secured substantial increases of (even) 3*s.* or 4*s.* a week. The most recent analysis gives it credit for raising wages in the short term, but only by a very small amount – a few per cent – overall.[4] The importance of these years may lie in the longer term as part of the labourers' – and the farmers' – political education.

Dorset was the county of the Tolpuddle Martyrs: amongst those who made early contact with Arch were men from the county. It would not be thought of as a county which contributed a great deal to the Revolt of the Field. In a list of the numbers of men being supported by the Union in June 1874, the number 'on funds' was 1,963 in Suffolk, 339 in Essex, 376 in Cambridgeshire, smaller numbers in other eastern counties, but a mere 23 in Dorset. Other than 10 in Gloucestershire, these were the only people in a west of England county in receipt of strike pay from NALU.[5] Their importance was more enduring than their numbers might suggest. When some of them were evicted from cottages in Milborne St Andrew in June 1874, the Union's local organiser arranged for a photographer to be present. The resulting pictures

[3] *The Times*, 19 Dec. 1873.

[4] G. R. Boyer and T. J. Hatton, 'Did Joseph Arch raise agricultural wages? Rural trades unions and the labour market in late nineteenth-century England', *EcHR* 47 (1994), pp. 310–44.

[5] *The Times*, 15 June 1874.

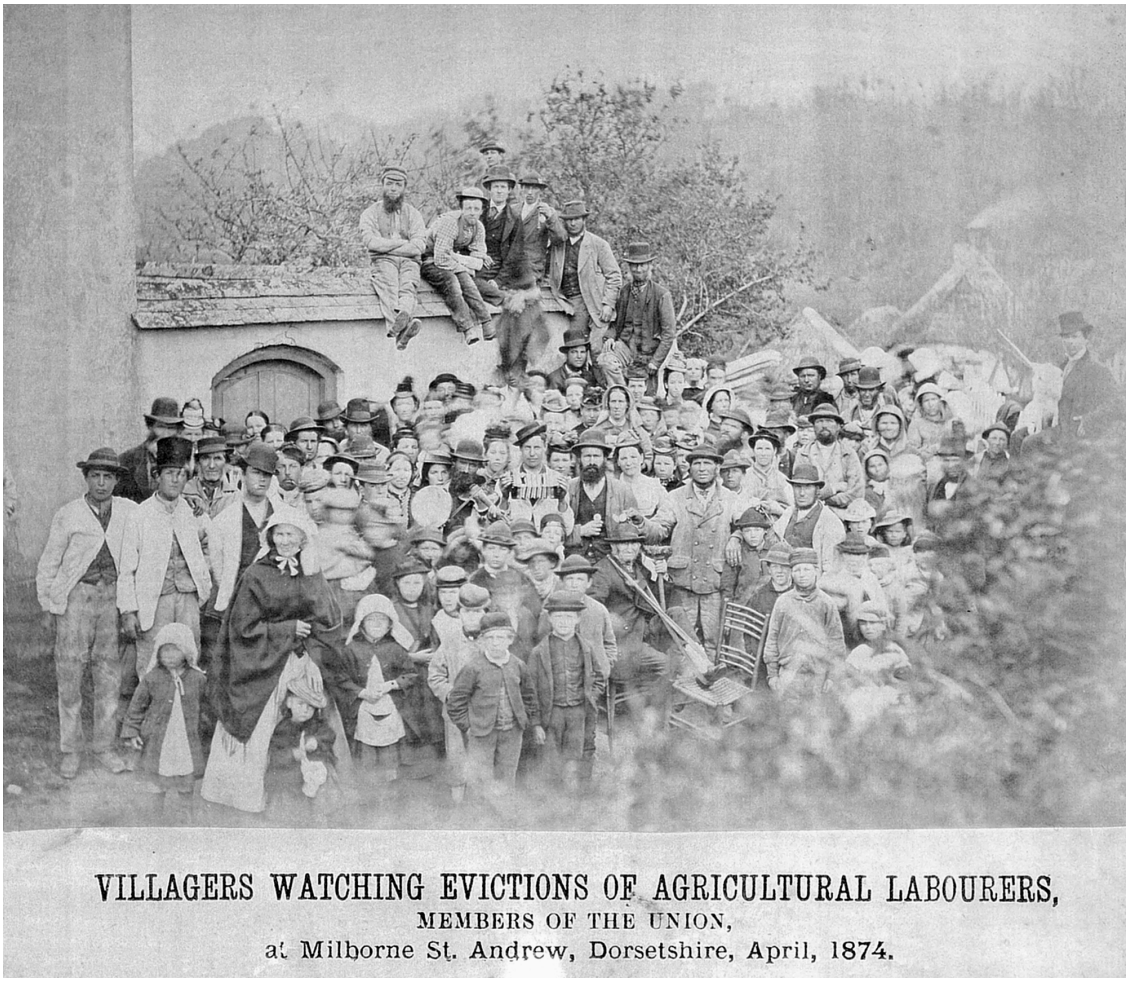


FIGURE 1. The crowd watching the evictions at Milborne St Andrew, April 1874, with the original printed caption. There are at least 35 men, 31 women and 16 children present. Courtesy Dorset County Museum.

circulated widely within the county and acquired an iconic standing (Figures 1, 5 and 6). They have also been reproduced widely in modern works. In this paper, our purpose is to explore the agitation for higher wages and a shorter working week in Dorset in 1872–4, explaining the circumstances in which these photographs were taken.

I

Dorset labourers' wages were notoriously low from at least the 1790s, and these low wages were at least part of the cause for the 'Captain Swing' riots of 1830. Falling wages were the spur for the Dorsetshire Labourers (the Tolpuddle Martyrs) to set up a tiny trades union in 1834. There were several Chartist meetings in Dorset in 1838 (as there were all over the country), and the speakers (unsuccessfully) encouraged labourers to join a union and improve their wages.

The state of the Dorset labourers was summarised by Tufnell in a report of 1844. 'In a great part of this district wages are so low, that they cannot fall, and the distress of the county does not affect the labouring classes. Their *normal* state is one of the deepest privation, to lower which should be to depopulate the land'.[6]

There are two descriptions of wages in the county from the 1860s. The 1860–1 national return shows Dorset second to bottom in the country with a weekly wage of 9*s.* 5*d.* The 1867 royal commission report found it difficult to calculate how much the Dorsetshire labourers earnt, although the commissioner, Stanhope, stated that the wages 'are less, and present a greater variety, than in any county visited by me' because of payments in kind. He found that an ordinary labourer usually earnt 8*s.* with a cottage, or 9*s.* if paying rent, with extra money at harvest and some potato ground. Stanhope though 1*s.* a week rent low, but 'the cottages of this county are more ruinous and contain worse accommodation' than any other county with which he was familiar except Shropshire. Godolphin Osborne, the reformer who knew the county well, considered that taking into account all perquisites, an average wage throughout the year was 11*s.* a week.[7] The low wages of Dorset agricultural labourers suggest that they needed trades unions, but there was little unionism in Dorset before 1872.

II

Joseph Arch's National Union of Agricultural Labourers was founded in May 1872, the Warwickshire Agricultural Labourer's Union having been formally established on 29 March. Only a few weeks later it was stated at a meeting of labourers at Blandford that there were already three or four hundred union members in Dorset.[8] In June at Winterborne Kingston (just east of Milborne St Andrew) a labourers' meeting was chaired by Alfred Martin, the leader of the strike at Milborne.[9] This was the stormiest of meetings. A 'great uproar prevailed throughout the meeting occasioned by a numerous party of farmers, some of them carrying formidable looking walking sticks, which were continually flourished over some of the mens' heads, but no blows were struck'. Instead of a labourers' meeting, it turned into a bitter dialogue between the farmers and labourers, reported verbatim by the newspaper:

> A farmer, 'The labourers' wives wear as fine bonnets here as the farmers' wives do.' (A voice: 'If they do it is by sitting up day and night gloving; they do not get it out of the farmers: they do not get old clothes or parish coals.') Mr Besant [farmer of Milborne St Andrew] said 'The labourers do very well with what they have got.' A labourer replied, 'We do not; I have thrashed in your barn with only turnip greens for my dinner.' Mr. Besant replied, 'I know you are a good-for-nothing fellow.' A farmer said 'It is enough to make a farmer's hair stand on his head to hear what you men say; we can't get enough out of the land to pay such wages.

[6] Jo Draper, 'The 1830s "Captain Swing" riots in Dorset – an eyewitness account', *Proc. Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Soc.* 124 (2002), pp. 21–34; id., 'William Barnes and "The Unioners" in Dorset', *Southern Hist.* 22 (2000), pp. 207–21; E. C. Tufnell, 'Report on the state of labourers in Dorset', BL, Add. Ms 40,587, fo. 162.

[7] Stanhope, *Report*, pp. 3–6; Peter Dewey, 'Farm Labour', in E. J. T. Collins (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, VII (i) (2000), pp. 830–1.

[8] *Weymouth Telegram* (hereafter *WT*), 15 June 1872.

[9] *WT*, 22 June 1872.

> If we give the money instead of perquisites, they will steal what they get as perquisites now.' A voice replied, 'If you pay them they will not want to steal.' Mr. Allington [union rep] said, 'I have noticed you gentlemen farmers ride better horses than the owners of the land, and I also know that when a farm is to let there are plenty of farmers after it, and yet they say they can get nothing out of it. If they do with less luxuries they could give better wages.' A farmer replied, 'I have no luxuries whatever – I have only bread and bacon – I never have butcher's meat – I give my men as good as 15s. a week.' Mr Allington asked the meeting if that statement was true. Many voices replied 'it is not true.' A labourer said 'I have worked for days with nothing but bread.' A woman said 'Her son had worked for the farmers till he was nineteen years of age, and then he only received 4*s.* a week.' Mr. Besant said 'That was more than he was worth.' The mother, 'How was it then that his next master at Bournemouth gave him 16*s.*' A farmer said 'It is written in scripture that thy bread shall be given thee and thy water shall be sure.' Mr. Allington replied 'It is true the Lord has promised it, and he has sent plenty, but you farmers withhold it from the poor, and the Lord will judge the oppressors of the poor.' At the close of the meeting one man was paid off on the spot for joining the union, the man's son also receiving his wages. The farmers departed amid a perfect storm of hooting and hissing. The deputation was afterwards drawn by the men, in the waggon that served as a platform, in triumph through the village, and thus terminated one of the most stormy meetings it is possible to imagine.

In the same issue the *Telegram* reported the Blandford branch of the Labourers' Union resolving 'to carry on the movement quietly, and in the most respectful way to employers; to ask for 12*s.* a week with cottage and garden for men residing in the villages and 15*s.* per week for those in town'.[10]

The next week it was reported that some farmers in Winterborne Kingston had agreed to a rise in wages. A mass meeting of labourers at Fordington near Dorchester were told of the Whitchurch labourers who

> had acted very honourably and creditably. They handed in their memorial for 12*s.* a week and perquisites or 15*s.* a week without perquisites. One gentleman said he would not give it, and they went home. They were sent for in about three-quarters of an hour, and the master said he would give it to them, but not to one man who had been rather prominent; but, said the man, 'If you don't give it him, master, you won't to us'.

The farmer gave in.[11] In July the *Telegram* reported rises in wages being given in Frampton and Cerne Abbas (a compromise at 2*s.* more rather than the 3*s.* sought) and it seems several other places too.[12] In 1872 the Union, as elsewhere, was not just helping the men to get better wages: they had a deliberate policy of assisting men to move away from Dorset. This was intended to have a double benefit: the men got better wages or prospects, and a shortage of labour in Dorset served to maintain wages. Men were leaving for the North of England where agricultural wages were higher, from at least June 1872, when thirty left Blandford for the Manchester area. The

[10] *WT*, 22 June 1872.

[11] *WT*, 29 June, 6 July 1872. Probably Winterborne Whitchurch between Milborne and Winterborne Kingston is meant.

[12] *WT*, 13 July, 20 July 1872.

Union also helped men to emigrate to Canada, or less successfully to Brazil. Many letters from emigrants were published in the newspapers during the 1872–4 dispute, with the farmers and landowners quoting those from unhappy emigrants, the Union those from satisfied ones. By January 1874 the Union estimated that between seven and eight hundred labourers had left the county with its assistance.[13]

By mid-July 1872 the Union had 2,000 members in Dorset. Joseph Arch himself spoke at a meeting on Fordington Green on 17 July.[14] Thomas Hardy heard Arch speak in Dorset on one of his visits, possibly this one, and thought 'there was a remarkable moderation his tone, and an exhortation to contentment with reasonable amelioration, which to an impartial auditor, went a long way in the argument. His views showed him to be rather the social evolutionist … than the anarchic irreconcilable'. 'Nobody who saw and heard Mr Arch in his early tours through Dorsetshire will ever forget him and the influence his presence exercised over the crowds he drew … It was impossible to hear and observe [him] for more than a few minutes without perceiving that he was a humorist – moreover, a man by no means carried away by an idea beyond the bounds of common sense'.[15]

In August the conflict became more bitter. At the close of a Union meeting at Briantspuddle 'a collection was made on behalf of three families whom the steward of H. Frampton, Esq. had turned out of doors, and whose things were still on the side of the road'. The Union was hoping to take legal action. The 'cruel evictions at Affpuddle and Moreton' were referred to at a meeting in Fordington in September, 'those who had sanctioned them were not Christians, they had not the hearts of men'.[16]

Relationships between farmers and men remained difficult during the harvest of 1872. In 1873 the *Telegram* reported of autumn 1872 in the north of the county:

> JOHN: What, beant us gwain to ha' neer a harvest whoam t'year measter.
> MASTER: No, John, harvest homes were meant as a thankoffering from the master to the man for having put his best foot foremost in a trying time, but harvest homes, and strikes, and unkindness from man to master is hardly fit to meet with a harvest feast.
> JOHN: Well, measter, man and bwoy I ha' worked on this farm for fifty year, but nover knowed us go wi'out a harvest whoam before.
> MASTER: Aye, John, and I have known your father before you, and never heard of Unions, and strikes, and countrymen being told by lazy Cockney fellows that they *must leave off work in the midst of harvest before this year.*
>
> This was part of a conversation upon the interruption in the harmonies of farm life, and something very similar must have occurred at Bradford [Abbas] last year, as we missed the usual invitation to our friend's harvest festival. The truth is that the talk of strikes had made matters uncomfortable. Some men had refused to tie up wheat after a machine, and as matters did not otherwise promise well for harmony, our friend, Professor Buckman, reluctantly declined to hold the usual feast. We are, however, glad to know that this year the men were

[13] *WT*, 5 June 1872, 23 Jan. 1874.
[14] *WT*, 20 July 1872.
[15] Thomas Hardy, 'The Dorsetshire labourer', *Longman's Magazine* 2 (1883), pp. 252–69.
[16] *WT*, 17 Aug., 21 Sept. 1872.

> regaled with the very best of fare, and heartily welcomed, and as we have heard from one of them, 'both maester and man enjoyed thirselves more than ever I knowed 'em afore' and we understand that the master complimented them all upon the manly and harmonious manner in which they had gone through the harvest, telling them at the same time that if they really meant to be independent, and could exercise a little self-denial to enable them to keep off the parish, and limit their wants to that amount of drink that 'would cheer but not inebriate', he for one would be quite ready to welcome an increase of wages.[17]

In the west of the county, where there seem to have been fewer Union members, the chairman of the Broadwindsor, Burstock and Stoke Abbott Agricultural Society said in late September that he 'trusted the labourers as body would not listen to those stump orators who were going about the county', and the local rector, the Rev. Preb. Malan explained that 'it was designed of God that men should live together in harmony, each keeping to his respective position, with obedience and diligence'. A farmer was even clearer: there were 'prowling about the county a number of agitators with the view of setting the men against their master and breeding general discord where there was content and happiness'.[18]

In November 1872 Mr Collins, schoolmaster at Piddlehinton and author of an anti-Union pamphlet, held a meeting at Winterborne Stickland to tell the labourers about Unions. No discussion was to be allowed and 'Mr Collins spoke for nearly an hour, amidst considerable uproar'. When he finished, the labourers took over and passed a resolution that an Agricultural Labourers' Union was 'a great necessity and calculated to put the labourer in his true and right position'. Not what Mr Collins had intended at all.[19] Later that month the Union claimed 3,000 members in Dorset. The 1871 census listed about 15,000 agricultural labourers in Dorset, so the proportion of Union Members was not high.[20]

In December Robert Fowler of Winterborne Whitchurch, a parish adjacent to Milborne, addressed the Blandford Agricultural Society on the labour problem.[21] Fowler saw himself as a spokesman for farmers within the county, a role which resulted in his standing as an independent candidate against the Conservatives in the Dorset by-election of 1876, the first tenant farmer to stand in the county.[22] This lay in the future. In 1872 Fowler was known to the Union

[17] *WT*, 10 Oct. 1873.

[18] *Bridport News*, 4 Oct. 1872. Malan was vicar of Broadwindsor 1845–85, a scholar and great traveller. see A. N. Malan (ed.), *Soloman Caesar Malan DD. Memorials of his life and writings* (1897).

[19] *WT*, 16 Nov. 1872.

[20] *WT*, 30 Nov. 1873. For the number of labourers, B. Afton and M. Turner, 'Agrarian occupations', in *Agrarian History* VII (ii), p. 1986.

[21] Robert Fowler was born in 1823 and so was aged about 50 at the time of the disputes. He died in 1879 (parish register, brass plaque in Winterborne Whitchurch church).

[22] This was the first parliamentary election in the county with the ballot box rather than public voting. *The Times* referred to Fowler as 'the candidate of the tenant farmers' and reported that the contest was 'virtually between landlords and tenants, Mr Fowler going in strongly for reform in local taxation' (31 Jan. 1876). Fowler objected to the selection of candidates by a cabal and was reported in the *Dorset County Chronicle* as saying that 'These matters had generally been settled for them [the voters]. Two or three of the county gentleman met together and it was arranged between them who should be the representative'. Fowler said that he had been asked to stand 'on the solicitation of a large party of electors in the county' and was reported as saying in a speech that 'The great landowners of the county had two representatives already [in parliament] but a great body of voters in the industrious classes had no one to represent them'. *Dorset County Chronicle*, 13 Jan., 3 Feb. 1876. He was defeated by 3060 votes to 1866.

as one of its most intransigent opponents. At a meeting in Bridport, in mid-Summer, a National Union delegate had reported:

> Mr Fowler, of Whitechurch had been the greatest opponent they had had in Dorsetshire. He made some statistical statements in the papers. The speaker challenged him to prove his statistics, but he had not come forward to do so. His men asked for a rise. He said he would not give it; he would rather sell his crops. The man who bore the paper was to leave. On the Monday they came and asked him again. He said he would not give it, and they went back. The Union told them they would give them 8*s.* a week if they held out, and that was only one shilling less than their wages. He soon sent for them back again, and gave them what they asked. He (the speaker) believed he liked the men better for it. He now knew they were men. They had some power now. The Union was behind them. Unity was strength. Let them do their duty and the Union would elevate them.[23]

In his address, Fowler lambasted those who earned more than 12*s.* a week on the land:

> these men demanded a certain time for breakfast and dinner, and would not work for more than eight hours, and would have a certain amount of wages ... Occasionally in the busy season the employers were obliged to succumb in a measure to the demands, but when that season was past they took the leaders of the movement by the nose and discharged them, got rid of them. He had found that since taking that course he had met with no difficulty at all; his men had gone on very well. He had got rid of the troublesome fellows, and he advised everyone else to do the same ... Let them take by the nose those who usurped their master's places, let them discharge such persons, and turn them from their houses, let people say what they liked on the subject.[24]

Fowler then had 'succumbed' like other employers when the demand for labour was greatest and the need most immediate: but the Union's confidence that they had changed the man had plainly been misplaced, Fowler having later taken the opportunity to rid himself of the union adherents amongst his workforce. Given his hard line against the Union in 1872, and his advice to evict labourers, it is surprising that it was in Milborne, the adjacent parish, that the evictions actually occurred. Besides suggesting that labourers be 'taken by the nose' and evicted from their cottages, Robert Fowler described the amenities of Winterborne Whitchurch:

> In this parish is a church, chapel, boy's school, girl's school, reading room, co-operative store, allotment land, clothing club, friendly society (with over £1,000 invested), a common for the run of horse or cow at low charge, and labour for all willing hands.

The report of Fowler's hard-line speech prompted a succession of letters in the *Telegram*. 'Nunquam Dormio' replied that as Fowler did not remember

> all the advantages enjoyed by the labourers in this village, I beg to say there are also in this village a public house, two grocers' shops, four shoemakers' shops, a large oak-tree in Whatcombe Lane, blacksmith's and carpenter's shops, a wall in front of the reading room, a man

[23] *Bridport News*, 12 July 1872.

[24] *Dorset County Chronicle*, 26 Dec. 1872.

who travels with tea and drapery, a very tall man, a thatcher, and a very short man, who is secretary of the reading room. Surely with all these advantages, the agricultural labourer ought to be contented.[25]

The Union responded angrily to the nose-pulling suggestion, and in the newspaper 'A Union Man' repeated his words viz:

'Let them TAKE BY THE NOSE those who usurped their master's places, AND TURN THEM FROM THEIR HOMES. LET PEOPLE SAY WHAT THEY LIKED on the subject.'

I question the wisdom of the advice; and I would recommend farmers not to attempt pulling the noses of their labourers until Mr. Fowler has made the experiment. Let him begin by pulling the noses of one or two of his own labourers; and if they tamely submit, other farmers may safely adopt the same practice. At all events it would be wiser of Mr Fowler to select a small man for his first experiment.[26]

Mr Snook, the Union official in Winterborne Whitchurch, relisted the advantages of the village, adding

But the writer ought to have stated that *all these advantages are granted through the kindness of T.* [sic] *C. Mansel-Pleydell, Esq.*, and, with the exception of the church, the writer of the letter in no way assists by contribution or otherwise these institutions. I cannot see what this has to do with the labourer's wages. We have also a goodly number of teetotallers in this village; this society is self-supporting, and no doubt is doing a considerable amount of good. In the spring of the year [1872] a branch of the Labourers' Union was formed in this village prior to which the wages were 9*s.* per week with perquisites; this caused a rise of wages during the summer months; but, immediately after the harvest the writer of a letter in your paper discharged six men who had worked on the same farm 143 years; or on an average of nearly 24 years each. The officer of this branch of the Union found they were discharged for no other reason than for joining the union. Being all men of good character, they were supported by the Union for several weeks, and all but two have left the village obtaining situations elsewhere. There is no surplus of labour in this village, as the young men leave and obtain situations in the police or as porters on the railway, &c … Not content with these advantages, farmers want the poor people's cottages as well. I am sorry to say that some of the cottages in this village and others are in a very sad condition. There have been great improvements in the cottages the property of J. C. Mansel-Pleydell, Esq., in this village, as during the last 26 years there have been twenty new cottages built, most of them containing a sitting room, back kitchen, and three bed-rooms, besides other necessary offices, which are let to the labourers at one shilling per week. I think our motto should be the golden rule, to do to others as you would they should do to you. If the landlords had treated their tenants in the same manner as the farmers have the labourers for joining the Union, I am sure they would not have liked it, but would have

[25] *WT*, 10 Jan. 1873, 28 Dec. 1872.

[26] *WT*, 10 Jan. 1873.

> complained more than the poor people who have had to leave at a fortnight for joining the union.[27]

The state of the dispute was clearer early in 1873. The Union held two large meetings on the day of the Candlemas fair at Dorchester, the traditional hiring fair for labourers over a wide area. Two thousand people attended the first meeting of the Union at 11 a. m., and possibly as many at the second at 3 p. m., both on Fordington Green and both addressed by Joseph Arch and others.[28] The newspaper reported that 'wages have gone up from two to four shillings a week, the general run now being 10*s.* to 12*s.* a week with the usual perquisites, viz. House and garden, potato land, furze and from half-a-ton to a ton of coal for fuel-gristing-best at 6*s.* a bushel (now worth 7*s.* 6*d.*), with extra wages in hay and corn harvests, and sundry other smaller benefits ... Disguise the truth however one might wish it, the Labourers' Union has occasioned the rise'.[29]

These meetings were the peak of Union activity in Dorset. We have already seen how a farmer like Fowler was willing to make short term concessions and then sack labourers in the autumn. Some involuntarily found themselves without work and, as Mr Snook reported, left the district to find work elsewhere. 1873 saw a marked reaction to the Union amongst farmers. Both the Union and the farmers were trying to bypass the old hiring fairs and use more modern methods. For the first time *The Weymouth Telegram* and the *Bridport News* both contained large numbers of advertisements for labourers, carters and other agricultural workers. Several notices specified that 'No Unionists need apply'. The farmers were fighting back in other ways, sometimes in ways which offended the public. A newspaper published a letter from a tradesman who had a man working for him 'who was discharged by his master' for saying he had to consult with his fellow farm labourers before agreeing to work late.

> Don't think sir, this is my grievance. Of course it is not. His master had a right to discharge him, and used that right. My complaint is that when the discharged man took other work which was not farmer's work at all, a farmer came and pressed the tradesman for whom he was at work to dismiss him. The tradesman yielded to the pressure and dismissed him. No fault was alleged against him except in connection with the strike, and I heard from the tradesman's own lips that he had no fault to find with the discharged man, and *discharged him only because he was dependent on the farmers for custom, and could not afford to offend them.* I am happy to say I do not know the name of the farmer who insisted on the man's dismissal, for the tradesman would not tell me. He (the tradesman), could not, as an honest man, help telling me why he dismissed him, because I had engaged the dismissed man to do some wood work for me, and therefore I had a right to ask why he was discharged.

The letter writer thought the farmer 'understood that the transaction was not one which would bear the light' and ended 'I hope this will be the last case of man-hunting in East Dorset'.[30]

[27] *WT*, 10 Jan. 1873.
[28] *WT*, 21 Feb. 1873.
[29] *WT*, 21 Feb. 1873.
[30] *WT*, 21 Mar. 1873.

Occasionally the farmers formally combined to oppose the Union:

> THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS
>
> The following agreement has been signed by nearly all the farmers possessing holdings on the Shaftesbury estates: – 'We the undersigned occupiers of land under the Dowager Marchioness of Westminster, feel that it is necessary that we should combine together to protect ourselves against the present organisation of the Agricultural Labourers' Union. We therefore agree with each other that we will not employ any member of the Agricultural Labourers' Union on our farms, and that we will, in the event of a scarcity of non-Union labourers, aid and assist each other during hay-making and harvest, when necessary. In forming this combination we do not wish to refrain from giving proper wages to the labourers, but to protest against combination and dictation promoted by paid agitators. – Dated June 7, 1873'.[31]

Other farmers looked for ways to reduce their dependence on labour and held the prospect of a shift to grazing as a threat over the labourers. Grassing the land 'to follow an example set in Ireland' to 'diminish the quantity of labour required' had been suggested at the Dorchester Farmer's Club in April 1872.[32] Mr G. W. Homer, addressing the Dorchester Agricultural Society in July 1873, suggested that the labourers' agitation was diminishing the amount of work available to them.

> There was not the acreage of turnips sown this year as there had been the last two, because the labourers had put on the screw at hoeing-time; and the consequence was that where he had one application for work the last two years he had had twenty this season – (Hear, hear). He made a point of employing every man who offered himself winter or summer if he could, but this year he had got everything done up as close as he could, and had turned away more than ever he did in his life. The reason was that last season the labourers put on the screw, and tried to reap an illegitimate advantage just at a critical point of the season, and now they had lost days and days work, and he was quite sure the labourers had now had the worst season for extra work they had ever had since they learnt to use the hoe – (applause).[33]

The following year, 'A Looker On' reported: 'The employers, I find, intend to give up the growth of crops, giving much hand labour, such as mangold etc., and lay the thin soils down to grass, so that not more than half the labourers will again be required that hitherto have been employed'. Three of the labourers then on strike saw advantage in this. 'About grassin down the land, that't a wuld tale, and the sooner that's done the better, because then we think when it do come to be known that they be stopping to grow food for the people, Government will take it away and we labourers have it'.[34]

[31] *WT*, 20 June 1873.
[32] *The Times*, 15 Apr. 1872
[33] *WT*, 28 Aug. 1873.
[34] *WT*, 8 May, 15 May 1874.

There was also propaganda. The *Weymouth Telegram* published an anti-Union poem which purported to be by a labourer:

TRADES UNIONS

I once thought the Union a very good plan,
And paid in my twopence a week like a man;
But I've thought better of it, and altered my mind,
For to live in such bondage I don't feel inclined.

"You must'nt do this" and "you're bound to do that",
A plain honest man knows not what to be at:
The delegate tells us it's all for the best,
And so 'tis for him, for he feathers *his* nest.

"Never work over-time", no matter for why –
House-falling – Crops harming – Deficient supply –
Let them rot! – let it fall! – but go home from your work,
A Unionist's duty is … *Duty to shirk*

…

Well, I'm tired, and sick on't, and here is my mind,
Since to work is the lot of the bulk of mankind;
Let's rise a fresh Union that won't disunite,
And FREEDOM OF LABOUR we'll claim as our right.

Let rich men and poor men be brothers together,
And keep up their friendship through fair and foul weather;
This Union is playing a dangerous game,
For the *interests of masters and men are the same.*

and so on.[35] Farmers did not have the monopoly of unfair behaviour. In July two labourers of Compton Abbas, 'members of the Agricultural Union', were arrested for 'maliciously damaging two scythes', the property of two non-union labourers. One of them was additionally charged with setting fire to a stack of faggots. Firing ricks or faggots was traditional revenge, and it was occasionally suggested during the 1872–4 dispute that Unionists were revenging themselves on farmers by arson.[36]

[35] *WT*, 23 July 1873 (about half the poem is reproduced here with four verses omitted after the third verse and three more at the end).

[36] *WT*, 18 July 1873. c.f. a report from the autumn. 'Mr Snook of Whitchurch … denounced, with emphasis, the "cruel slander" that the union had encouraged their members to set fire to ricks – it was "a foul lie", and if any such members could be found in the Union let them be pointed out, and their names should no longer disgrace the books. It was not by foul play they intended to push their cause' (*WT*, 21 Sept. 1872). Joseph Arch himself joked at a large meeting in Dorchester in December 1873, 'He had even been called the "Arch-Apostle of Arson" though he had always inculcated moderation'. *The Times*, 19 Dec. 1873.

Little is reported over the autumn and winter of 1873. The twenty-fifth annual meeting of the Wareham and Purbeck Labourers' Friend Society (dedicated to providing labourers with allotments, prizes for long service and the like) gave the farmers and landowners a chance to debate the labour problem. A farmer

> was disposed to attribute it in some degree to the educational policy of the present Government. He thought the education now given to the labourers had a good deal to do with the dissatisfaction evinced. He thought the labourers were now-a-days educated beyond the sphere of life in which Providence had placed them; and that educating a man for a certain station without giving him the means to support it was doing harm instead of good.

Surprisingly, this seems to be the first time that education was blamed. Another farmer could not see there was a problem:

> He believed himself, in spite of much that had been written to the contrary, that there had been no more contented person than the Dorset labourer; and he (Mr. Fyler) was not disposed to think that he was much worse off than his neighbours. He did not mean to say that he got so many shillings a week as some others, but with fuel, potatoe ground, gristing, cottage, &c, his pay was made fully equal to that of neighbouring counties. But unfortunately there had been an invasion of the county by a band of marauders, filibusters, or 'public speakers', who had held open-air meetings and told the labourers they had devoted their lives to their service, thought of nothing else by day, and dreamt of nothing else by night, and they found the Dorset labourers were a race of slaves, but if they would only follow their advice, and join the Union, they would be altogether in a different and better position. It was quite natural to expect that a certain number of un-educated men, and particularly those not the most competent as labourers, would be taken by such talk; but he believed many had now bitterly repented.

Mr Weld, a large landowner said:

> It was very disgraceful to have demagogues coming through the county to sow discord amongst them. They had been not far from Lulworth, being sent for by one or two of the parishioners. They came and used most improper and impertinent language; and it was disgraceful and totally false in all respects. He (Mr Weld) asked the man what he called himself, and he said 'a public speaker!' – (laughter) – which was quite a new trade to him, and one which he had never heard before. It seemed to be his duty to go about making speeches, and endeavour to stir up the people to desert their employers. He hoped they would find they were not responded to in the way they expected.

This lack of respect from the lower orders was often mentioned. The President of the society, another farmer said:

> It was perfectly natural for the labourer like anybody else to be anxious to improve his position; but then there were two ways of doing a thing. Suppose a labourer in the service of Mr. Jones at 10*s.* a week, hears that his neighbour in the employ of Mr. Brown gets 12*s.* It is perfectly natural that Jones's man should like to have as much as his neighbour, and if he went to his master in a civil and respectful manner, telling him everything was up, he had a wife

> and family to support, and should be glad if he would give him the increase, probably if he were a good servant it would be acceded to; but, if he went in a bumptious manner, when the corn was cut, and demanded a rise or he would throw up his work at once, he did not think Mr. Jones or anybody else could be expected to do much for such a man.

It was not what the labourers wanted which was the problem, but the nasty way they were asking for it.[37]

J. Floyer, MP for Dorset, addressing the Dorchester Farmers' Club in April 1874, talked about the state of agriculture, and with regard to the Unions, was also sympathetic to the labourers' predicament.

> We must not be too hard on the labourer; men come to him and say 'You ought to have a piece of land, £1 a week and so on', and a man would hardly be flesh and blood when told instead of 15*s.* he ought to have £1 a week if he did not say 'I should like the £1 better'. No one can wonder at that. You may say they ought not to believe such men, but they come down here, and perhaps they have the gift of talking, and if the labourers are led astray and induced to enter the Unions you must not be much surprised.[38]

But even as he addressed the Dorchester farmers, a new wave of strikes had begun. In March 1874 'Twenty agricultural labourers are now on strike at Compton Abbas and Fonthill Magna. They want, it is said, 15*s.* or 16*s.* a week, with proportionate rates for piece work. The Union leaders countenance this demand, so that it is not improbable there will be strikes in other villages in a few weeks'.[39] Perhaps in the light of their experience of 1872, farmers were now prepared to meet Union demands with a hard line: conversely the Union, operating from a position of weakness, was looking to secure a propaganda coup. This focuses our attention on events at Milborne St Andrew.

III

Dorset was still a county of large landowners. Nine people owned more than 10,000 acres in Dorset in 1873, and another 13 owned between five and ten thousand acres. J. C. Mansel-Pleydell, the main landowner in Milborne St Andrew, belonged to the latter category, owning 8,669 acres.[40] John Clavell Mansel-Pleydell (1817–1902) was born a Mansel and inherited Smedmore in south Dorset. He added Pleydell to his name on his marriage to the Pleydell heiress of the lands around Milborne. He took a degree at Cambridge and then read for the Bar. Mansel-Pleydell was founding President of the Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club in 1875, and remained President to his death in 1902, giving annual Presidential addresses which summarised advances in every science over the previous year. The Society's journal, describing a presentation to him in 1895 states 'In Dorset we all know him as an active magistrate, as a kindly neighbour, as a good landlord, as a thorough, sterling Englishman, and in a word, as a jolly good fellow all round'. His obituary in the same journal states 'it is impossible to give an

[37] *WT*, 31 Oct. 1873.
[38] *WT*, 17 Apr. 1874.
[39] *WT*, 20 Mar. 1874.
[40] J. P. Dodd, 'Dorset Agriculture, 1800–1854', *Proc. Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Soc.*, 102 (1980), pp. 7–13.

account of a life of such varied interests'. Mansel-Pleydell published extensively on the geology and flora of Dorset, wrote the first proper flora of the county; a book on its birds and another on the molluscs.[41] Mansel-Pleydell did not himself farm at Milborne St Andrew: his lands were let to farmers, as was customary. In 1872 he lived at Longthorns on the boundary with Winterborne Whitchurch (to the north east) and acted very much as the squire of both parishes.

Milborne St Andrew lies on the broad swathe of chalk which runs right across Dorset. By 1872 this large village had lost its weekly market, but it still had a 'cattle, sheep and cheese fair' held on 30 November each year.[42] The parish, which consisted of Milborne St Andrew and Milborne Stileham, was populous with 601 inhabitants in 1871 and 567 in 1881. Photographs from this era show a mixture of substantial brick houses and much smaller and meaner thatched cottages of the sort which, as we shall see, drew adverse criticism in the press (Figures 2–4). The census shows that the major employment category for men was that of agricultural labourer: over a third of males in the village in 1871 were given that occupational designation (Table 1). The 1867 Royal Commission into the employment of women and children in agriculture noted changes throughout the central area of Dorset.

> ... the chalk range of hills stretching through it from east to west has been to a great extent brought into cultivation in recent years, is occupied in large farms, and, though considerable effort has been made, the labourer is in some cases living at a long distance from his work. Yearly hiring, and the system of letting the cottages with the farm are common, one result of which has been the mode of hiring whole families.[43]

The 1871 census also shows the pattern of farms in Milborne St Andrew. Joseph Fowler farmed a huge 960 acres, employing 29 men and boys. William Besant farmed 414 acres and had 14 men, three boys and two women. These are the only two farms of any size: three more farmers are listed, one with no acreage given (George Groves) and no employees, one with 36 acres and no employees and one with 42 acres and employing two men and a boy. At Milborne Stileham, there was a single farmer, John Standfield, with 430 acres, employing 17 men and 3 boys, and one farm bailiff. Joseph Fowler employed fewer men per acre (even adding in the son listed at the census) but this may be because more of his acreage was down to grass. He was still, by far, the largest employer in the parish. Fowler had three adult sons in his employment. As 'A Looker On' wrote in the *Weymouth Telegram*, Fowler 'has three able and willing sons, young men who can and now do the work of double the number of ordinary labourers. In this way, I am told, no less than £10 per week is actually saved in the wages account of this one farm'. Quite how saving three labourers' wages of 10–12*s.* a week can be made into £10 a week was never explained. Three of the labourers on strike had a letter in the *Telegram* the following week. 'We think our master penny wise and pound foolish: "Looker-on" says he save £10,

[41] Anon, 'Wimborne meeting', *ibid.*, 16 (1895), pp. xlvii-lii; Morton G. Stuart-Grey, 'In memorium: the late John Clavell Mansel-Pleydell Esq. of Whatcombe', *ibid.*, 23 (1902), pp. lxii-lxxii. An earlier version of this article was entered for the Mansel-Pleydell Essay Competition (founded by the same J. C. Mansel-Pleydell) in 2003, and was rejected as 'too one-sided'.

[42] *Kelly's Directory* (1875 edn), p. 823.

[43] E. Stanhope, 'Report' [on Dorset] in *Second Report of the Commission for the employment of children, young persons and women in agriculture, Appendix, Reports from the Assistant Commissioners* (BPP, 1868–9, XIII), p. 2.

TABLE 1. Milborne St Andrew parish, occupations from the 1871 and 1881 censuses

	1871				*1881*			
	number	*%*	*not born in village*	*%*	*number*	*%*	*not born in village*	*%*
Persons without occupation in the census (including at school)	379	63.1			385	67.9		
Farm labourer (1871)/ agricultural labourer (1881)	64	10.6	11	17.2	64	11.3	26	40.6
Labourer	12	2.0	6	50.0	10	1.8	4	40.0
Carter	11	1.8	7	63.6	10	1.8	6	60.0
Carter's boy (1871); Farm boy (1881)	2	0.3	1	50.0	1	0.2	1	100.0
Shepherd	7	1.2	3	42.9	5	0.9	5	100.0
Dairyman	0	0.0			1	0.2	1	100.0
All other males with occupations	77	12.8	39	50.6	63	11.1	41	65.1
Field worker female	3	0.5	0	0	0	0.	0	0
Dairymaid	0	0.0			2	0.4	2	100.0
All other females with occupations	46	7.6	26	56.5	26	4.6	14	53.8
Total with occupations	222	36.9	93	41.9	182	31.1	100	54.9
TOTAL	601	99.9			567	100.0		

Note: includes Milborne Stileham.

and we say lose £20 ... We three whose names is under this, seeing it said that our late employer has three sons who can do as much as six of we, do challenge these three sons to do any agriculture work for any amount they like to name'. This does not seem to have been taken up. 'One of those on Strike' retorted in the same issue, 'I have only to say if he calls saving being obliged to plough in the weeds in his fields, because he has not sufficient hands to clean the land, I am inclined to think that the extra labour which will result in cleaning the crops, will sadly diminish the so-called savings'.[44]

Robert Fowler of Winterborne Whitchurch, who we met earlier addressing the Blandford Agricultural Society, farmed on an even larger scale. The 1871 census gives him as 'Landowner (Farmer) of 750 acres and half of 1100 acres employing 27 men and 4 women and 18 boys and half of 21 men, seven women and five boys. Maltster'. Overall then, he employed sixty five people. Dunbabin has suggested that the Union was stronger where farms were large, and that certainly holds true for this area.[45]

[44] *WT*, 8 May, 14 May 1874.

[45] J. P. D. Dunbabin, 'The incidence of organisation of agricultural trades unionism in the 1870s', *AgHR* 16 (1968), pp. 124–5.

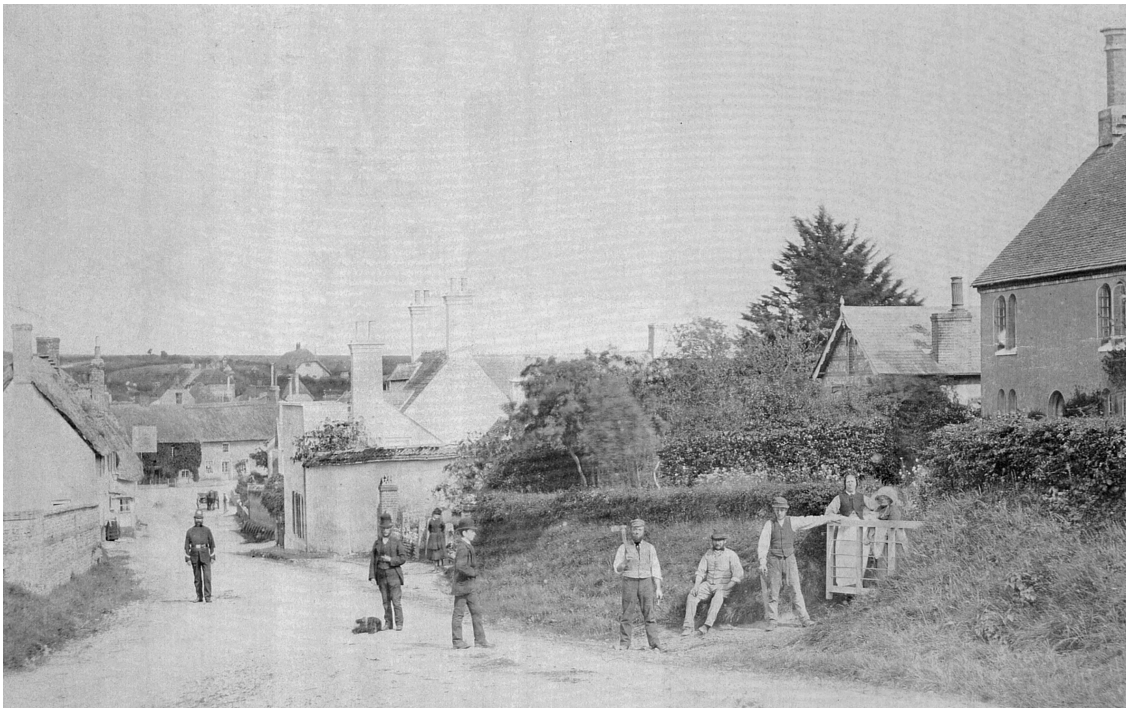


FIGURE 2. The main road through Milborne St Andrew photographed in the 1870s by Pouncey of Dorchester, perhaps because of interest in the village after the lock-out. Courtesy Dorset County Museum.

The disputes seem to have followed the same pattern in Milborne St Andrew and the adjoining Winterborne Whitchurch. The first strike took place in May, June and July 1872. A rise was conceded but in the autumn of 1872 many men were sacked and left their villages. A second strike with inconclusive results took place in March 1873. A third strike, seeking a three shilling rise, was launched in April 1874 and this resulted in lockouts and evictions. In May 1872, right at the start of the Union, the *Bridport News* reprinted an article from one of 'the London journals' about the Dorsetshire labourers which focused on Piddletown and Milborne St Andrew. The account was not very respectful to Mansel-Pleydell:

> Mansell practises paternal government on a minute scale in the hamlet of Milborne St Andrew. He has introduced most of the improvements eulogised by Mr. Disraeli, with the exception of model cottages, which are still wanting. One can understand his feeling a Conservative tenderness for the whitewashed mud-walls and the moss-grown thatch placed there by his ancestors. They are a poetic feature in the landscape over which he presides; and if addicted to inflicting rheumatism or ague on unpoetic tenants, these are physical conditions which a Dorset man expects to present themselves as naturally as his eye teeth. Milborne cottages do occasionally succumb to old age and get pulled down, but no other form of innovation is permitted amongst them. I could not meet with any one able to determine how many years it was since the youngest of them was built. It was much easier to trace a universal consciousness of the great need there was for a dozen or two more. Building will be

an indifferent investment, however, at the current rentals, which average only a shilling a week. Milborne housekeeping is sensibly ameliorated by the squire's leniency as a landlord, but his kindness is flavoured with eccentricity. In respect of garden allotments, the village is under a sumptuary law, which restricts holders to about five perches per head of their families. They have the consolation of paying a peppercorn rental of twopence per perch per annum; but the earth-hunger gnaws at their hearts. They actually covet not only more cottages, but more garden ground. It is a long stride for their imaginations from their own limited cabbage beds to the thousand-acre farms on which they have to labour for the good of other men's pockets. Not that the farmers of the parish are anything else than gentlemen whom it should be a pleasure and an honour to work for. They are, it is true, lukewarm as to the ancient customs of 'gristing' and potatoe ground; but they have dropped readily into the groove of modern philanthropy. They support a very fair school, and some time ago they helped to establish a village reading-room, whereby hangs a tale. In this room Hodge's study of Conservative politics as taught by the local press was tempered with glimpses of less fossilised journals, which had been unwittingly subscribed for by his patrons. Treason penetrated into the camp. Last Saturday night the labourers met in this very reading-room, and concocted a disloyal manifesto against their benevolent employers. It was expressed in the form of an intimation that, after the 27th of April, 'We, the undersigned, would one and all decline to work any longer for less than two shilling per day of nine hours'. An identical note was addressed to each farmer in the parish, bearing the signatures of all the men in his employment. One of the signatories was deputed to deliver the ultimatum, which was done accordingly on Monday morning.

This *coup* is not likely to succeed so well as it deserves, for during the week some of the men grew nervous, and withdrew their names. The masters believe that there is plenty of labour to be purchased at the present price, and some of them argue that it would be bad for the men themselves to increase it. Their inducement to remain in Dorset would be strengthened, and that, according to the farmers, is the root of all the evil. If the surplus labour of the county would have sense enough to transfer itself to another market, the remainder could be better paid in consequence, were they only to get what was saved in poor rates. Under the ruling system of cultivation Dorset needs only machinery and gamekeepers. It is never without men seeking work, and some who have once escaped from it are infatuated enough to return.

This has more detail than the newspapers about the start of the demands in the village: using the reading room provided by the squire for the meeting to formalise their demands is a nice touch. It also shows that the Milborne men were well organised, although some wavered.[46]

Milborne's precocious adherence to the Union is evidenced on a number of occasions. Martin spoke at a large union rally in Somerset in early June 1872 and gave the crowd 'particulars of a strike which occurred a few weeks ago' for 'an advance from 9*s*.–12*s*. per week, and said that when on strike assistance was sent to them by gentlemen in London, Mr Potter forwarding £20'. Two union delegates sent from Warwickshire had already formed four Union

[46] *Bridport News*, 3 May 1872.



FIGURE 3. The eastern end of Milborne St Andrew in the 1870s by Pouncey of Dorchester. The large brick houses (right) contrast with the thatched cottages. Courtesy Dorset County Museum.

branches in the area 'and there were already 230 or 240 members'.[47] Joseph Arch, speaking at a labourers' meeting in Blandford in late July said 'This Union was first started in Warwickshire, and we got application from this county for assistance. It was from Alfred Martin, telling us that some of them at Milborne were on strike, and asking for help, and it was at once proposed to send down £20' and two delegates. The same issue of the newspaper reported that a labourers' meeting had been held that week in Milborne St Andrew, with 3,000 people present. Alfred Martin was quoted late in July as saying 'We began this movement at Milborne'.[48]

At one of the early labourers' meetings at Winterborne Kingston in June 1872 'a vote of thanks was accorded to Mr Standfield of Milborne' and two other farmers 'for the liberal manner they had met the men'. Mr Ricketts, a local union man said 'Mr Standfield had given his men 2*s.* a day, but the men did not feel satisfied with it, as they wanted something to drink in haymaking; they told their master, and he said, "Well, I will give 10*s.* for the hay harvest extras"'. Milborne St Andrew was mentioned at a labourers' meeting in Fordington in early July 1872. 'A poor man at Milborne was receiving 8*s.* a week and asked for a rise. The master said he could not give more, and added "Do you know what you get?" ... and told him he had

[47] *The Times*, 7 June 1872.

[48] *WT*, 27 July, 3 Aug. 1872.

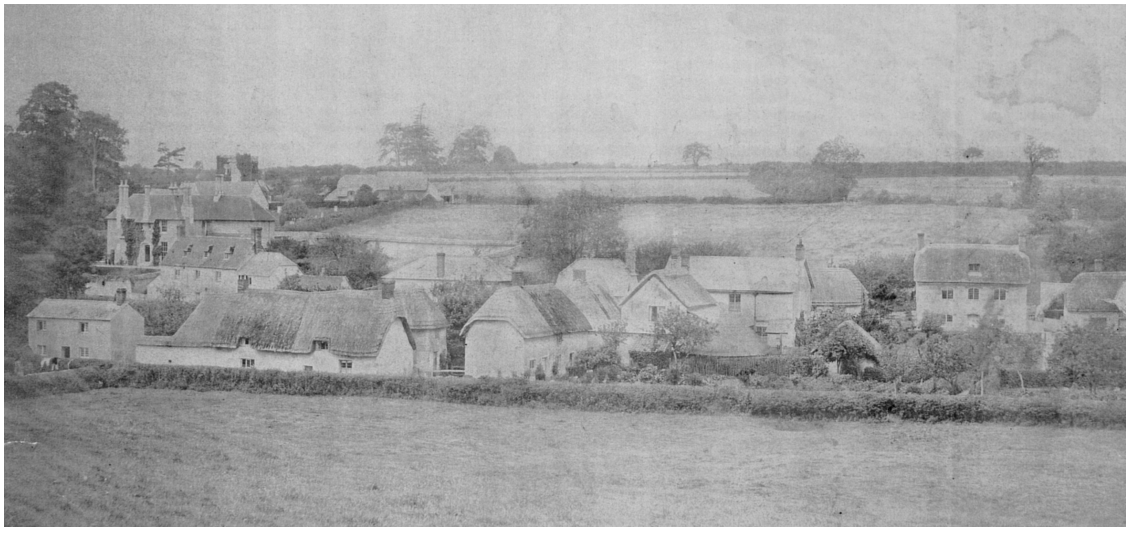


FIGURE 4. Thatched cottages at Milborne St Andrew in the 1870s, by Pouncy of Dorchester. Courtesy Dorset County Museum.

a house worth 2*s.* a week, and gristing worth 6*s.* 6*d.* a bushel for 5*s.*, but the man said often they could not eat it, and had to go to the baker for more'.[49]

The outcome of the dispute at Milborne was referred to by Mr Smith, Union leader for the area in September 1872:

> As an example of the pressure put upon men who had joined the union, Mr Smith said … they would remember that some time ago Mr Robert Fowler, of Milborne St Andrew [*recte* Winterborne Whitchurch], boasted that he gave his men 17*s.* a week. Now, since then, he had come down to 12*s*; and some of the men, because they had joined the union, he had discharged. Some of these men could actually boast of forty and twenty years' service, and because they had followed the example of their masters, in combining together, they were turned adrift.[50]

A labourers' meeting at Blandford two weeks later was told how 'The farmers at Milborne St Andrew, Whitchurch, Kingston etc., are discharging men that are in the Union and are in many cases treating them very unfairly'.[51]

Nothing further describes events at Milborne until late March 1873 when we are told, at the beginning of the inconclusive labour unrest of that year:

> Milborne St Andrew: a branch committee meeting was held here on the 12th instant, when it was proposed, seconded, and carried unanimously, 'that all able-bodied members inform

[49] *WT*, 29 June, 6 July 1872. In this context, gristing probably means unground corn: the labourer would have had to have it ground into flour.

[50] *WT*, 21 Sept. 1872. Robert Fowler was actually a farmer in the adjacent parish of Winterborne Whitchurch – the speaker must have muddled the two parishes – Joseph Fowler was the main farmer at Milborne.

[51] *WT*, 28 Sept. 1872.

their masters that on and after the first week in April they will require a rise in their wages of 2*s.* per week, and older members in proportion; a week's work to consist of fifty-four hours'.[52]

Whether any of these demands was secured is unrecorded, but it seems unlikely.

The start of the 1874 dispute is reported very clearly:

STRIKE OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS AT MILBORNE ST ANDREW

On Saturday, April 4, the labourers employed on the farms of Mr Groves, Mr Standfield, and Mr. Fowler, gave the usual week's notice, that, unless their wages were advanced three shillings per week, they should turn out on the following Saturday. On the Monday morning, Mr. Fowler, on seven of his men going on as usual to work, sent them home again, telling them they would not be wanted any more; most of these were married men, and regular hands. The following Saturday, the demand not being acceded to, on the expiration of the notice the labourers, to the number of between 30 and 40, turned out on strike. The shepherds and carters are still in work, as they receive perquisites in addition to the 12*s.* per week, and another thing they could not leave their places without breaking the terms of their agreement. Out of the 12*s.* per week received by the other labourers they had to pay for house rent, fuel, &c. We are glad to hear that no disturbance has taken place; on the contrary the utmost quietness prevails, the men having unanimously resolved not to enter a public house whilst they are out of work, under a penalty of 6*d.*, the fines, if any, to go towards the funds of the general lock-out in the eastern counties.[53]

The three farmers named covered most of the parish, with only one large farmer named in the 1871 census omitted. On 24 April it was reported that the strike continued, 'both parties showing a strong determination to hold out to the end'.[54]

Most of the farm labourers in the village seem to have been on strike – it was called a general strike, and this was given as the reason why so many people were there to witness the evictions (Figures 1, 6). A letter in the *Weymouth Telegram* on 8 May 1874,[55] states that the strike is 'confined to the south side of the turnpike road' but this was challenged in a letter to the *Weymouth Telegram* the next week signed 'One of those on Strike'. 'One of the farms where the men have struck is not situate on the south side; and, in addition, some of the labourers do not live on the south side'. This does not sound like a complete general strike: his words suggest that some labourers were at work. Another letter of 29 May 1874 states that about thirty men were on strike, but this was after the evictions of late April when some men had gone back to work, and others had left the village.

'Looker On' was told 'by a respectable person' that the strike

it is continued to small limits, that no more men shall be on the Union funds than can be easily paid, but this I was told has only been partially done … [a person who knew about the Union told him], 'You see, sir, it was thought the farmers here would soon give way and pay

[52] *WT*, 28 Mar. 1873.
[53] *WT*, 17 Apr. 1873.
[54] *WT*, 24 Apr. 1873.
[55] Also printed in *Dorset County Chronicle*, 7 May 1874 (where it is the first mention of the strike in that newspaper).

> the demand for 15*s.* per week, and until then the men in union in the adjoining parishes, Bere Regis, Dewlish, Milton Abbas, &c, had agreed to a levy of 6*d.* per week each to keep those on strike, and as soon as Milborne farmers had been driven to give way, the same demand was to be extended to these parishes; this was to last until the busy season of hay-making had arrived, when a further demand of another three shillings a week was to be made'. How far this information is correct I do not know, but it was given me by a respectable person, and I give it you for what it is worth.[56]

At a labourers' meeting in Blandford in late July 1872 Mr Barnett, stated 'I represent the Stickland branch. We are 150 strong, that is including [Winterborne] Houghton'. These parishes are just to the north of Milborne, with Milton Abbas between Stickland and Milborne. This, and a statement in early June of 230 or 240 members in four union branches in the area are the only membership figures discovered.[57]

It is difficult to establish exactly what wages the labourers were receiving, because of the complications of perquisites, cheap rent etc. Cottages are considered below, but other perquisites included extra pay for harvest etc., and sometimes fuel, allotments or even corn for bread. Even at the time, earnings were a matter of dispute in the columns of the *Weymouth Telegram*. The Milborne men were demanding 15*s.* a week, and they stated that they were currently earning 12*s.* a week. The farmers claimed (as did the letter-writer of 8 May) that it was 12*s.* a week plus perquisites. 'One of those on strike' replied on 15 May. 'The men, I say, did not have perquisites, and as to having the advantage of piece work, the only time I can remember was when a job was offered us at such a price as would have rendered it impossible for us to have earned so much as 12*s.* per week'. The report of the start of the strike clearly says the labourers had 12*s.* a week but paid rent etc. out of that. The later letters all seem to accept that the men were receiving 12*s.* a week, and in early June it was reported that Mansel-Pleydell's agent was then offering 13*s.* a week.[58]

The three labourers who were evicted lived in cottages belonging to the farmer, himself a tenant. The labourers paid him rent, although some of the hostile letters to the newspapers claimed they did not. Again, the question of how much rent the labourers paid was disputed and resulted in a debate in the letters columns of the *Telegram*. 'One of those on strike' wrote 'If these families paid no rent, how came it to pass that 1*s.* weekly was kept back from their 12*s.* wages to pay the rent? This was done, and if this is paying no rent, I know not what else to call it'. 'Justice and Common Sense' was clear: the strikers though themselves hardly dealt with because of their evictions. 'They might as well think they ought to receive their wages in full, as that they ought not to be deprived of their cottages. For, are not the cottages, and the use of the cottages, given as part of their weekly wages? And why should they expect to be allowed to retain that which is equal to one or two shillings a week, and yet refused to give anything in return?' (Tempting to answer, because they have paid the rent, but no-one did reply in that way). 'Another Looker On' did reply 'Is it right that a landowner should turn a man out of his home because he refuses to work for 12*s.* a week? I think it would be equally right to say to a farmer

[56] *WT*, 5 June 1874.
[57] *WT*, 13 July 1874; *The Times*, 7 June 1874.
[58] *WT*, 8 June 1874.

if you don't pay your men a pound a week, I will eject you from your farm … the forcing of the men to work for one master is like forcing a farmer to sell his corn to one miller'.[59]

A letter from 'Looker On' added a further complication about cottages. Someone who had been 'advising' and supporting the striking labourers

> owns cottages there [Milborne St Andrew] and at Kingston and Whitchurch. These are of a very poor description with little garden and accommodations; for these a rent of from 7*s.* 6*d.* to 8*s.* 6*d.* per month is charged, quite double that for cottages belonging to land-owners and farmers, proving the owner to be quite awake to commercial principles when his own pocket is concerned.

No cottages were currently being built, as they do not pay unless part of an estate, nor will until 'a system of charging their full value is established. This cannot be less than 5*s.* per week for the cottages required, costing at least £200 each for land and building, to which must be added, insurance, repairs, and rates'.

John Smith, the small landlord concerned, replied in a letter published by the *Weymouth Telegram* the following week:

> I beg to say my cottages are let at £4 4*s.* per year, which amounts to about 1*s.* 7¼*d.* per week, and I can easily find tenants, as men know if they pay their rent they are sure of a home, and are not subject to be ejected if they do not work for a particular farmer, or if they decline to work for low wages. I am not aware that I am the owner of cottages in Whitechurch and Milton; perhaps a 'Looker On' will kindly inform me where they are, as I should be glad to call for the rent. After saying I charge the poor excessive rent, the 'Looker On' says – 'The building of cottages does not pay except as an accommodation for labourers required on the estates, nor will it until a system of charging their full value is established; this cannot be less than 5*s.* per week'. So Mr 'Looker On', you tell me if I charge my tenants 1*s.* 7¼*d.* per week, it is too much: and then you say the full value of a cottage is 5*s.* a week. Pray explain your inconsistency. The fact is the labourer will never have a good and comfortable cottage until he is enabled to pay a higher rent and to enable him to pay a higher rent, he must have increased wages. Why should I let my cottages at less than their value to enable a farmer to pay low wages, assisted by relief from the poor-rates?[60]

These rents all seem on the low side. The Royal Commission of 1868 found 2*s.* a week to be the usual rent although some landowners let them direct at 1*s.* a week, as Mansel-Pleydell did at

[59] *WT*, 15, 29 May, 5 June 1874.

[60] *WT*, 5 June, 12 June 1874. Smith also wrote in support of the union: 'I believe the Labourer's Union to be a necessity, and I will advocate the rights of the labourer fearless of the frowns of the rich and powerful. I only ask that he should be paid a sufficient sum to enable him to have some of the comforts of life in return for his labour; and I seek to injure no man; but when I see farmers, whose immediate ancestors were petty tradesmen, now keeping their carriage and pair of horses, with a livery servant stuck up behind them, and when I know these luxuries have been wrung from the poor by low wages, and when I know low wages mean women and children with aching foodless stomachs, and boots without soles, and that the labourer has nothing to look forward to but the Union workhouse in his old age and to being buried in a parish coffin, I think it is time he demanded the franchise and a sufficient remuneration for his labour'. (*WT*, 12 June 1874).

Milborne St Andrew (see below). Most of the cottages in Milborne were old and this may have been reflected in their rent.[61]

One of the Union's general demands was for land for the labourers, and the Milborne St Andrew men were keen supporters of that. They concluded their letter to the *Telegram*, 'Wish we had [the land], there shoulden be any lack of bread about the loaf'. Difficult syntax, but presumably meaning bigger better loaves. The London newspaper account of 1872 cited previously mentions disputes over the amount of potato ground allotted to labourers in Milborne St Andrew.

Milborne St Andrew was only a tiny part of the strike and lock-out of the Summer of 1874: the main dispute was in East Anglia. Nor were the evictions which took place there the only ones in Dorset. There had been at least two lots of evictions earlier at Affpuddle and Moreton and also at Pallington near Dorchester in 1872 and possibly at Owermoigne,[62] but Milborne St Andrew is remembered because the Union arranged for photographs to be taken of the three evictions (Figs 1, 5 and 6). These were reproduced and distributed by the Union. Joseph Fowler was quick to meet striking labourers with eviction. In late April:

> Two farm labourers who had been in the employ of Mr. Fowler, and who were occupying cottages belonging to him for which they paid rent, were forcibly ejected; and their goods and chattels put into the road. As there is a general strike of labourers in the village there was a good muster of men, women, and children, attracted thither by the 'novel and interesting' spectacle. Many were the exclamations of disapprobation at the way in which the little property the poor people possessed was being thrown out, and many uncomplimentary epithets were applied to those so employed. It may be inferred that a breach of the peace was expected as Superintendent Underwood and the local police were present, but there was no disturbance, the men who were looking on adhering strictly to the instructions from the Union officials to commit no breach of the peace, even though there might be great provocation. The poor people's goods were packed up by the roadside, and two others received notice that they would be evicted in a similar manner on the following morning, but, from some reason or other, only one of those was turned out, making three families in all who have been summarily ejected. One of those who have been ejected is on his way to the north of England, but another it is said became penitent, was forgiven, and would probably return to his master on Monday morning. The third still remains by the roadside, a warning to others of the summary punishment they may expect from their employers if they demand an advance of wages. A rather laughable incident occurred to one of those employed in removing the furniture from one of the labourers' cottages. It appears that an article of property (it cannot,

[61] Stanhope, 'Report', p. 5; *Bridport News*, 15 May 1874 (see above, pp. 57–8).

[62] *WT*, 21 Sept. 1872. *The WT* reported on 17 Aug. 1873 a collection at a labourers' meeting at Briantspuddle 'on behalf of three families, whom the steward of H. Frampton, Esq., had turned out of doors, and whose things were still on the side of the turnpike road'. James Frampton of Frampton, prosecutor of the Tolpuddle Martyrs in 1834 died in 1855: this is his son Henry keep-ing up the tradition. A labourer at Pallington, near Dorchester asked for a rise from 8*s.* in August 1872 and was told by the farmer '"I will see you – first". Two days subsequently the man's goods were bundled out of the cottage, and put by the side of the road, the farmer ordering and witnessing the ejection of the women and children during the heavy rain', *WT*, 17 Aug. 1872.

> strictly speaking, be called furniture), was in the room wrapped in a cloth, which a son of Mr. Fowler took from his hands to carry out, when something dropped through a hole in the bottom and there immediately rose some hundreds of small insects which by their buzzing and the peculiar stinging sensation they caused about the face and head, were soon discovered to be a swarm of bees!! Thinking discretion the better part of valour, the young farmer dropped the hive and beat a hasty retreat from the room, the door of which, fortunately for him, was open, and through which they bystanders observed the bees pouring like smoke! No doubt removing labourers furniture at Milborne will long be remembered by him.[63]

Henry Mayor,[64] the district Union secretary reported in a letter in the same issue of the newspaper:

> A farmer and three sons have been engaged putting the goods out of doors; but in the midst of all the families behaved well. One of the men stood in his doorway singing the Union songs while his goods, wife, and children were turned into the street, force being used with the wife who had a sick baby, and was anxious to keep it under shelter, but was not permitted to do so. Medical advice was obtained to see if the exposure would be likely to prove fatal with the disease the child was suffering from. Another man turned out employed himself in playing some lively tunes on his fiddle in his house. A part of the man's property appears to have been a stock of bees, which was not very easy to eject, but appeared more than a match for those who entered. All possible schemes are used to get the men to return. The employer goes into the cottages and advises the men to return to work at the old rate of wages, and uses … and … language against the leaders of the Union. The men are now moving off to other fields of labour.[65]

The swarm of bees sounds like a plant, and the Union made much of the poor sick child. All the newspapers make it clear that the men had paid their rent. A later letter from Henry Mayor explained the taking of the photographs:

> When I was on my way to witness these scenes, I felt determined to get them shown up to the world, and I, without hesitation, took with me a photographic artist, to get a view of these never-to-be-forgotten acts of oppression, and I am doing all I can to spread them the world over, so that in times to come, as well as the present, these diabolical acts of cruelty, which were practised on the poor labourers and their families, by professing Christians in the year 1874, may not only remain in word to be read in English history, but that the scenes themselves may be handed down, if time should last, in the ages to come.[66]

He succeeded: these photographs are used in every book on the labourers and trades union history.

The Union had a great may of these photographs printed and distributed with a caption as

[63] *WT*, 1 May 1874.

[64] Henry Mayor of Blandford occasionally becomes the Mayor of Blandford as in *The Times*, 27 July 1872.

[65] *WT*, 1 May 1874.

[66] *WT*, 18 June 1874.

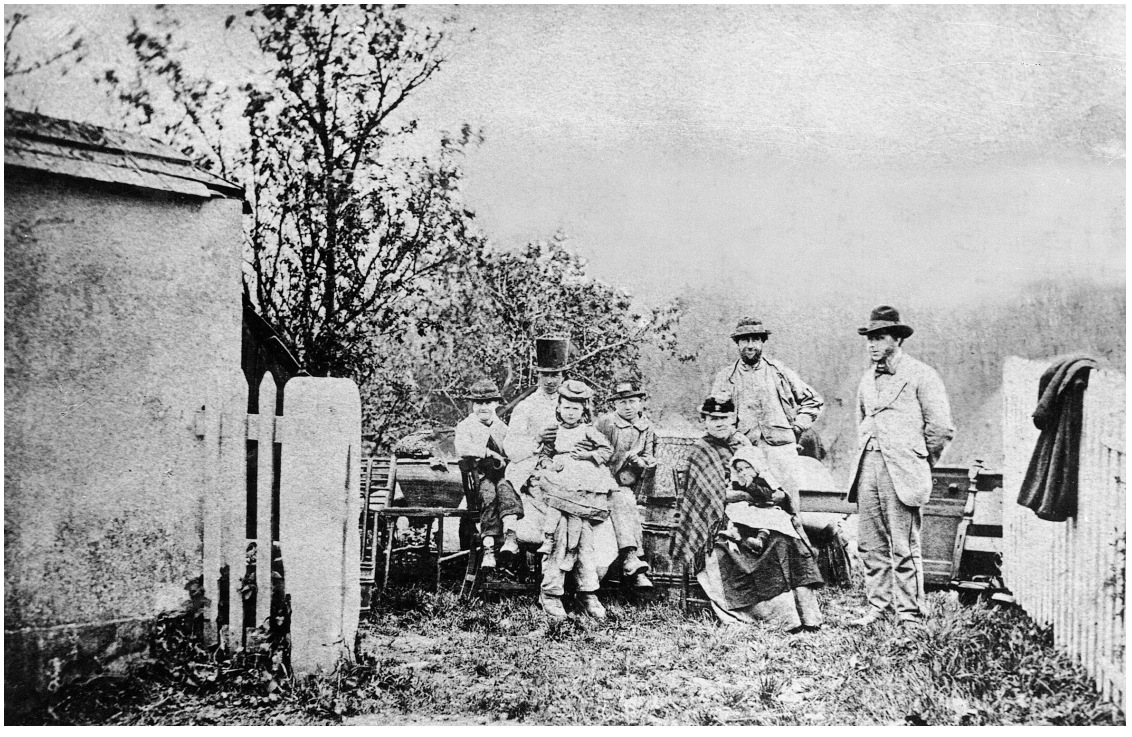


FIGURE 5. The eviction at Milborne St Andrew, April 1874. Two families were evicted; possibly the men on the right are the labourers and the woman one of their wives. The man with the tall hat could be Mr Mayor, the Union official who organised the taking of the photographs. His clothes and (especially) the hat are unlike those of the men in Figure 1. The people are sitting with the furniture from the houses about them. Courtesy Dorset County Museum.

in Figure 1: there must have been a great may of them as quite a few survive. When Groves was writing his history of the agricultural trade unions (published in 1948), he found that

> in many a Dorset cottage the visitor will come across a faded photograph of an eviction of the great lockout: the labourer and his family gathered outside the cottage that was once their home, around them their few pieces of furniture, their shabby ragged bundles of clothing and bedding, a picture or two; their whole world pitched out into the roadway.[67]

The direct method of eviction seems to have been legal: at least the police were present when the Fowlers threw their labourers out of their cottages. Mansel-Pleydell took a more formally legal route. He applied to Blandford County Court in mid-May for permission to eject labourers. Six labourers objected and the *Bridport News* reported that Reuben Sergeant

> with others had been occupiers of cottages at Milborne on Mr Mansel's estate. Several of the cottages were given into the hands of the farmers, but others Mr. Mansel had held in his own hands, charging the occupiers 1*s.* per week rent. The regular notices to quit had been served

[67] Reg Groves, *Sharpen the sickle. The history of the Farm Workers' Union* (1949), p. 74.

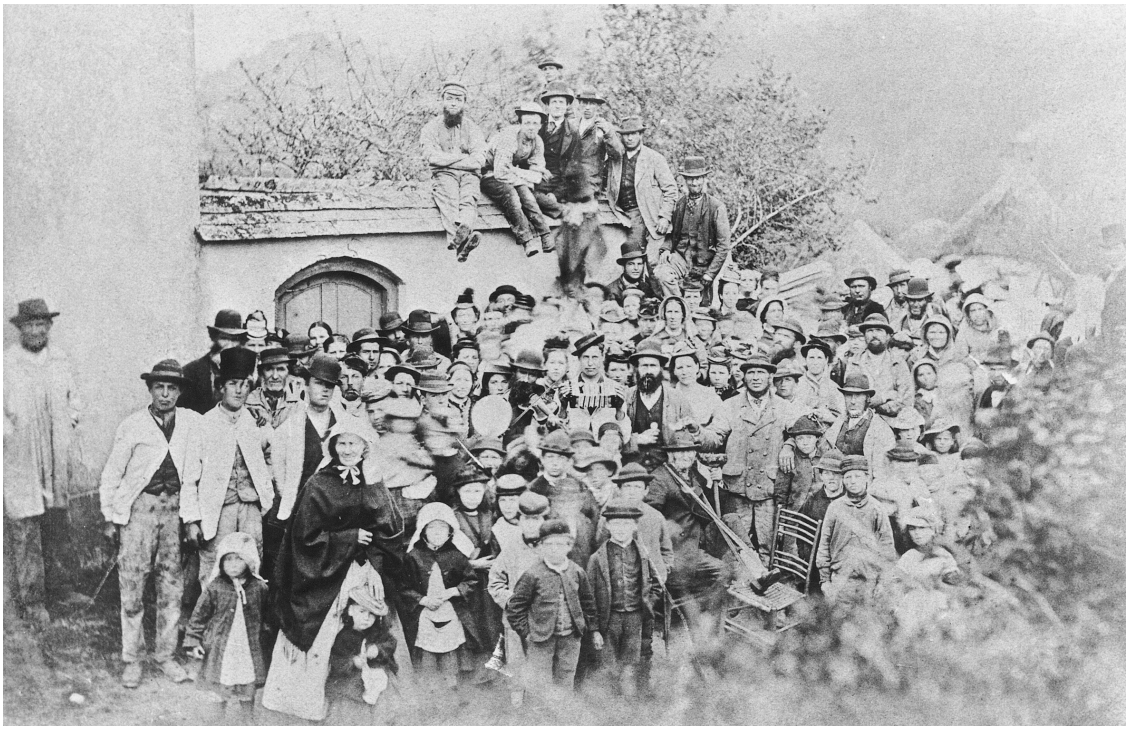


FIGURE 6. A further version of Figure 1, showing an elder man wearing a smock on the left, who has been cropped from the mass-produced version of the picture. Courtesy Dorset County Museum.

on the parties, and everything had been done legally – Defendant said he considered he was entitled to a quarter's notice, as he had paid quarterly, and on being asked if he had his receipts stated that he had left them at home. Counterfoils, however, were produced by Mr. Robert Galton, which showed that the cottages were let from week to week, and Mr. Galton stated that though he had never given notice to any before, he should have given a week's notice. His Honour explained to defendant and his companions that though the rents might have been collected quarterly that did not prove a quarterly letting, but was only done for the sake of convenience. In reply to His Honour, Mr. Atkinson said the men belonged to the Labourers' Union and had struck for higher wages. Defendant said he would go back and work for the farmer if he would pay him what he asked, and seemed to think it very hard that he should be called upon to give up possession. Mr. Atkinson said that as they did not wish to show anything like unkindness or harshness they were willing to give three weeks for the defendant to remove, and this His Honour confirmed, expressing a hope that in the meantime an arrangement would be made between their employer and the men.[68]

Mansel-Pleydell did not evict any of these labourers: possibly the publicity given to the earlier evictions discouraged him, or perhaps he thought the Union was nearly defeated. On 8 June

[68] *Bridport News*, 15 May 1874.

1874 the *Weymouth Telegram* reported that 'the men on strike here [Milborne St Andrew] were visited by the agent of Mr. J. C. Mansel-Pleydell, the owner of the estate, who informed them that if they were willing to work for 13*s.* per week – and the farmers would hire them at that price – they were at liberty to get employment where they could, and should not be ejected from their houses'. This is a complete turn-around from mid-May when Mansel-Pleydell was applying for permission to evict.[69] When they returned to work is not clear. One immediate cost, which some may have felt just, was that on 5 June, Joseph Fowler, forced to thresh a wheat rick with the aid of his sons, his labourers being on strike, had his clothes pulled into the engine. His arm was broken and he suffered severe bruising.[70]

The men evicted are not named in the newspapers, and only eight of the striker's names are known with certainty. They are listed in Table 2. George Chaffey, John Brown and Henry Derrick wrote a letter to the newspaper which started, 'We, the labourers on strike at Milborne St Andrew'. They were challenged by a letter from 'Looker On'. He made enquiries about the man 'one is a tradesman, not a farm labourer at all, "woodman, thatcher etc" renting a little land himself; another a gardener, rabbit trapper etc, working on the farm occasionally; the other not working at all for the person he calls his late master'.[71] This must be Joseph Fowler (see below). Henry Derrick is on the 1871 census for Milborne St Andrew as woodman & thatcher, and the description in the letter in inverted commas is exactly that, suggesting the census had been consulted. John Brown is listed as a Farm Labourer, and George Chaffey is not in the census.

Five more names are known because they are the cottagers summonsed to Blandford County Court to be evicted. John Brown both signed the letter and was summonsed, but Reuben Sergeant, Thomas Stickley, John Randall and James Stickley are new names. All are in the 1871 census as labourers, but James Stickley and Reuben Sergeant lived in Milborne Stileham, the south-eastern part of Milborne St Andrew parish. Reuben Sergeant was the main defendant at court, which seems strange as the only person of that name was only 13 at the 1871 census, and so can only have been sixteen or so in 1874.

Who was leading the 1874 strike is unknown. Alfred Martin is named as the leader of the Milborne St Andrew strike in the Union history:[72] he is not mentioned by the newspapers during the 1874 strike and lock-out. Martin spoke at several labourer's meetings in Dorset in 1872 and at Winterborne Kingston, an adjacent parish in late July 1872, he was reported as saying:

> My fellow working men, stick to union. If you do you may depend it will stick to you. If you do, do not be afraid to go to your masters respectfully, and if he will not give you what you ought to have go somewhere else where you can get it. (Hear, hear.) We began this movement at Milborne, we had no one to direct us, but you have had your eyes open, and you know now how to proceed. (Hear, hear.) How about the pig? I hear that they are going to run for him to-night, but I hope no union man will catch him. (No, no.) I do not think many union men are there. (No, no.) Now, my lads, keep away from drink, it is ten years ago since

[69] *WT*, 8 June 1874.

[70] The report says 'John' but Joseph must be meant. *Bridport News*, 12 June 1874. The accident happened on Friday last, so 5 June. Fowler survived to commit suicide in September 1879 (*Bridport News*, 19 Sept. 1879).

[71] *WT*, 15 May, 5 June 1874.

[72] Groves, *Sharpen the sickle*, p. 61.

TABLE 2. Known union members in Milborne St Andrew, 1872–4

	Signed letter, 15 May 1874	*Summonsed for cottage, 1874*	*Other evidence*	*1871 Census*					*1881 census resident at MSA*
				age	*occupation*	*Place of birth*	*Place of residence*	*children at home*	
John Brown	Y	Y		42	Farm Lab.	MSA	MSA	3	Ag. Lab.
[…] Burt or Butt			Y						
George Chaffey	Y								
Henry Derrick	Y			39	Woodman and thatcher	MSA	MSA	4	Woodman and thatcher
Alfred Martin			Y	49	Farm Lab.	MSA	MS	1	
George Randall		Y		51	Farm Lab.	MSA	MSA	1	Farm Lab.
Reuben Sergent		Y		13	Farm Lab.	MSA	MS		Ag Lab.
James Stickley		Y		39	Farm Lab.	MSA	MS	3	Ag Lab.
James Stickley				66	Farm Lab.	MSA	MS	0	Ag Lab.
Thomas Stickley		Y		55	Farm Lab.	MSA	MSA	2	Ag Lab.

Key: MSA, Milborne St Andrew; MS, Milborne Stileham.
Sources: as text, 1871 census, 1881 census enumerators' books.
Note: The census does not give Milborne Stileham as a birthplace but only the parish of Milborne St Andrew. It is not possible to say with certainty which of the two James Stickleys was evicted.

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> I took the pledge, and I have never regretted it yet. My wife is always sure that I shall bring home my money. You men take my advice and stick to the union. (Hear, hear and cheers).

The pig references are a puzzle – nothing else in the newspapers refers to it.[73] Martin was typical of Union organisers in being teetotal. He does not appear at any of the many meetings reported after late July, and is not mentioned with any of the subsequent disputes: presumably he was amongst those who left the area in the aftermath of the 1872 strikes. He cannot be located in the 1881 census: perhaps he too migrated.

IV

Reports of the dispute peter out in the newspapers, but in August a further letter from 'Nunquam Dormio' summarised the end of the dispute.

> As to the strike at Milborne, the men were out nearly or quite three months, during which time they were paid about one hundred and thirty pounds as relief. Their union pay was not stopped (though probably it would not have continued much longer) as the men went to work of their own accord. The fact is, owing to the favourable season and the increased use of machinery, the farmers were enabled to farm their land in a slovenly manner with the aid of a few old men and boys who did not belong to the Union. That the Union has received a heavy blow cannot be denied, but I cannot see how the farmers can say they have gained a victory. It is probable the Union may recover, and become stronger than before. If the farmers should take advantage of the men by lowering their wages after harvest, the effect will be that many men who now do not belong to the Union will join. What the agricultural labourers required was to be shaken up, and they have been shaken up most effectually. They had had their first great battle with their masters, and they have not been utterly beaten.

The very next letter in the newspaper is from 'A Dorsetshire Labourer' asking for the truth about Canada, as he will emigrate if he can do better there than he does in England.[74]

Robert Fowler, who had first paid more and then opposed the Union, was accused when he was a candidate in the 1876 by-election of having used 'an agent of the old Labourers' Union' as a canvasser.

> He [Fowler] would ask was there anyone in the whole county of Dorset who believed that. It was a disgraceful lie. There was no man who had put his foot firmer on the movement than he had done … they had been the cause of hundred and thousands of labouring men leaving the county, and many of them to suffer starvation and misery … he had always given his men good wages and he did so still: he had not altered them on this demand.[75]

[73] *WT*, 3 Aug. 1872.

[74] *WT*, 7 Aug. 1874.

[75] *Dorset County Chronicle*, 3 Feb. 1876. It was the 'old labourers union' because of splits from the original: there was, by 1876, a 'new' union. Astonishingly though Fowler did have support from a union man at one of his election meetings. John Curgenven, curate of Lyme Regis, wrote to the *Dorset County Chronicle* (27 Jan. 1876) complaining that 'Mr. J. Mitchell, a well known extreme radical and abuser of existing institutions' had addressed

V

In its public face, the Union had something of the quality of a religious revival. During the Milborne evictions 'one of the men [being evicted] stood in his doorway singing Union songs'. About a week afterwards the Union organised a service at the cross roads in Milborne St Andrew, and 'a considerable number of people chiefly of the labouring class of this and the adjoining parishes' gathered to hear a Labourers' Union delegate preach. 'The proceedings were of the most orderly character. The singing of a couple of favourite hymns, accompanied by an harmonium and flute, was heartily joined in by young and old'. The preacher said that Joseph Arch 'had been called of God to the great work in which he is now engaged' and that sometimes Union members were called upon to suffer 'even as those poor families were whose home is under the hedge today'.[76] The Union was also careful to seize the Christian high ground. Joseph Arch was a dissenting preacher, and many of the local union officials shared his background. At a labourers' meeting in Fordington in 1872 a union official is reported as saying 'We have found it desirable to get Christian men and teetotallers as officers'.[77] The 70 delegates drawn from all over England who met at the National Union 'conference' in June 1874 were observed by a reporter from *The Times* who thought that most were agricultural labourers 'and a large proportion of them were local preachers amongst the Primitive Methodists'.[78] The Christian credentials of those who opposed the Union were sometimes questioned: the behaviour of farmers was denounced as unchristian.

The meetings also have the flavour of political meetings – 'A Looker On' complained 'The leaders of their Union hold meetings with music, flags etc., singing Union songs and wearing their colours'. Disconcertingly the Union colour was blue, nowadays the colour associated with Conservatives. At a meeting at Winterborne Kingston in August 1872 some of the labourers were 'wearing rosettes of ribbon, others with the word "Union" in front of their hats'. At the unionised Dorchester Candlemas Fair in February 1873 'many of the lads displayed a bit of blue ribbon in their hats as a token that they were Unionists'.[79] Even the smaller meetings had overtones of elections or celebrations: at Chesilborne in May 1873 'a procession was formed, headed by the Milton Abbas brass band, and some of the men carried garlands'. Five hundred labourers were present.[80]

When the Union portrayed itself as a Christian movement, and drew many of its forms from the church, and especially the nonconformist churches, what was the attitude of the Dorset clergy to these disputes between their parishioners? Many of the local Union officials, and probably many of the members too, were non-conformist teetotallers and regarded the Church of

Fowler's meeting at Lyme, 'accounted for his support of Mr Fowler as being the less of two evils' and attacked tithes. Curgenven was outraged because Fowler 'allowed him to speak and appealed for an hearing for him when he was interrupted'. 'Mr Fowler said that he "called himself a Conservative and Mr Mitchell called himself a Radical, but there was not much difference in their opinions *after all*"' [emphasis in original]. Mitchell must be George Mitchell who started the labourers' union in Somerset in June 1872, an extraordinary supporter for Fowler.

[76] *WT*, 1 May 1874.
[77] *WT*, 21 Sept. 1872
[78] *The Times*, 15 June 1874.
[79] *WT*, 8 May 1874, 3 Aug. 1872, 21 Feb. 1873.
[80] *WT*, 30 May 1873.

England clergy as part of the establishment, supporters of the farmers and landowners. Some clergy certainly preached the gospel of social conservatism.[81] The General Secretary of the Union complained about the Dorset clergy who 'acknowledging the wretched position of the labourer, hold aloof from the question, because, as they say, it would not be right for them to take sides with any party in secular or social questions; and yet how repeatedly do we find them dining, and in company with the employer class'. He was writing about the Blandford Agricultural Society Dinner, as was Henry Mayor, local secretary, who wrote 'I cannot understand parsons being found at public-house dinners, and especially at this time of temperance reformation; I wonder they can face a public-house at all, much more sit down with the "jolly good fellows, so say all of us". The good Book says "Be not fond of wine-bibbers, for wine is a mocker" '.[82]

One of the Union men said that parsons 'rob, impoverish, and insult' their parishioners. This brought C. P. Phinn, Rector of the Crichels into the correspondence columns of the *Telegram* saying 'with all the avowed objects of the Agricultural Labourers' Union I heartily agree. Increase of wage, improved dwellings, security of tenure, possession of a share of land, the franchise – to all these I believe our agricultural labourer have a right ... [and] I recognise in the fullest manner the right of all concerned *to unite* for these objects'. What he could not stand was 'the frantic and sweeping abuse poured out on the clergy'. He thought the Union had 'sectarian jealousy of the parsons as ministers of an Established Church' and this led to the 'rancour displayed against them'. He claimed that the *Labourers' Union Chronicle* 'often chuckles over reports of villages where men and lads were learning never to "pull the brink" or "touch their hats" to their minister'.[83]

Attitudes hardened, and a national Union official at a big labourers' meeting at Fordington in December was reported as saying:

> A clergyman in Dorset a few months ago condemned paid agitators, but he said 'the labourer was worthy of his hire', and the majority of them were men who were the best of their class, and could earn good wages if the Union dropped to-morrow. And what were the clergy but paid agitators? – (laughter). They took the pay and then some went to sleep – (laughter). The clergy were paid by many who did not believe in them or their doctrines, but the Union delegates got their small stipends from the pence of those who approved their work. Not until the landlords and farmers had to pay towards their delegates, would those men be on the level of state-paid parsons – (laughter).[84]

The exception among local clergy was the Rev. C. Kegan Paul, of Sturminster Newton, later the publisher and author. At the Dorchester Candlemas fair meeting Mr J. Cox, national union man said he 'was very sorry the clergy had not rallied round them [the labourers]. Only one he knew had come forward, and that was the Rev. Mr Paul of Sturminster who had assisted them with his might. Such men as he saved the Church of England. It was a noteworthy fact that whenever any measure had been brought forward to benefit the

[81] Above p. 47 for an example.
[82] *WT*, 19 Jan 1873.
[83] *WT*, 13 June 1873.
[84] *WT*, 19 Dec. 1873.

labouring classes, the clergy had opposed it'.[85] Kegan Paul remembered the dispute in his autobiography:

> In 1872, Mr. Arch's movement for a higher rate of wages among the labourers reached Dorset, and he carried his agitation into our neighbourhood with the aid of the Hon. Auberon Herbert.[86] I threw myself into this movement with all my heart. Mr. Herbert and Mr. Arch spent some days with me, during which we visited many large meetings of labourers, and in spite of the opposition of farmers, squires, and clergy we had the satisfaction to know that we raised the rate of wages at least two shillings a week all round. The good that was then done has never been undone; although it is still extremely probable that a large number of comfortable clergy are even less persuaded of the right of the labourer to earn decent wage than they are of the necessity of keeping him from over-indulgence in strong drink, the end of the agitation will probably result in producing a yeoman class, *i.e.* men who own land and cultivate it themselves, for there seems no room for three to share the profits on land, and the middle-man must go.
>
> The squire and the farmers were good souls in their way and after their lights, but they were narrow and bigoted in Tory opinions, and we never really got on well, with my strong views about the rights of the labourer, especially about his right to take his labour to the best market and to improve his condition when he could. The labourers were a decent, pleasant people in many ways, and the children were as a rule particularly engaging, and so were many of the young men. There was a good deal of drunkenness, but not more than usual in country parishes, and on the whole I was lucky in the people. They gave me hearty help in choir, they came well to church, and were always loyal and good to me. My heart will always warm to a Dorset peasant.[87]

VI

In all the thousands of words published in Dorset about the 1872–4 dispute, women hardly figure except as the recipients of the men's wage packets and as mothers. They were lambasted at a meeting in June 1872 by a farmer who said 'The labourers wives wear as fine bonnets here [Winterborne Kingston] as the farmers' wives do' to which a voice replied 'If they do it is by sitting up day and night gloving; they do not get it out of the farmers'.[88]

The 1871 census for Milborne St Andrew lists only three women as field workers, one as a stocking knitter and six as glovers, but women's work was often part-time and so not recorded in the census (Table 1). After mid-century there were fewer women labourers in agriculture. Robert Fowler, speaking to the Blandford Farmer's Club in 1860, said 'hundreds of women have now little to do but tale bearing, chit chat and tittle tattling' because button making had ceased and 'farm labour is become somewhat distasteful to many of them'. He hoped that a glover or stocking maker would set up in the area to give 'the females constant employment, adding to

[85] *WT*, 21 Feb. 1873.

[86] Auberon Herbert, 1838–1906, younger son of the Earl of Carnarvon and at this time Liberal MP for Nottingham. He espoused increasingly radical positions including ones of a republican hue. See Oxford DNB *sub nomine*.

[87] C. Kegan Paul, *Memories* (1899), p. 345.

[88] *WT*, 22 June 1872.

their income and making them more useful members of society'. Clearly by 1871 glovers had taken his hint.[89]

The 1867 Royal Commission report quoted the opinion of Mr H. Fooks, farmer of Winterborne Whitchurch:

> We have more difficulty in getting the women to go. In other villages round many more go. In some cases I know farms where 10 or 11 women are employed ... If I was going to thresh with my steam engine I should go to my carter's wife, and tell her I want her for a day or two. We consider that they are liable for that sort of work. I don't much like women for it, because I have known three or four accidents about here from it.[90]

In February 1873 the *Weymouth Telegram* reported that 'whereas it has been customary to pay women when working on the farm eight pence a day, a shilling is now in many cases given'. So women did benefit from at least the first year of union activity, although at less than half the rate of men – with no perquisites the full man's wage was probably 15*s*., women at six days a week 6*s*.[91]

At the National Union's 'conference' in June 1874 the admission of women as members was discussed. 'It appeared that in many branches they had already been admitted' and one delegate (from Worcester) stated 'We have found that women are the best of men, and that many a woman is worth three men' to the Union. The Dorsetshire delegate (never named) said that in his county they had a female delegate who would talk down any male delegate in existence. Despite this testimony, the conference voted against admitting women to the Union.[92] In fact the Union in Dorset could be anti-women. At a big labourers' meeting in Blandford in October 1872, Mr Wedmore, local union secretary 'denounced the employment of females on farms, and said that they wanted their wives at home to rock the cradle and attend to household affairs (laughter)'. A union official in February 1873 said that one of the local papers reported that 'there were only a lot of women and children' at Union meetings, but this was false. Neither the newspaper or the Unions were valuing women.[93] Universal male suffrage was part of the Union's demand, but no-one sought votes for women.

VII

Was the Union a success? At the meeting of the Blandford Agricultural Society in December 1872, Lord Portman was quoted as saying that labourers had been paying 2 or 3 per cent of their wages 'into Union funds, and he would like to know what benefit he [the labourer] was likely to get from that'.[94] He was answered through the letters column of the *Weymouth Telegram* by the general secretary of the Union. 'The Hon. Mr Portman inquires "what benefit he (the labourer) thinks he's going to get from it (the labour union)". This is a somewhat difficult question I confess. I might, however, say what they have already got. Wherever we have been able to bring the influence of the Union to bear, the men's wages have advanced 1*s*., 2*s*., 3*s*. and 4*s*.

[89] *Dorset County Chronicle*, 5 Apr. 1860.
[90] Stanhope, 'Report ...', p. 17.
[91] *WT*, 21 Feb. 1873.
[92] *The Times*, 15 June 1874.
[93] *WT*, 19 Oct. 1872, 21 Feb. 1873.
[94] *WT*, 26 Dec. 1872.

per week'.[95] A Dorset farmer writing in the *Agricultural Gazette* in March 1874 admitted that wages had risen from 9*s.* to 12*s.*[96]

In that Union activity in Dorset 1872–4 put up the wages of the agricultural labourer by perhaps 2–4*s.* a week, or between 22 per cent and 50 per cent as the wages had been 8–9*s.* a week, it may be considered a success. But the men did not get the 16*s.* they sought, or the limitation on working hours, and for a good number, the strikes and subsequent lockouts were the occasion for their migration from Dorset to employment elsewhere. Their places were doubtless taken by men without Union loyalties. We know little about tensions within the labourers, between those who supported the strike and those who did not, and those who remained and those who took the places of men who left with their families. Nor do we know how long the advances in wages lasted. Nationally, agricultural wages had returned to their pre-1872 levels by the end of the decade.[97]

We may suspect though that it was never glad morning again. Nunquam Dormio recognised this: in a letter to the *Telegram*, he wrote 'One thing is certain as a consequence of the struggle, and that is, that never again will the agricultural labourer be satisfied with his past condition, nor will he ever again become the submissive slave he was in times past'.[98] The labourers had shown the power they could bring to bear on farmers and the latter had not feared to answer with dismissals, lockouts and evictions. The bitterness of the dispute led to suspicion between man and master and this may have been its longest lasting legacy. J. Floyer, MP said in April 1874, just before the Milborne evictions, 'wherever there are strikes and lock-outs they always end in some kind of compromise after both parties have suffered severely ... and then there are the unkindly feelings which must remain after the contest has ceased'.[99] How far the strike radicalised the labourers cannot really be established. A carter from Piddlehinton in June 1874 refused to 'remove some manure from one heap to another' ... His defence was that "it warn't his business to fill putts"' (the two-wheeled tipping carts). He had a contract as a carter, a man who worked with horses on the farm, and he was being asked to do the work of a common labourer. The editorial in the *Weymouth Telegram* reflected 'We cannot ignore the fact that the new spirit of jealousy and suspicion is a growth contemporaneous with the Labourers' Union'.[100] Thomas Hardy put it more succinctly in 1883. 'Such ticklish relations [between farmers and labourers] are the natural result of generations of unfairness on one side, and on the other an increase of knowledge, which has been kindled into activity by the exertions of Mr Joseph Arch'.[101]

The breaking of the bond between the farmer and his men probably led to more mobility, with men changing their jobs yearly. This did happen before 1872: Mr Fookes, Blandford area farmer, complained in 1860 that 'there were a certain class of labourers that could not be happy unless they went to fair yearly to try and get a better place. One farmer, last fair, agreed with six-and-twenty labourers, and if so that number must have left their places'. Another farmer

[95] *WT*, 10 Jan. 1873.
[96] *WT*, 27 Mar. 1874.
[97] Boyer and Hatton, 'Did Joseph Arch raise agricultural wages?'.
[98] *WT*, 7 Aug. 1874.
[99] *WT*, 17 Apr. 1874.
[100] *WT*, 26 June 1874.
[101] Hardy, 'Dorsetshire labourer', p. 264.

said the Dorchester Candlemas hiring fair had 'sprung up within the last forty years'.[102] An increase in mobility amongst the labourers may be indicated at Milborne St Andrew. In 1871 17 per cent had not been born in the village: in 1881 41 per cent (Table 1).

The pamphlet-writing, anti-unionist schoolmaster from Puddletown, Mr Collins, had written early in 1873:

> Unionism is the foster parent of turbulence and democratic tyranny; it sets class against class, divides a nation into hostile camps, destroys social and military subordination, and brings about, in consequence, a strained and complicated tension in the affairs of a nation, of which civil war is the only cure – the miseries of which all will I think, agree, will heavily outweigh the benefit of a sudden rise in wages. Already the fruits of Unionism in England are manifold and grievous; recruiting is dying out; disquietude prevails among our military and naval forces; social war is already proclaimed, and every great institution which has accompanied and fostered England's rise to greatness and prosperity, is either assailed or threatened with destruction. I will vary an old proverb a little, and make it embody the sum and substance of my faith in this matter – "United as a nation we stand; divided by Unions we fall".[103]

The strikes of 1872–4 shows how the Dorset labourer could agitate, organise, even hold his own in heckling competitions with farmers. Their struggle perhaps did nothing to inculcate sympathy for their position amongst those farmers who held that the destitution of the labourer was not the result of low wages, but the labourers' fecklessness. 'A Dorset Farmer' writing in March 1874 absolved himself and his class from any responsibility for the labourers' condition.

> A Dorset man in hard work is usually in a state of chronic fuddle, and often quarrelsome. This drinking at the farm begets thirst, which is attempted to be allayed at the public-house or in the town. Few Dorset labourers consider it right to return from the towns without half a pint, which means as much as can be got. If it be asked if his family is better off? my answer must be, decidedly worse. I find the wife does not get more to keep house than she did; the rest is going in drink, unionism, and its consequent restlessness and excitement. Fancy a man getting 18*s.* and allowing his wife 7*s.* a week to keep herself and four children, and yet such a case came before the board last week, as the man on hurting himself immediately applied for "parish pay". Judging from my own parish, I am decidedly of opinion that the men and women are deteriorating – they are less tidy, and their children less cared for than when wages were nominally 9*s.* a week. One reason for this, I fear, will soon show itself in a general apathy on the part of the farmer with regard to the labourer and his family, as the more pressure is put upon the farmer the less will he concern himself keeping men all the year, but will just pay them as he wants them; and more, I fear that it will introduce and extend the gang system. How far education may affect the future it will be hard to say, but I for one shall be rejoiced at higher wages, if these will lead to independence of drink, of poor-rates, of idleness.

[102] *Dorset County Chronicle*, 5 Apr. 1860.

[103] *WT*, 24 Jan. 1873.

Even the poor state of the cottages was the labourers' fault:

> I wish I could see cottages kept better; but the helplessness and want of order of the labouring class paralyse all efforts in this direction; e.g. children tear down plaster in houses and break about fences with impunity, and our poor are too helpless to stop a hole with a bit of mortar, or to whitewash and keep a place clean.[104]

VIII

Union statistics show that the decline in membership in Dorset was less than elsewhere – from 2,300 members in 1874 to 1,100 in 1879. In some other counties, such as the Union heartland of Warwickshire, membership fell by three-quarters between 1874 to 1879. Nationally the fall was less than a half.[105]

Enough of the Union survived in Dorset to hold a celebration of the forty-first anniversary of the Tolpuddle Martyrs in March 1875, when a presentation was made to James Hammett, the only Martyr still in England. One of the national Union men present 'referring to the evictions at Milborne last year, said the Unionists should have let those cottages stand empty until Farmer Fowler and Mr Mansel-Pleydell had agreed not to discharge Unionists'. The address presented to Hammett referred to 'the days of oppression' which were not yet over. 'The merciless evictions for the crime of Unionism on the estates of Mr J. C. Mansell-Pleydell, Sir Richard Glyn, and others show the same cruel spirit of violent intolerance towards their humbler neighbours yet lives in our midst'.[106]

In May 1912 the memorial arch to the Tolpuddle Martyrs was unveiled. The then vicar of Milborne St Andrew was present, exhibiting 'photos of the eviction scenes at Milborne St Andrew in 1874, when men are said to have been evicted for joining the Agricultural Labourers' Union. A baby-in-arms in one photo was stated to have grown to manhood and to be present today'. He would have been nearly 40. A bitter struggle had become a matter of quaint recollection.[107]

[104] *WT*, 27 Mar. 1874.
[105] Dunbabin, 'Incidence of organisation', pp. 115–8.
[106] *WT*, 19 Mar. 1875.
[107] *Dorset County Chronicle*, 30 May 1912.

Organic society: agriculture and radical politics in the career of Gerard Wallop, ninth Earl Of Portsmouth (1898–1984)*

by Philip Conford

Abstract

Through examining the ideas and activities of G. V. Wallop, ninth Earl of Portsmouth, this article demonstrates a close connection between the emerging organic movement and radical right-wing politics during the 1930s and 1940s. Evidence from his papers reveals that Wallop, a noted farmer and landowner, was instrumental in drawing together leading organic pioneers, and belonged to many of the groups which promoted organic husbandry during the mid-twentieth century. Other important organicists were to be found actively involved in his political initiatives, which were well to the Right of the spectrum. While rejecting the view that commitment to organic husbandry necessarily implies far-Right politics, the article argues that Wallop's espousal of both causes casts serious doubt on the claim that the early organic movement was a-political.

Many members of the contemporary organic movement, and of the Soil Association in particular, experience a certain discomfort when the political dimension of its early history is discussed. Over the past two decades, several historians have demonstrated that during the movement's formative years a number of its leading personalities were associated with Fascist or radical right-wing organisations and, in so doing, have handed ammunition to its enemies.[1]

Two main lines of response to the problem are evident. One is to try to drive a wedge between the organic movement as it has developed since the 1960s and its earlier incarnation from the 1930s to the 1950s, downplaying any continuity between the two and attributing the modern movement primarily to the impact of a broader environmentalism given impetus by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. The other is to accept that some leading organicists in the movement's early years were indeed involved in political activities likely to be unacceptable to the majority of today's Soil Association members, but to argue that these activities and their

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[1] See for instance, Philip Conford, *The origins of the organic movement* (2001), pp. 146–54; Richard Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers of the Right* (1983), pp. 142–46, 317–28; Patrick Wright, *The village that died for England* (1996), pp. 150–202.

associated ideology were quite distinct from advocacy of organic husbandry.[2] Only a comprehensive study of the organic movement from the 1950s onwards could hope to establish whether or not either of these explanations is valid, and such a study remains to be undertaken.

This article will consider the second approach and, by concentrating on the life and career of Gerard Vernon Wallop (1898–1984), the ninth earl of Portsmouth, will argue that it is seriously flawed.[3] Wallop was both one of the most influential figures in the early organic movement and one of the most extreme politically, and his views on agriculture, rural life and food quality were central to his social and political philosophy. Indeed, given that organicists emphasize the importance of a 'holistic' outlook, it would be surprising if one of their leading thinkers kept his agricultural ideas separate from his politics. The reverse was in fact the case; in his early book *Horn, hoof and corn*, Wallop wrote explicitly that it was the task of agriculture to save the State.[4] Evidence from Wallop's papers demonstrates that some other important organic personalities were involved in his political initiatives. Given Wallop's importance in the organic movement and the centrality of his agricultural views to his political philosophy, the thesis that the radical right-wing politics were distinct from the agricultural ideas cannot be sustained.

This essay proceeds as follows. Firstly, it examines Wallop's life and career, concentrating on his achievements as an estate-owner and his work in agricultural politics. We shall see that as an agriculturalist he was highly regarded, even by those who did not share his politics; that he had many and varied contacts; that his books were widely reviewed, and that he was much in demand as writer and speaker. Then Wallop's central importance to the emerging organic movement will be established; in particular we shall note the influence of his 1938 book *Famine in England*, his role in bringing together Sir Albert Howard, Sir Robert McCarrison and other key figures at a conference on his Hampshire estate later the same year, his role in the Kinship in Husbandry and his work with various groups promoting organic ideas. Next comes an examination of his political activities on the far Right as a leading member of the English Mistery and the English Array during the 1930s, and his role in anti-war groups towards the end of that decade. The final section demonstrates that several other prominent figures in the early organic movement belonged to Wallop's political groups.

Certain caveats are required. This article is but one contribution to a growing study of rural politics and eugenics in mid-twentieth-century Britain, and no definitive conclusion is likely to be reached in the near future. Much work on Gerard Wallop, his associates in the Kinship in Husbandry, and the history of the organic movement remains to be done, and the material uncovered is likely to be complex and ambiguous. But it does seem clear that certain influential figures in the movement's early days believed that organic farming and the food it produced

[2] See for instance, Tracey Clunies-Ross, 'Agricultural change and the politics of organic farming', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Bath, 1990), p. 144, as an example of the first approach. In this connection, it is worth noting that the Soil Association journal *Mother Earth* regularly addressed ecological and environmental issues during the 1950s. The late Mary Langman, OBE, who worked at the Pioneer Health Centre in the 1930s and was a founder-member of the Soil Association, took the second approach in an interview with the author, 28 June 2000.

[3] Gerard Wallop, Viscount Lymington, succeeded his father as Earl in February 1943. He will be referred to throughout by his family name.

[4] Viscount Lymington, *Horn, hoof and corn* (1932), p. 189.

could help realize their vision of a regenerated England, and that this poses a problem for those who maintain that organic farming was an a-political cause.

Although demonstrating that the influential Gerard Wallop advocated organic husbandry as part of a wider vision, this article is not intended to suggest that belief in organic husbandry must of necessity be linked with, or imply, a far-Right political standpoint. As a matter of empirical fact this is clearly not the case, while in order to claim a logically necessary connection one would have to build a dauntingly complex edifice of argument on the uncertain base of political theory. Keeping instead to the comparative security of empirical history, we can note that commitment to organic husbandry has co-existed, and still co-exists, with a variety of social and political beliefs.[5] Nevertheless, before examining Wallop's career, we need to understand, albeit only in the broadest terms, the main reasons why this commitment formed an integral part of the outlook of such far-Right figures as Gerard Wallop and Rolf Gardiner.

Firstly, then, racial health was a central issue. There was considerable evidence that a substantial section of the population was in poor physical condition and ate food of limited nutritional value. If the British were to avoid becoming a 'C3 nation' – that is a nation of substandard physical specimens, judged according to the categories used by the army's recruiting board – then it was literally vital that they should adopt an improved diet, by which the organicists meant a diet of fresh foodstuffs produced from humus-rich soil. They believed that the work of agriculturalists like Sir Albert Howard, and nutritionists like Sir Robert McCarrison, strongly implied the superior quality of organically-grown foodstuffs, which might be used to reverse the 'degeneration' of the race.[6]

Secondly, Wallop and his associates resisted the erosion of rural life and culture. They believed the nation to be too dominated by urbanism and industry, and suffering from the social instability consequent upon that perceived imbalance. To increase the rural population it was necessary to replace industrial, quantitative standards of efficiency (output per man) by biological, qualitative standards (output per acre of nutritionally valuable produce). Seeing organic methods as labour-intensive, they called for a return to the land, envisaging – in defiance of agricultural trends – an expanding rural population of organic smallholders.[7]

This desire to revive British agriculture provided a notional justification for anti-semitism. The argument ran as follows: agriculture had been sacrificed for the sake of industry and free trade, and Jewish interests, through their involvement in industry, shipping, import-export and finance, had benefited from this policy. The concept of wealth had been corrupted, so that it

[5] Among prominent past supporters of organic husbandry whose examples support the contention that organicists do not have to be right-wingers can be found the Labour MP and peer Lord Douglas of Barloch, a founder-member of the Soil Association; the socialist horticulturalist Edward Hyams, author of *Soil and Civilization* (1952); the American Marxist Scott Nearing; E. F. Schumacher, author of *Small is Beautiful* (1973); Laurence Easterbrook, noted agricultural journalist for the *News Chronicle* and *New Statesman*; J. I. Rodale, Jewish liberal and a leading promoter of organics in North America, and Robert Waller, editor of the Soil Association journal during the 1960s.

[6] On Howard, McCarrison and nutritional issues see Conford, *Origins*, pp. 50–59, 130–45. *Nutrition and physical degeneration* (1945) was the title of a major study of diet and health by the American dental scientist Weston Price. See also Alexis Carrel, *Man the Unknown* (1935).

[7] As an example of this outlook, see H. J. Massingham (ed.), *The Small Farmer* (1947). That organic agriculture can be large-scale and mechanized has been demonstrated by the Wiltshire farmer Barry Wookey; see his *Rushall: the story of an organic farm* (1987).

was now identified with the abstract figures of an accountant's ledger rather than the natural resources and human skills on which all societies depend. There were cultural factors, too: the Jews, it was argued, had no commitment to the countries they lived in, and particularly not to any national soil. In the frequently-used and transparent code of the time, they were 'rootless cosmopolitans', perceived as a threat to the traditional rural culture which men such as Wallop and Gardiner wished to re-vitalize.[8]

There is another reason, of a more theoretical nature, why organic husbandry and right-wing politics came together in the minds of some of the organic pioneers. It concerns what the philosopher John Macmurray termed the 'organic analogy'; that is, the idea that human beings and the societies they create should be conceived of as biological organisms. The organicists rejected the application of mechanistic metaphors and standards to the natural world, but as Macmurray (who had dealings with a number of prominent figures in the movement) argued, interpreting society as an organism leads in the direction of totalitarianism, with human beings defined by their functional role in a hierarchy and assessed for their usefulness as if they are merely biological 'stock'.[9] The historian of twentieth-century British eugenicism, Dan Stone, has pointed out that the 'comparison of men to animals such as sheep and horses was a common theme of right-wing thought'. Wallop expresses the idea in his post-war essay 'The English way of life', when, during a discussion of indigenous English racial types, he states: 'It is clear to any breeder of stock that, without the right environment, it is almost impossible to bring out the desired genetic quality of animals ... The most important single factor in environment is good food.' The clear implication is that human beings should be regarded as farm animals, their breeding controlled by eugenicists like Wallop.[10]

We shall return to these issues after examining Wallop's life and ideas, but it is worth bearing in mind as we follow his career that his political stance was extreme, and that even among his associates in the Kinship in Husbandry there was unease about his views.[11]

[8] *Jews and the Jews in England* (1938) by Gerard Wallop's close friend Anthony Ludovici, under the pseudonym 'Cobbett', provides a good example of this outlook.

[9] John Macmurray (1891–1976) was Grote Professor of Mind and Logic at University College, London (1928–44) and Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh (1944–58). His analysis of the organic mode of thought can be found in *Freedom in the Modern World* (1968), pp. 193–202; *Interpreting the Universe* (1933), pp. 103–21, and *The Self as Agent* (1957), pp. 33–37. Macmurray was prominent in the New Britain movement of the early 1930s, in which Philip Mairet, George Scott Williamson of the Pioneer Health Centre, Montague Fordham and other notable organicists were involved; see Conford, *Origins*, pp. 167–68. He influenced the doctor Aubrey Westlake, later a founder-member of the Soil Association, and worked closely with the literary critic John Middleton Murry, who took up organic farming in the 1940s: see John E. Costello, *John Macmurray: a biography* (2002), pp. 204–06, 240–44. Macmurray reviewed Maurice Reckitt's symposium *Prospect for Christendom*, which contains a major essay by Philip Mairet on environmentalism, for the *New Statesman* (20 Oct. 1945, p. 269).

[10] Dan Stone, *Breeding Superman* (2002), p. 39. Hampshire RO (hereafter HRO), 15M84/F154: 'Notes on the English way of life', p. 8. Compare Anthony Ludovici's rhetorical question: 'What breed of sheep, what breed of horses, what breed of common barnfowl, could have been abandoned to the promiscuous mating ... to which modern man has long been abandoned, without suffering degeneration?', quoted in Stone, *Breeding*, p. 39.

[11] H. J. Massingham wrote to Arthur Bryant about the 'three squires' in the Kinship (Wallop, Northbourne and Gardiner) and how their attitudes revealed 'not a little fascism peeping out'. The letter, dated 4 Apr. 1943, can be found in the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London, file E/27. On the internal relationships of the Kinship in Husbandry, see R. J. Moore-Colyer and Philip Conford, 'A "Secret Society"? The internal and external relations of the Kinship in Husbandry, 1941–1952', *Rural Hist.* 15 (2004), pp. 189–206.

To examine Wallop's far-Right ideas is not to indulge in any kind of witch-hunt against him: his activities in the 1930s have been documented by Richard Griffiths and Patrick Wright, and he devoted a chapter of his autobiography to the English Mistery (though it must be said that he makes it appear more benign than it really was). Nor, conversely, does an interest in Wallop's career imply sympathy with his politics; rather, it indicates recognition of his significant role in mid-twentieth-century agriculture, one which has until recently received less attention than that of his friend Rolf Gardiner.[12] We shall see that Gerard Wallop was a shrewd man who knew the English establishment from inside, had many contacts in government, and was realistic about what he and his associates could hope to achieve. Since the 1945 Labour landslide ensured that their vision of an organic, ruralist society became more remote than ever, they achieved very little politically. But in so far as they helped establish the organic movement as a coherent alternative to the industrialized, chemically-intensive approach which dominated agriculture in the second half of the twentieth century, they have had a longer-term influence of considerable moment.

I

Gerard Wallop was born in 1898, into a family which had owned land in Hampshire since the Norman Conquest: but he was born into it in Chicago, of an American mother. His father was an adventurer who in 1884 had fallen in love with the north-western states of America and bought a ranch near the Montana-Wyoming border, living there as a horse-breeder for ten years before moving to another about 60 miles south. Young Gerard was brought up on this latter ranch until 1909, when he went to school in England. He returned to the West every couple of years before joining the army (one of the last volunteers before conscription) in 1916. He served in France in the Household Cavalry and the Guards Machine Gun Regiment, and records that the contrast between the destruction of battle and the healing effect of fields and woods at dawn turned his mind towards farming.[13]

After the Armistice, A. L. Smith of Balliol College, Oxford wrote to him agreeing that he could sit Finals in History and Economics in June 1920.[14] Having taken his degree, Wallop spent a year in Oxford's School of Agriculture, where one of his tutors was C. S. Orwin, later a scourge of the organic husbandry school. In 1922 he was a pupil of the Hobbs brothers at Kelmscott and the following year took over a 150-acre farm on one of the family estates. As a farmer and, subsequently, estate-owner, Wallop was successful and progressive. He had much to learn

[12] For Wallop's own account of the English Mistery see the Earl of Portsmouth, *A Knot of Roots* (1965), pp. 126–33. There are many files of Mistery material in the Wallop archive in the Hampshire Record Office, among them 15M84/F/13/3, F176, F195, F206, F378, F379, F380, F382, F395, F396, F398, F407, F413, F414. On Gardiner, see R. J. Moore-Colyer, 'Rolf Gardiner, English patriot and the Council for the Church and Countryside', *AgHR* 49 (2002), pp. 187–209, and Wright, *Village*, pp. 151–62, 176–202. The political historian Dan Stone has examined Wallop's career in relation to eugenic thought and British fascism: see his *Breeding Superman* (2002), pp. 44, 49, 53, 57; id., 'The English Mistery, the BUF and the dilemmas of British Fascism', *J. Modern History* 75 (2003), pp. 336–58, and 'The Far Right and the Back-to-the-Land Movement' in Julie V. Gottlieb and Thomas Linehan (eds), *The Culture of Fascism* (2004), pp. 182–98. Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the twentieth century* (1989), pp. 117–19, refers briefly to Wallop's far-Right activities.

[13] HRO, 15M84/F170; Portsmouth, *Knot*, p. 33.

[14] HRO, 15M84/F246.

when he started and met with hostility from neighbouring tenant farmers, but in the 1930s Farleigh Estate became a centre of agricultural experiment. By 1931 he had disposed of his last draught horses (a policy significant enough to be reported in the *Sunday Times*), and early the next year he was advocating full mechanisation of livestock farming in an address at Rothamsted Experimental Station. He reclaimed 3,000 acres mostly taken over from bankrupt tenants, laying on water, folding pigs on grass and using A. J. Hosier's moveable bails. As a result, arable production doubled and gross output trebled. He was also actively concerned to improve the wretched conditions of rural housing.[15]

During the 1920s Wallop combined farming with a vagrant life in Europe, and mixed in bohemian circles in Paris; the literary socialite Caresse Crosby and her husband Harry published his poetry. He also committed himself to Conservative politics, being elected a county councillor for Hampshire in 1923 and winning the parliamentary constituency of Basingstoke in the general election of 1929. But parliamentary democracy disillusioned him, as it seemed incapable of tackling the nation's dire economic and social problems, and he turned down the opportunity to become Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, Walter Elliot, reluctant to submit to the unconscionable demands of the party whips. In 1934 he resigned his seat, too impatient, as he later judged himself, to accept the slow unfolding of events.[16]

During his time as an MP he became a leading figure in William Sanderson's organisation the English Mistery, of which more below. He also published his first book on agriculture, *Horn, hoof and corn* (1932), an interesting combination of the themes which would later dominate his organicist thought: the need for a larger, peasant, rural population; the spiritual dangers of industrial progress; the damaging sacrifice of farming to free trade, and the importance of agriculture to national health. His policy recommendations were in tune with the mood of the times: increasing home production for the sake of national security; creating more highly organized marketing systems; developing the dairy industry and market gardening, and promoting mechanisation (with the reservation that stockless arable farming would increase rural unemployment).

Wallop's reputation grew during the 1930s. In November 1936 he spoke at the Farmers' Club on 'The Place of Agriculture in Home Defence'. *Famine in England*, which reflected his interest in the ideas of Sir Albert Howard, sealed his reputation when it appeared in the spring of 1938. It received widespread and overwhelmingly enthusiastic press coverage. To promote it, Wallop spoke at a Foyle's literary luncheon which was reported in several national newspapers. The *Sunday Times* made *Famine in England* one of its Books of the Month, while the *Dairy Farmer* devoted more than three pages to responses to it from a variety of experts, among them E. J. Russell, the Director of Rothamsted, who praised its vigorous and convincing argument. Even the left-wing *New Statesman* reviewed it favourably, rejecting its racial alarmism but praising its sound views on agricultural policy.[17] The book made Wallop something of a national

[15] HRO, 15M84/F132.

[16] Caresse Crosby, *The Passionate Years* (1979), pp. 128, 141–42; Portsmouth, *Knot*, pp. 106–25.

[17] Viscount Lymington, 'The place of agriculture in Home Defence', *J. Farmers Club*, Nov. 1936. Press cuttings on *Famine in England* can be found in HRO, 15M84/F149. *New Statesman*, 17 Sept. 1938, p. 428.

celebrity, and in the autumn of 1938 he spoke on the BBC' s West of England service on 'The Changing Processes of Agriculture'. The other speaker, Professor J. A. Scott Watson, was later Director-General of the National Agricultural Advisory Service, and was to write ironically of a 'wave of mysticism' about humus.[18]

The period between the Munich crisis and the fall of France saw Wallop actively involved in opposing war with Germany and then doing what he could to bring about an armistice. Once the war started in earnest, he became Vice-Chairman of the Hampshire County War Agricultural Executive Committee (WarAg). His years as an MP had enabled him to establish a variety of friendships and contacts, a number of them across party boundaries. When Tom Williams became Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture in May 1940, Wallop wrote to congratulate him and invited him to stay at Farleigh House, the family seat. Williams welcomed the prospect of a meeting and wrote (rather ambiguously, in view of Wallop's recent political initiatives) that he had 'been much nearer to you and your activities than you may imagine'. In 1942 Wallop persuaded Malcolm Messer, editor of *Farmers' Weekly*, to publish a series of four articles by members of the Kinship in Husbandry: himself, J. E. Hosking, Philip Mairet and Lord Northbourne.[19]

The following year his book *Alternative to Death* appeared. While not receiving quite the degree of attention awarded to *Famine in England*, it was nevertheless widely reviewed in the national and provincial press. Wallop's former Oxford teacher, C. S. Orwin, struck the sourest note, scathingly condemning in the *Manchester Guardian* its 'mass of false premises and its undertone of vulgarity'.[20] While the book was being prepared for publication, Wallop succeeded his father as Earl of Portsmouth, contributing on 26 October 1943 to a major Lords debate on the impact of chemical fertilizers on the soil. He was by now closely involved, as the following section will show, with various groups and publications advocating organic husbandry, but he kept one foot firmly planted in the establishment camp, being prominent in the Central Landowners Association and travelling to the USA and Canada in 1945 as a member of the Farm Buildings Mission. The advent of the post-war Labour government did not adversely affect his ministerial contacts; Tom Williams, the new Minister of Agriculture, had visited Farleigh Estate in January 1945, and Wallop requested a private meeting with him a year later. In July 1946 Williams asked him to continue serving on the Hampshire County Agricultural Executive Committee, and take over as Chairman for the interim. Wallop declined, but emphasized in his letter how much he admired Williams's work.[21] The following summer, Wallop contributed to a series of broadcast talks on the topic *Rural England: The Way Ahead*. The representative of progressive orthodoxy who challenged his views was the East Anglian farmer and Labour Party supporter H. D. Walston, whose son Oliver is today a noted farmer and outspoken opponent of organic farming.[22]

[18] J. A. Scott Watson, 'Old farming beliefs in the light of science', *Agriculture*, Mar. 1949, p. 508.

[19] HRO, 15M84/F213, Wallop to Williams, 21 May 1940; F212, Williams to Wallop, 23 May 1940. *Farmers' Weekly*, 3 July 1942, p. 27; 10 July 1942, pp. 25–26; 17 July 1942, p. 27; 24 July 1942, pp. 26–27.

[20] Reviews of *Alternative to Death* can be found in HRO, 15M84/F152.

[21] HRO, 15M84/F206 and letter from Wallop to Tom Williams, 17 July 1946, F213.

[22] *Rural England: The Way Ahead* (National Council of Social Service, 1947).

For two decades, then, Gerard Wallop was a prominent agriculturalist who became a well-known public figure speaking and writing on behalf of the farming industry. His knowledge of British agriculture was wide-ranging (he took an active interest in the work of the Land Settlement Association and the Smallholdings Advisory Council) and he counted several Ministers of Agriculture among his friends, most notably Reginald Dorman-Smith, a member of the English Mistery. However much opponents like Walston might try to paint him as nostalgic and unrealistic, he had demonstrated his practical and administrative skills on his estate.[23]

But although Wallop liked and respected Tom Williams, it was clear that agricultural policy was proceeding in a direction far removed from that which the organicists favoured, and that there was no possibility under Mr. Attlee's government – or, for that matter, any foreseeable Conservative government – of a rural revival of the kind that they adumbrated. In 1948 Wallop made his first visit to East Africa and, moved by the same pioneering spirit which had possessed his father, bought farms near Mount Elgon. Finding England now over-restricted, he opted to make his future in Kenya, where there was 'more elbow room': 10,000 acres of it, once he had purchased other nearby land.[24] He spent about 25 years in Kenya, improving soil fertility and playing his part in agricultural policy and national politics. He was a government-nominated member of the Board of Agriculture, and Chairman, and later President, of the Electors' Union during the Mau Mau troubles. In 1957 he was chosen under the new constitution as a Member for Agriculture, serving three and a half years in the Legislative Assembly. Once the 'wind of change' began to blow through Africa, Wallop found himself, in 1965, among the first estate-owners to have their land nationalized. Compensation was minimal and was in any case paid in the non-negotiable Kenya shilling. Rather than leave Kenya, however, he accepted an invitation from the President, Jomo Kenyatta, to become a special advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, discharging his duties in this capacity until he suffered a severe stroke in 1976 and returned to Britain.[25] He died in 1984.

II

If Gerard Wallop's status as an agriculturalist during the 1930s and '40s was considerable, in the development of the organic movement he was crucially important. Two events alone, both occurring in 1938, suffice to establish his central role in the movement's coalescence: the publication of *Famine in England* and the July conference at Farleigh Estate on agriculture and health. But as we shall see, he was active in the organic cause in a variety of ways.

Wallop wrote in his autobiography how 'By 1928 I was probing into the problems of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, and leaping by instinct rather than knowledge towards some of her 1962 conclusions.' Regrettably, he does not give any detailed account of the experiences which led him to respond in this way, contenting himself with saying that he came 'to question the breeding and feeding of my animals' – as he did later of the British people – and that the older

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[24] Portsmouth, *Knot*, p. 213.

[25] Letter to the author from the present Earl of Portsmouth, 21 Apr. 2003.

employees on his estate made him sensitive to the feel of the soil, with the result that he rethought 'the mechanical and chemical side of my agricultural education'.[26]

Wallop's friendship with Sir Albert Howard, which began around 1935, gave his instincts a more scientific basis. In the autumn of 1937 he was corresponding with Howard about the manuscript of *Famine in England*, sending him reports on soil erosion and a brace of pheasants, and borrowing from Howard's wife Louise a League of Nations report on nutrition to lend to Anthony Ludovici (of whom more in the following section). The following spring, Wallop organized an agricultural luncheon for Howard, to which Ludovici was invited. Howard wrote to Wallop when his own book *An Agricultural Testament* appeared in 1940, saying that he intended the book to demolish 'most of the absurd research work now being subsidized by the State', and hoping that the war would be seized as an opportunity to remedy the neglect of the soil which had been occurring for two generations. Wallop reviewed *An Agricultural Testament* in the *New English Weekly* and Howard wrote to thank him. Privately, Wallop had some reservations about the manner in which Howard attacked orthodox agricultural science, but he nevertheless considered him 'a fine fighter', for whom he had 'great affection'.[27]

Wallop was also in close touch with Sir Robert McCarrison, whose research in India on human health and nutrition complemented Howard's work with plants and animals. In June 1937 McCarrison sent Wallop a copy of his Lloyd Roberts Lecture at the Medical Society, and Wallop evidently reciprocated by putting McCarrison's name forward as a potential speaker on health and the soil at the Farmers' Club, though the suggestion was turned down on the grounds that McCarrison had insufficient knowledge of English conditions. When *Famine in England* appeared, Wallop sent McCarrison a copy.[28] We shall see in the following section that Wallop used McCarrison's ideas for his own political purposes.

Like McCarrison, Dr. Guy Theodore Wrench had spent many years in India and studied the diet and agriculture of the north-west frontier's Hunza tribesmen; his book *The Wheel of Health*, published by C. W. Daniel in 1938, is another classic of the early organic movement. In the autumn of 1937 Wrench wrote to Wallop complaining about publishers' reactions to the book and expressing interest in seeing the typescript of *Famine in England*. The following June, he told Wallop that he had recently spent a day with Howard.[29]

Wallop came to know Howard, McCarrison and Wrench during the years 1935–37, but his friendship with the agronomist R. G. (later Sir George) Stapledon went back to the mid-1920s. Stapledon led something of a double life, agriculturally speaking: as an acknowledged international authority on grassland and plant breeding he was at home in the world of orthodox, progressive agriculture, while as a ruralist, poet and ecologist he was a strong influence on the organic school, a close friend of Rolf Gardiner, an inspiration for the Kinship in Husbandry and a sympathetic fellow-traveller with the Soil Association. He reviewed *Famine in England* glowingly for the *Spectator* and visited Farleigh Wallop several times; Wallop visited him at the

[26] Portsmouth, *Knot*, pp. 37, 36, 78

[27] HRO, 15M84/F147; ibid., Wallop to Howard, 21 Oct. 1937, and to Howard's secretary Mrs. Hamilton, 23 Nov. 1937; F183, Wallop to Ludovici, 29 April 1938; F166, Howard to Wallop, 1 Mar. 1940 and 26 July 1940; F170, Wallop to Massingham, 30 July 1941.

[28] HRO, 15M84/F147, C. B. Rolfe to Wallop, 2 Nov. 1937; F148, McCarrison to Wallop, 9 Apr. 1938.

[29] HRO, 15M84/F146, Wrench to Wallop, 14 Nov. 1937, and F147, 1 June 1938.

Welsh Plant Breeding Station at Aberystwyth and arranged for him to speak to groups of Hampshire farmers.[30]

In addition to these four scientists, two landowners were particularly influential in giving impetus to the organic movement, and both were Wallop's friends. He first met Walter, Lord Northbourne, at Oxford after the war, and the acquaintance was renewed when Northbourne wrote to praise *Famine in England*; by 1941 Wallop could describe him as 'a real personal friend'. Wallop was similarly enthusiastic about Northbourne's *Look to the Land* (1940), describing it in a letter to another correspondent as 'absolutely admirable'. The two men worked closely on arranging a conference held on Northbourne's estate in the summer of 1939, at which the biodynamic agriculturalist Ehrenfried Pfeiffer was the guest of honour. They also knew each other through their membership of the Economic Reform Club and Institute.[31]

Perhaps Wallop's closest agricultural friend and ally, though, was Rolf Gardiner, the Dorset forester and folk-dancer who made his estate near Shaftesbury a centre of 'rural restoration', holding harvest camps and trying to revive the disappearing link between farming and a sense of the sacred. Gardiner and Wallop shared a particular political agenda. The former's career and his influence on the early organic movement are well chronicled and need not be recounted again here; suffice it to say that he and Wallop were at the heart of the Kinship in Husbandry group which during the 1940s sought to spread the organic message through as many channels as possible.[32]

In what must be considered one of the most important gatherings in organic history, Wallop brought together on 11–12 July 1938 the above half-dozen key organic personalities. Also present were a number of farmers, medical men and other interested figures, including the Welsh industrial doctor G. Arbour Stephens, Lord Phillimore (friend of Wallop and fellow Hampshire landowner), Baron de Rutzen of Slebech, Pembrokeshire, and Captain Leslie Bomford, a member of the Vale of Evesham family noted for developing agricultural machinery, who farmed near Whitchurch in Hampshire. These latter two belonged to Wallop's political group, the English Array. The conference's object was to decide 'whether certain experiments on soil and crops at Farleigh Wallop merited extension and wider consideration', which was agreed.[33] In effect, the conference was proposing an experiment to assess the nutritive value of food produced from crops grown on soil manured by composted dung and vegetable waste. The members envisaged feeding rats with cereal crops produced this way – something similar to McCarrison's experiments at Coonor in India – and the feeding of humus-grown products of field and garden to pupils at a local school for their main meal of the day. This is, of course, the project at the heart of the organic movement: to establish that food produced from

[30] On Stapledon, see R. J. Moore-Colyer, 'Sir George Stapledon (1882–1960) and the landscape of Britain', *Environment and History* 5 (1999), pp. 221–36, and Robert Waller, *Prophet of the New Age* (1962). Stapledon's review was in the 8 Apr. 1938 issue of the *Spectator*, p. 634. Portsmouth, *Knot*, pp. 78–80.

[31] HRO, 15M84/F147, Northbourne to Wallop, 6 May 1938; F170, Wallop to Massingham, 24 Apr. 1941; F162, Wallop to C. Hussey, 13 June 1940. The provisional list for Northbourne's conference can be found in F211. On the Economic Reform Club, see Philip Conford, 'Finance versus farming: rural reconstruction and economic reform, 1894–1955', *Rural Hist.* 13 (2002), pp. 225–41.

[32] On Rolf Gardiner and the Kinship in Husbandry, see R. J. Moore-Colyer, 'Back to Basics: Rolf Gardiner, H. J. Massingham and "A Kinship in Husbandry"', *Rural Hist.* 12 (2001), pp. 85–108.

[33] HRO, 15M84/F204.

humus-rich soil benefits the health of animals and humans. As the group at Farleigh Estate recognized, it is a hypothesis whose establishment requires exhaustive research and plenty of financial backing. The nearest there has ever been in Britain to such a project is the Haughley Experiment in Suffolk, which operated during the 1950s and '60s.[34] This was inspired by the influence of Wallop's book *Famine in England* on Eve Balfour, who farmed at Haughley, near Stowmarket. In a letter to him of September 1943 she wrote: 'There is no one in the country whose opinion I value more than yours, the man who started me on the humus trail, so you can perhaps imagin[e] the glow of pleasure which your very high praise of my book [*The Living Soil*] gave me.' She was reading Wallop's *Alternative to Death*, and described it as 'one of the really great books of the age'.[35] Having read *Famine in England*, Balfour became convinced of the need for an experiment to test whether or not Howard's and McCarrison's theories were justified, and with the help of her neighbour Alice Debenham set in train the processes which, after the war, resulted in the establishment of the Haughley Experiment, later taken over by the Soil Association. She wrote *The Living Soil* to arouse interest in the case for humus farming and its putative health benefits, and its success led to the founding of the Soil Association in 1946, of whose Council Wallop was for several years a member. His own efforts, in 1945, to persuade the Agricultural Research Council to fund an experiment were unsuccessful.[36]

Wallop was involved in most of the important groups which together constituted the early movement and was friendly with a number of figures in addition to those who attended his conference in July 1938. We have already referred to Ehrenfried Pfeiffer and the bio-dynamic cultivation inspired by the lectures which Rudolf Steiner delivered in 1924. The bio-dynamic movement was established in Britain by 1929, two years before Howard returned from India, and was a significant strand in the early organic movement.[37] Wallop was not a disciple of Steiner, but the practical results of bio-dynamic methods impressed him and in the 1930s he conducted some field-scale experiments to compare bio-dynamic cultivation with chemical manuring. When Pfeiffer spoke at Northbourne Court in July 1939, Wallop made various suggestions as to who should be invited to meet him; it is interesting to note that Dr. George Scott Williamson of the Pioneer Health Centre was one of the other speakers, and that Wallop's suggested names included Rolf Gardiner, Baron de Rutzen, and Moses Griffith of the Welsh Plant Breeding Station. In a letter the following spring to the then Minister of Agriculture Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, Wallop referred to 'the great Dr Pfeiffer', who would be visiting England in April, and invited Dorman-Smith to lunch so that he could meet him.[38]

Late in 1938 Wallop launched another initiative, a journal called *New Pioneer*. We shall consider *New Pioneer's* political stance in the next section, but can note here that it promoted both a pro-organic agricultural policy and an anti-war agenda. Its pages included contributions from Sir Albert Howard, Rolf Gardiner, Lord Northbourne, Philip Mairet and the Conservative MP

[34] On the Haughley Experiment, see E. B. Balfour, *The Living Soil and the Haughley Experiment* (1975).

[35] HRO, 15M84/F152, Eve Balfour to Wallop, 28 Sept. 1943.

[36] HRO, 15M84/F199.

[37] See Conford, *Origins*, pp. 65–80.

[38] HRO, 15M84/F166: Wallop to G. Harrison, 16 Mar. 1945; Wallop's list of suggested names can be found in F211; F210, Wallop to Dorman-Smith, 21 Mar. 1940. Moses Griffith was a prime mover in Welsh nationalism and an advocate of the de-industrialisation of south Wales in favour of a peasant-based Welsh economy. He was manager of the Cahn Hill Improvement Scheme in central Wales.

Pierse Loftus, as well as much material by Wallop himself. Mairet edited the *New English Weekly*, which, as I have argued elsewhere, could claim to be the most important forum for organic husbandry in the years before the Soil Association.[39] From 1938 onwards Wallop wrote and reviewed for it regularly.

Philip Mairet became one of the twelve founding members of the Kinship in Husbandry, which first met in September 1941 and whose aim was to promote a rural, organicist vision of post-war society. Its members also included Wallop, who was a moving spirit in its establishment, Northbourne, Gardiner, Edmund Blunden, Arthur Bryant and H. J. Massingham.[40] Like Eve Balfour, Massingham had been impressed by *Famine in England* and began to correspond with Wallop, suggesting in a letter of November 1939 that there should be an organisation to draw together those who shared their ruralist philosophy. In 1941 Massingham edited the symposium *England and the Farmer*, to which Wallop contributed; it is in various respects an early manifesto for the wider aims of the Soil Association.[41]

Wallop was active in a number of other groups in the network of which the *New English Weekly* and the Kinship were part. In 1938 Richard St. Barbe Baker's Men of the Trees organisation held, at Oxford, its first summer school, and Wallop chaired the session at which Howard spoke. In 1940 Wallop addressed an Economic Reform Club dinner on the theme of agriculture, and he was a vice-president of the Rural Reconstruction Association, to which the Economic Reform Club became closely linked in the 1940s.[42] During the war, Rolf Gardiner was prominent in establishing the Council for the Church and Countryside, a body which served as a front for the organic movement; Wallop too belonged to this, and spoke at the major debate which it sponsored in November 1945 on *Agri-Culture or Agri-Industry?* (Privately, though, as he confessed to T. S. Eliot, he considered the Council a 'forlorn hope'.[43]) He also spoke on 'Food and Agriculture' at a meeting of the Food Education Society, held at the London School of Tropical Medicine in April 1945. The Society's Vice-Presidents included several pro-organic figures, among them Wallop himself, Howard, McCarrison, Massingham, the dental scientist Sir Norman Bennett and the agriculturalist Lord Bledisloe.[44]

Wallop's papers reveal, as is to be expected, that he took a particular interest in the Pioneer Health Centre, an experiment in preventive social medicine which attracted international interest and whose founders, Dr. George Scott Williamson and Dr. Innes Pearse, were instrumental in establishing the Soil Association. The Centre was forced to close during the war, and Wallop

[39] Philip Conford, 'A forum for organic husbandry: the *New English Weekly* and agricultural policy, 1939–1949', *AgHR* 46 (1998), pp. 197–210.

[40] The other founder-members of the Kinship were the ruralist writer Adrian Bell; the botanist and seed merchant J. E. Hosking; the director of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, Douglas Kennedy; the editor of *The Gloucestershire Countryside*, Robert Payne, and the ruralist writer C. Henry Warren. Visitors to Kinship meetings included Jorian Jenks, first editor of the Soil Association journal *Mother Earth*, and the noted agricultural journalist Laurence Easterbrook.

[41] HRO, 15M84/F148, Massingham to Wallop, 24 Nov. 1939. Correspondance between Massingham and Wallop on *England and the Farmer* can be found in F170.

[42] *Three addresses on food production in relation to economic reform* (Economic Reform Club and Institute, 1940). On the links between the ERCI and the Rural Reconstruction Association, see Conford, 'Finance'.

[43] On the Council for the Church and Countryside, see Conford, *Origins*, pp. 201–04. HRO, 15M84/F165: Wallop to Eliot, 29 July 1944.

[44] HRO, 15M84/F217 contains a typescript of Wallop's talk.

commiserated with Pearse in the autumn of 1940, describing it as a most hopeful experiment. In the winter of 1943–44 Pearse sent him a copy of her book on the Pioneer Health Centre, and he declared himself enthralled by it, feeling that her science had reinforced his philosophy. An undated letter from Pearse to Wallop discusses with him the formation of the Soil Association.[45] Wallop went on to serve on the Soil Association's Council for four years (1947–50), but it is uncertain whether he played a significant part in its activities given that he moved to Kenya during this period. His archives do not contain material relating to the Association for these years and he did not contribute to its journal *Mother Earth*, but his earlier work had been of crucial importance to the body's establishment.

Wallop's files contain much more correspondance with other leading organic personalities, but the evidence presented in this section fully establishes his central importance in the early movement. We can now turn to his political activities and see how closely connected they were with his organicist beliefs.

III

'I, personally, am not a Fascist,' Wallop wrote in 1937 to a Mr L. Bussell, 'though I can appreciate and understand their motives'. Indeed, in a speech reported by the *Andover Advertiser*, he had declared that a British Mussolini was needed to halt the nation's drift to disaster. But in his autobiography he maintains that his political activities in the 1930s were far from Fascist, since they involved no leadership principle, no mass rallies, no uniforms – just a desire for 'government by sane consent'. Wallop and his associates 'did not regard ourselves as Herrenvolk but we wanted our revival to be Anglo-Saxon … We felt that outside influences were corrupting our standards and national purpose'.[46] A look at the company Wallop kept during the 1930s provides some context for these remarks.

Two figures in particular are important, though significantly only one of them, William Sanderson, features in Wallop's autobiography; the other, Anthony Ludovici, does not rate a mention, though Wallop's papers reveal that the two men were very close for a period of at least fifteen years. Since it is probable that Wallop met Ludovici through Sanderson, we shall consider Sanderson first.

In 1930, as a new Conservative MP, Wallop made a speech attacking the ineffectual party leadership of Stanley Baldwin (whom he privately deemed 'a scheming old bladder of stale wind'). As a result, he was invited to the rooms of a barrister, William Sanderson, at New Square in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Sanderson was the 'fountain head and philosophic leader' of a movement called the English Mistery, which coloured Wallop's political thought after 1930 and dictated most of his standards of value. The Mistery was a royalist, quasi-masonic organisation, a 'school for leadership' dedicated to regenerating English society and the English race through a restoration of true values and individual responsibility and by resisting all forms of 'outside'

[45] HRO, 15M84/F260: Wallop to Pearse, 30 Oct. 1940, 21 Dec. 1943, 24 Jan. 1944; Pearse to Wallop, undated.

[46] HRO, 15M84/F147: Wallop to L. Bussell, 13 Dec. 1937. *Andover Advertiser*, 6 June 1930. Portsmouth, *Knot*, pp. 129, 127.

(that is, primarily, Jewish) influences. The term 'Mistery' was derived from the idea of 'mastery' of a craft, implying special or secret knowledge.[47]

Sanderson was, in Wallop's view, 'utterly dedicated to his purpose and at the same time was some small part charlatan'. Another picture of Sanderson, confirming Wallop's in several respects, has recently been given by someone of a very different political stance but who, remarkably, was also involved in the Mistery: this is the left-wing barrister John Platts-Mills, who, before adopting socialism, flirted with the political Right and attended a number of Mistery gatherings, even giving an address at one of them. His unsuitability for the Mistery is evidenced by comments among the society's documents that he displayed 'Whig tendencies' and had become a Communist. He was removed from membership in November 1933. Demonstrating that the political Left is not immune to patronising snobbery, Platts-Mills describes the talks given at Mistery meetings as 'trivial little papers written by well-intentioned but dim little people'. Nevertheless, he met his future wife at a Mistery soirée.[48]

Platts-Mills conveys more idea than Wallop does of Sanderson's unpleasantness, describing his loathing for the idea that God cares for the lowliest ('"the statesman must consider quality"'), and his convictions that illness is a cause for shame, denoting innate inferiority, and that pensions stifle character: this despite (or because of) his own very small and handicapped physique, which almost entirely confined him to a chair and made him dependent on the charity of two mature ladies.[49] But neither writer describes Sanderson's links with British fascism or gives the flavour of his personal communications, at once embittered, hectoring, contemptuous and self-pitying. One can fully understand why Wallop, an ebullient character, broke from him; it is baffling that he should have succumbed to his spell in the first place.

Writing to an Oxford undergraduate in 1937 about Fascism, Sanderson said that he had been consulted on each of four or five occasions when there had been attempts to start a Fascist movement in England, and that Grandi, the Italian ambassador in London, had attended the English Mistery's fourth anniversary dinner. Sanderson was in no way hostile to Italian Fascism, and the Mistery both understood and sympathized with the Nazi movement. Sanderson's credentials as a supporter of extreme conservative politics dated back to before the First World War, when he belonged to the Order of the Red Rose and gathered around him active Royalist and loyalist young men, several of them connected with the chambers of F. E. Smith. He was associated with the Imperial Fascist League and contributed regularly to *The Fascist*. In Wallop he saw a figure who could represent, articulate and further the values he believed necessary for the redemption of English stock and culture, describing him as his 'spiritual son', 'the real leader of a real movement and it will be 1500 years before anyone can say that it is dead'. In a long letter to Wallop and Norman Hay he was even more apocalyptic, writing of himself as a Genghis Khan, setting out to alter what were supposedly 'facts' about society, and envisaging Gerard Wallop as 'a legend 10,000 years hence'. Before them lay 'the conquest of the world'. Three months later he wrote to Wallop: 'You are my last throw and I have staked more on you than anyone else … has done'. And in February 1933 he told him: 'there is no limit to the

[47] HRO, 15M84/F170. On the Mistery, see n. 12 above.

[48] Portsmouth, *Knot*, p. 127. The comments on Platts-Mills can be found in HRO, 15M84/F379. John Platts-Mills, *Muck, silk and socialism: recollections of a left-wing Queen's Counsel* (2002), p. 58.

[49] Platts-Mills, *Muck, silk and socialism*, pp. 57, 58.

destiny that lies open before you'. Sanderson displays clear signs of megalomania: if he is God the Father, then Wallop is the Messiah-Son who will enable his divine plan to be fulfilled.[50]

In this same letter, Sanderson wrote that he had brought Anthony Ludovici – whom he described elsewhere as 'the best disciplined mind in Europe' – round to 'admiration and belief' in Wallop's abilities. Wallop erased Ludovici from his autobiographical memory, an omission which needs to be rectified if we are to form an accurate picture of his political associates. Dan Stone, in his study of British eugenicism, devotes a chapter to this now largely forgotten figure (whose writings nonetheless still influence the far Right), revealing that Ludovici was prepared to recommend incest, infanticide and mass slaughter as means to the end of racial purification. (Ironically, Ludovici was himself the product of a mixed-race marriage, but according to Wallop 'realise[d] to the full the dangers that this involve[d]'). The journalist Francis Beckett, whose father John was a colleague of Ludovici's in the British People's Party, describes Ludovici as possessed by a 'cold, intellectual fanaticism'. This cold, intellectual fanatic was a close friend and associate of Wallop and Gardiner; the former acted as his agent in finding a publisher for his anti-semitic tract *Jews and the Jews in England* (1938), which he wrote under the pseudonym 'Cobbett' for fear that it might harm his literary reputation. The book was published by Boswell, having first been rejected by Eyre & Spottiswoode, a decision which Wallop attributed to fear of Jewish influence. Wallop regarded Ludovici as responsible more than anyone else for the intellectual swing to the Right which he believed was occurring in the late 1930s, describing him as an 'evangelist of sanity'. As reported in the *Jewish Chronicle*, Wallop chaired a meeting at which Ludovici described Nazi pogroms as examples of 'domestic sanitation', and both men had at least one meeting with the Fascist theoretician A. Raven Thomson. Ludovici followed Wallop from the Mistery into the Array and spoke at Array camps in the late 1930s.[51]

Ludovici does not appear to have been interned during the war; astonishingly, Wallop described him in November 1939 as being 'on highly responsible war work'. Late in 1940, Wallop had Ludovici's furniture in storage at Farleigh Wallop. The friendship continued after the war, with Wallop sending Ludovici the draft of his essay on 'The English way of life' for his comments. This essay demonstrates Wallop's continuing concern with the influence of 'blood and soil' on the English race; it discusses England's racial history and the putative effects of alien influences on breeding and culture, and urges a shift from a predominantly urban to a predominantly rural society. Ludovici's comments demonstrate both strong sympathy with Wallop's aims and a greater ruthlessness in his attitude towards their achievement: 'open and gentle means' would never be effectual.[52]

Many of Wallop's other contacts and associates confirm the picture revealed by his closeness to Sanderson and Ludovici. Baron John de Rutzen of the English Mistery and the English Array

[50] HRO, 15M84/F176, Sanderson to unnamed Oxford undergraduate, 8 Mar. 1937; F407, Sanderson to Wallop, 7 Oct. 1932; Sanderson to Wallop and Norman Hay, 9 Sept. 1932; Sanderson to Wallop, 2 Dec. 1932 and 9 Feb. 1933.

[51] HRO, 15M84/F407, Sanderson to Wallop, 2 Dec. 1932. Stone, *Breeding*, pp. 33–61. HRO, 15M84/F147, Wallop to A. H. Lane, 28 May 1938. Letter to the author from Francis Beckett, 21 Feb. 2001. On John Beckett, see Francis Beckett, *The rebel who lost his cause* (1999). HRO, 15M84/F147, Wallop to Ludovici, 15 Nov. 1937; Wallop to Lane, 28 May 1938; Wallop to Ludovici, 3 Dec. 1937. *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 Dec. 1938, p. 40.

[52] *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, no. 9, Nov. 1939. HRO, 15M84/F183, Wallop to G. Johnstone, 8 Nov. 1940; F154, Ludovici to Wallop, 15 & 16 Jan. 1947.

was another close friend; David Pryce-Jones's biography of Unity Mitford identifies de Rutzen as a friend of hers and contains a photograph of him at ease in the company of Janos Almasy, a Nazi necromancer who cast Hitler's horoscope. Wallop himself was in contact with the Nazi agriculture minister R. W. Darré, contributed to the Nazi publication *Odal* and attended a Nazi rally as late as April 1939. He was a leading figure in the British Council Against European Commitments, a response to the Munich crisis of autumn 1938 whose support seems chiefly to have been drawn from those who saw any possible war against Germany as Jewish-inspired.[53] The pro-organic journal *New Pioneer* pushed a similar anti-war line, including among its contributors prominent members of the non-Mosleyite far Right such as John Beckett, A. K. Chesterton (second cousin of the writer G. K. Chesterton) and Ben Greene.

Wallop's writings reveal a tendency to conspiracy theory. He saw Hitler's Czechoslovakian coup of March 1939 as utterly stupid, driving sympathizers back into the arms of the Jews and the Wall Street profiteers: 'I sometimes wonder whether one of his Lieutenants is not either in the service of the Jesuits or the Jews'. Equally, he disliked the obsessive and provocative antics of people such as Arnold Leese precisely because they created sympathy for the Jews. One of the great conspiracy theorists, Nesta Webster, thanked him for the copy of the *New Pioneer* he sent her, and invited him to visit. The *Jewish Chronicle* closely monitored Wallop's activities in the late 1930s, reporting on the launching of *New Pioneer* and on one of its dinners.[54]

Having established Wallop's status as a key personality on the radical Right, we can proceed to examine how, through the English Mistery and, particularly, the English Array, organic ideas became an integral part of Wallop's political programme, and to show that a number of important figures in the organic movement were either directly involved in, or, through Wallop's initiative, associated with his political activities.

IV

It is instructive to note just how many pro-organic figures came within the orbit of Wallop's organisations and publications. Rolf Gardiner does not appear to have been a member of the English Mistery and was not a member of the English Array, but he spoke at a Mistery meeting and attended at least one Array camp, in September 1938. Michael Beaumont, Chairman of the Rural Reconstruction Association in the mid-1930s, was an early member of the Mistery, as was the forester St. Barbe Baker. Two noted practitioners of organic methods, later prominent in the Soil Association, loyally served the Mistery and the Array: Captain Ronald ('Roy') Wilson and Ralph Coward. Wilson, who ran the Iceni Nurseries at Surfleet in Lincolnshire, became 'Marshal of the Fens' for the Array, while Coward, a neighbour of Rolf Gardiner, was 'Reeve' of the Dorset Kin. Wilson's estate was a showpiece of organic and bio-dynamic cultivation – Sir Albert Howard and Ehrenfried Pfeiffer acted as advisors – and was visited by the British Association in September 1937; it also hosted Mistery and Array camps. It is impossible, where

[53] David Pryce-Jones, *Unity Mitford: a quest* (1976), p. 201 and plate no. 20. On the British Council Against European Commitments, see Richard Griffiths, *Fellow-Travellers*, p. 322, and HRO, 15M84/F255.

[54] HRO, 15M84/F189, Wallop to Norman Hay, 23 Mar. 1939; F184, Wallop to Tom Nesbit, 29 Jan. 1939; F207, Nesta Webster to Wallop. *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 Dec. 1938, p. 40 and 3 Mar. 1939, p. 40.

Wallop's activities are concerned, to draw a line between politics and agriculture: in October 1935 he held a farming conference at Farleigh Estate which was not sponsored by the Mistery but which Wilson attended and to which another Mistery-man, future Minister of Agriculture Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, was invited. One of the conference's proposals was a Land Bank, in order that agriculture could 'get away from the present system of usury'. A year later, the Eleventh, or Farleigh, Kin of the English Mistery attended a meeting at which Wallop's paper on 'The place of agriculture in Home Defence' was read about ten days before he presented it to an audience at the Farmers' Club. In the summer of 1939, in a 'Report on Progress', Wallop referred to the camp being held by Lord Northbourne, at which Ehrenfried Pfeiffer was guest of honour. He wrote that it was not directly connected with the Array but might help spread the Array's approach to agriculture.[55]

As we saw earlier, the nutritionist Sir Robert McCarrison attended the Farleigh Estate conference on health and agriculture in the summer of 1938, and a year later Wallop invited him to an Array camp, explaining that the English Array, in preaching regeneration and right values, paid 'the greatest attention to health and the soil'. An article by McCarrison had been read to the Farleigh Kin in April 1938, and a concern with nutrition, health and physique can be found in the work of both the Array and the Mistery. In 1934 and 1935 the virtues of unpasteurized, raw, 'virile' milk were extolled at meetings of the Farleigh Kin; in November 1936 the Kinsmen discussed the state of the national physique.[56] After Wallop ousted Sanderson in 1937 and changed the Mistery's name to the more pugnacious 'Array', the organic concerns of agriculture and health became more prominent. A memorandum, probably dating from the spring of 1938, was issued, outlining the Array's policy on nutrition and health; it was in most respects identical to that of the wider organic movement. The Array's constructive policy began in the soil, since regeneration of the soil was the basis of sound nutrition; the work of McCarrison, Howard, Pfeiffer and Wrench was adduced as evidence for this assertion. Leaders of the Array, in conjunction with eminent men outside it, were questioning the unsound methods of contemporary agriculture and thereby challenging the vested interests of importers, pill makers and those who, through 'the false semitic standards of money value', had debased the national diet. Tea, black coffee, refined sugar and white bread were particularly harmful; Array members did what they could to promote local production of wholemeal bread. Preventive medicine was vital, since the cost of sickness could be halved by instituting 'a really sound intensive home agriculture'. All Wardens were recommended to own a copy of McCarrison's *Nutrition and Health*.[57]

Along with these proposals was to be found an explicit eugenic policy. Array members should

[55] A letter from Wallop to Gardiner, HRO, 15M84/F191, 15 Mar. 1938, indicates that the latter was not a member of the Array. I must therefore correct the error contained in App. B of my *Origins of the organic movement* (p. 245), which makes him a member of both the Mistery and the Array. On Wallop's friendship with Michael Beaumont, see Portsmouth, *Knot*, pp. 108–10. On Roy Wilson's work at Surfleet, see George Godwin, *The Land our larder* (1939). Material on the 1935 farming conference can be found in HRO, 15M84/F178. Wallop's reading of his Farmers' Club paper is recorded in HRO, 15M84/5/13/3. The 'Report on progress' is in F184 and the note on Northbourne's summer camp is in F176.

[56] HRO, 15M84/F184,Wallop to McCarrison, 31 July 1939. Notes on the papers read to the Farleigh Kin can be found in HRO, 15M84/5/13/3.

[57] 'Memorandum to Wardens', HRO, 15M84/F366.

recruit, work and mate only with 'sound' types; more than that, as one of the appendices emphasized (displaying the hallmark of Ludovici), they should oppose all breeding which diluted national characteristics, especially the breeding of Jews and of physically inferior specimens. Another Array document expresses the sinister view that 'if we are to save our race, we must exclude all those waste human products of the world that today are turning us rapidly into a mongrel population'.[58] Yet in organic cultivation, it is precisely the waste products which are of most value and guarantee renewed life. The wider organic movement did not adopt this eugenic programme, for which Ludovici condemned it. But Wallop, Wilson and Coward subscribed to a creed requiring them to 'hate the alien corruption and internationalism which tries to destroy the frontiers of culture and clean breeding', and which referred to 'God's purpose in making soil and blood and climate something different for every land'.[59]

The Array placed the survival and regeneration of rural life at the centre of its vision of England's future. While Wallop was prepared for the Array to collaborate with the British Union of Fascists where appropriate, he disagreed with Mosley's movement for a number of reasons, one of them being that it was too urban. After the war, when former Array members were considering the feasibility of reactivating its work, Col. G. L. Archer of Ely wrote to Wallop to say that they could now hope for no more than to sow seeds, but that above all they should fight urbanisation.[60] This, of course, was exactly what Wallop was trying to do through the Kinship in Husbandry.

V

In the case of Gerard Wallop, then, the contention that far-Right politics and support for organic cultivation were separate beliefs, coincidentally to be found held by certain members of the organic movement, is completely unsustainable. 'We in the Array see the picture as a whole', he declared, and, whatever one may think of his social and political philosophy, it had a coherent pattern to it of which organic farming was an integral part.[61] Furthermore, Wallop was a central figure in the organic movement's coalescence during the 1930s and '40s. But he was also one of the most politically extreme of its pioneers, and his views were not shared by all who sympathized with his ideas on agriculture. There might be a case for arguing that Wallop seized on the ideas of Howard and McCarrison for his own purposes, giving the organic movement a far-Right bias which was not essential to its message. Issues of food and health were as much a concern of the Left as of the Right during the 1930s, and one could advocate a healthy diet out of concern for those afflicted by poverty, as John Boyd Orr did, rather than from a desire to preserve pure racial types. Similarly, it was not necessary to be anti-semitic to dislike finance capitalism. Neither was concern for the state of the countryside a preserve of the Right: witness the range of political views represented by the contributors to Clough Williams-Ellis's jeremiad *Britain and the Beast*, or the work of Valentine Ackland. In fact, one of George

[58] HRO, 15M84/F366 and F364.

[59] 'Belief for a man of the Array', HRO, 15M84/F178.

[60] Wallop's willingness to collaborate with the BUF is revealed in documents in HRO, 15M84/F188 and 364. F193, letter, Archer to Wallop, 6 Aug. 1946.

[61] 'Advice to Wardens', HRO, 15M84/F366.

Orwell's complaints about socialists in *The Road to Wigan Pier* was precisely that they tended to be too much tarred with the brush of dietary faddism and hiking.[62]

Nor did a refusal to interpret biological life mechanistically mean that one had to take the step of seeing human beings as purely organic. John Macmurray, whose rejection of the 'organic analogy' we noted earlier, agreed with the organicists that living things should not be regarded as machines, but he parted company from them when they applied organic categories to humanity. He devoted his philosophical career to developing a conception of human life which, while doing full justice to its material and organic nature, saw person-hood as its defining feature. Macmurray's ideas profoundly affected one of his students at University College, London, in the 1930s; this was Robert Waller, who later advocated 'human ecology' and edited the Soil Association journal *Mother Earth* from 1964 until the early 1970s.[63]

That the far-Right politics of some of the organic movement's founders were bound up with their agricultural views should now be clear; that such political views are a necessary corollary of a belief in organic cultivation and an ecological perspective is a much more doubtful proposition. It may be that Gerard Wallop's central influence during the organic movement's formative period hindered it by harnessing his extreme nationalist and anti-semitic beliefs to concern for the very real problems of national nutrition and agriculture. And it is ironic that someone who opposed monoculture in farming systems should be so convinced of the need to keep England free from anything that might dilute its own supposed cultural purity.

Wallop's contribution to the organic movement must in the end be considered ambivalent. That it emerged as a coherent opposition to industrial-chemical farming is substantially thanks to his gift for bringing people together, his extensive knowledge of agriculture, his energy and his powers of communication. But the vision of an 'organic' English society, racially and culturally pure, lent the movement a political taint which must have been unappealing to many who might otherwise have supported it, and is still used to its discredit today. In many ways a remarkable and interesting figure, Gerard Wallop insisted on seeing human beings as little more than 'stock' or examples of racial types; the result was animosity towards the 'alien' and the physically inferior which cast a shadow over a movement whose chief aim was to celebrate the potential bounty which Mother Earth could offer to all her children.

[62] John Boyd Orr, *As I Recall* (1966), p. 118. Clough Williams-Ellis, *Britain and the Beast* (1937); contributors included Patrick Abercrombie, E. M. Forster, C. E. M. Joad, J. M. Keynes, H. J. Massingham and G. M. Trevelyan, and messages of support were sent by, among others, Lloyd George, George Lansbury, Stafford Cripps, J. B. Priestley and Julian Huxley. Valentine Ackland wrote *Country Conditions* (1936); also see Wright, *Village*, pp. 128–30 and 136–39. George Orwell, *The road to Wigan Pier* (1972), pp. 152–3.

[63] The appointment of Robert Waller (b. 1913) as editor of the Soil Association journal *Mother Earth*, after the death of Jorian Jenks in 1963, marks a significant change in the Association's stance. Jenks had been agricultural advisor to Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists during the 1930s, and still supported Mosley in the late 1940s, when he was editor of *Mother Earth*. Waller, on the other hand, took to heart Macmurray's warnings against seeing human life as purely biological. With his assistant Michael Allaby, he sought to shift the Association towards a philosophy of 'human ecology', and reduce the influence of the squirearchical tendency. See Robert Waller, *Be human or die* (1973); for the influence of Macmurray, see particularly pp. 66–78.

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BLAIKIE, A., 'Coastal communities in Victorian Scotland: what makes north-east fisher families distinctive?', *Local Population Stud.*, 69 (2002), pp. 15–31.

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* Publications are normally of 2003 unless stated. The following short titles are used: *AgHR, Agricultural History Rev.; EcHR, Economic History Rev.*

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Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

RICHARD BRITNELL (ed.), *The Winchester pipe rolls and medieval English society* (Boydell Press, 2003). x + 213 pp. £55.

This volume arises out of a conference held at Winchester in 1999 to present new research based on the Winchester pipe rolls. It celebrates the earliest known series of surviving English manorial accounts, beginning in 1208–9 and arguably the first of their kind to be created, which have since 1959 been in the custody of the Hampshire Record Office following a seventy-year sojourn in the Public Record Office. Taking the change from rolls to registers in 1455 as its terminus, the volume includes an up-to-date hand-list of the rolls, giving their former and current references, and an excellent account by the editor of their archival history and custody with a historiographical introduction to the use made of them. Bruce Campbell emphasizes the uniqueness and atypicality of the rolls themselves and the estate that produced them, deploying a vast amount of information about other manorial sources and other estates in England to put them into context. He concludes with a valuable section on the methodological challenge which this presents to historians. Nicholas Vincent rounds off the volume by examining the extensive information they give on the political history of church and state, with many sidelights on the careers of the bishops themselves and other important men like the legist Henry Bracton. The other contributors make detailed use of the rolls to examine particular issues in the economic history of the Winchester estates. Katherine Stocks considers the surviving evidence of payments into manorial courts before 1250, the Winchester rolls providing by far the earliest and the most numerous examples. They give information about the timing, business and administration of these courts in their earliest years, also showing a rapid increase in the proportion of people making payments into court and the overall volume of business.

There follow four major articles of the greatest interest to agricultural historians. Mark Page writes about the peasant land market before the Black Death, emphasizing the primacy of inheritance as a means of transferring villein land, sharp differences in the pattern of land transfers between different manors, some of them stable and others susceptible to rapid tenurial change, and the existence of a cycle of expansion and contraction on peasant holdings in some manors. He points out that a more complex reality can sometimes be shown to lie behind simple and uniform entries about holdings, which were often more fragmented than they appear because of the need to provide for non-inheriting children, servants or others. John Mullan deals with the transfer of customary estates between the plagues of 1349 and 1361, and confirms that, as suggested by earlier studies elsewhere, there was a clear and steady fall in the volume of transfers between the two outbreaks. A lower proportion of these were transactions between members of the family of the previous tenant. At the same time, however, despite attempts by the bishop and his estate managers to maintain the status quo by raising entry fines back to their pre-plague level, there were innovative practices, such as the registration of life-tenancies and recoveries, which gave the market potential for greater vitality subsequently. Christopher Thornton writes about levels of productivity between 1283 and 1348 on the huge manor of Taunton, where five sub-manors may be compared with each other as well as other manors elsewhere. He uses the Weighted Aggregate Crop Yields (WACY) method of measurement developed by Bruce Campbell. The peak levels of cultivated acreage were reached in the first half of the thirteenth century, before falling off sharply after the 1270s to less than half the earlier levels by the 1330s. This he attributes to a managerial reassessment of profits from assarts on former pasture, not to a decline in fertility. The standard cropping regime was a three-course rotation of wheat, oats and fallow, minor variants being explained by local conditions. The contribution of stock to the arable regime is given due weight, but he concludes that the estate managers failed to integrate corn and stock effectively, with resulting low crop yields characteristic of the Taunton manors. These remained acceptable only because of low demand, mainly local rather than from more distant markets. The quality of marginal land was initially enhanced by large-scale marling, which later

declined as the demesne contracted. Despite this, Taunton contributed heavily to the bishop's cash income, mainly through sources other than the marketing of arable production. The rolls also give information about the employment of the customary labourers, on whose work the estate was overwhelmingly dependent. Another essay on building investment in the early fourteenth century by John Langdon, Jill Walker and John Falconer uses records of the costs of new buildings from 1297 to 1348 to test a hypothesis that there was a reduction in expenditure on construction which contributed to the economic distress of that period. The pattern proved rather to be one of a series of alternate peaks and troughs. Periods of downturn included the famine of 1315–22, with booms in 1310–15 and early in the war with France in 1337–43, although some of this reflected the desire of a new bishop to make his mark after a period of crown custody of the estate.

This wide-ranging book will henceforth provide an invaluable point of reference for further work on this magnificent series of documents.

DAVID CROOK
The National Archives

SANDRA RABAN, *A second Domesday? The hundred rolls of 1279–80* (OUP, 2004). ix + 229 pp. 4 tables; 2 maps. £35.

In response to the question which forms this book's title, Raban's answer is potentially yes, but in practice no. Since the distance between Domesday book and the hundred rolls extended beyond two hundred years, the complexity which the hundred rolls had to address rendered the standardization and compression of Domesday book impossible. The transformations during those two centuries, moreover, disallowed the completion of the project in any form – so this inquisition was abandoned leaving its imprint ostensibly for only a swathe across the Midlands with fragments from elsewhere (comprising *in toto* 56 hundreds and 13 towns and suburbs – p. 92). In reflecting on these issues, Raban has produced the first comprehensive account of the administrative and organizational background to the hundred rolls of 1279–80.

Many readers of this journal will be familiar with the exploitation of the hundred rolls for the structures of landholding, composition of peasant society, and seigniorial extraction from the peasantry. Indeed, one of the most recent attempts has been published here (Barg, *AgHR*, 39, 1991). As well as considering the information in the hundred rolls in her analysis of the structure of landholding, Sandra Raban has long been reflecting on their production and this volume is the result of her mature consideration and is definitive – in so far as any elucidation of the enigmas and complexities of the hundred rolls can ever be.

Despite the incorporation of a chapter on 'Uses of the rolls' and the evocative title of another, 'An inquiring culture', Raban's principal purpose is a diplomatic study of the composition of the rolls and their administrative context. The 'culture' of inquiry relates to the proclivity of Edward I and his contemporaries abroad to acquire information by sending out justices to make local inquests, sometimes for specific purposes. Presumably here 'culture' denotes a bureaucratic imperative combined with a personal impulse stimulated by a general context of investigation at this time.

Confirmation is amply supplied that the embarkation on the survey was ill-conceived: there was apparently no 'standard set of articles [of enquiry]' (p. 49); the project was too ambitious for the personnel available (p. 36); and the justices collected information at their discretion and that of the jurors, which was difficult to digest (pp. 90–1, 96). The surviving returns conceal the extent of the activity of the original commission, which might have been *started* more widespreadly. The survey was, however, quickly aborted and abandoned, often before the returns were committed to parchment.

Departing from the administrative history of the rolls, the final chapter recapitulates the significant contribution which analysis has made to the understanding of rural society at the zenith of the high middle ages. Here, the concentration is on peasant rents and services (Kosminsky, Kanzaka, Raban), the fortunes of estate management, comparing larger and smaller estate holders, and the regional distribution of the free tenantry. As interesting in this section, however, are the suggestions about inadvertent contemporary consequences of the rolls. The revelation of the magnitude of estates held by the church combined with its failure to show warrant might have occasioned 'a distorted impression of ecclesiastical aggrandizement' (p. 123) which contributed to the impulse to severity in the first statute of mortmain (1279). As another consequence, the rolls provided lords of small estates, not in the habit of record making, the opportunity to keep a copy of the survey (p. 125). On the other hand, annotations that some lords were uncooperative perhaps illustrates a suspicion of a fiscal purpose (p. 128). Moreover, caution should be exercised when deploying the rolls to examine social structure, for the interpretation given by the justices to small tenants is compressed, ambiguous and confusing (p. 127). Nevertheless, the rolls provide one of the few available resources for perceiving the role of smaller estates (p. 131).

In rehearsing the potential reasons for the survey, Raban concedes that there is no firm evidence of any single purpose. It is possible that, in the end, it must be

ascribed to no more than an investigative preoccupation, although there may have been some fiscal motive and she believes that the focus had been diverted from land and tenurial structure in 1086 to franchises, liberties and rights in 1279–80 (p. 41). The significance of that last influence, however, might seem to lose impact in the face of the 1274–5 inquest into those privileges and the inception of the *quo warranto* proceedings about the same time. If, as is asserted (p. 89), the surveys in the rolls bear a resemblance to those in inquisitions *post mortem*, might we not be confronted by a general cadastral survey about *The lordship of England* (Scott Waugh)?

Categorizing this volume as an administrative history, in fact, does its author a disservice, for no one interested in governance and governmentality, literacy, lordship – indeed, the whole range of medieval English history – will be able to ignore this book, not least agrarian and rural historians who intend to exploit the information in the hundred rolls.

DAVE POSTLES
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R. W. HOYLE (ed.), *People, landscape and alternative agriculture. Essays for Joan Thirsk* (Agricultural History Review Supplement Series 3, 2004). xi + 148 pp. Available from the Treasurer, BAHS, c/o Department of History, University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter, EX4 4RJ, £17.50 post free.

This collection of eight essays is the Agricultural History Society's tribute to the enduring influence of founding member, and two-time President, the eminent and energetic Joan Thirsk. Almost all of the authors were her students, and everyone celebrates her curiosity and originality as they explore and expand themes and subjects that she pioneered.

The collection begins and ends with essays on rural industry: David Hey opens with a finely-drawn reconstruction of the industrial woodland township of Barlow, south of Sheffield, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; Paul Brassley concludes with an equally-acute account of the genesis of the Oxford Rural Industries Survey of 1926/7. Three essays take single commodities for their focus and examine them for their wider significance: Christopher Dyer assesses the extent of medieval goat-keeping, Richard Hoyle looks at the high politics of growing woad in England and Ireland in the 1580s, and John Chartres considers the value to small producers of the eighteenth-century spade-cultivated crop, liquorice. Two essays look more closely at rural social relations: Peter Edwards describes conflicts over common wastes and drainage schemes in early modern Shropshire, and Elizabeth Griffiths uncovers landlords' management strategies in late seventeenth-century Norfolk. Finally, in a wide-ranging contribution to a collection marked by its attention to both detail and significance, John Broad surveys the regional development of English dairying from 1650 to 1850.

The themes, then, are industries in the countryside, economic policy and projects, peasant economy (including commons and common right), and 'alternative agriculture'. The last is defined in Thirsk's book of the same name (1997) as the agriculture adopted when low prices for 'mainstream' cereals and meat prompt innovations that change both farming and consumption for the long term. How do these essays add to our knowledge of these inter-related themes?

Hey's description of Barlow's charcoal, whitecoal, lead, iron and coal industries recovers a landscape now almost entirely lost. Here is an England of industrial woodland and transhumance to summer moorland pastures. These Peak District woods flourished because they were, in themselves, another crop. Closed to farmers, they attracted iron workers from the Weald and orehearth workers from the Mendips. Elsewhere in England, rural industry absorbed local labour and enabled families to settle for generations, but, as far as this scrupulous account can determine, the economies and communities of these farmers, smelters and colliers were as separate as their geographical origins. They invite comparison with the economy of multiple employments followed by free miners in other parts of the Peak, and with the proletarian miners of Whickham.

Deliberate economic policy encouraged some rural industries, either in principle or as specific projects. Hoyle and Brassley look at the politics behind government attitudes to rural industry. In the 1580s, ministerial speculation led to attempts to discourage woad-growing in England and encourage it in Ireland. Private gain was the aim, not finding work for the poor in either place. Woad-growers in England carried on regardless. Thirsk's view that scandals 'were but the scum on the surface of a healthy current of water' seems confirmed. In the aftermath of the First World War momentary ministerial interest in finding alternative occupations to keep agricultural labouring families on the land enabled the survey of England's rural industries by two women (Mrs Helen FitzRandolph and Miss Doriel Hay), themselves far from indifferent. Although official interest quickly waned, industrial employment had become a way to support agriculture and rural culture in general.

Peasant practice in keeping goats and cows, grazing fen commons, and growing niche-crops in gardens allows discussion of Thirsk's notion of alternative agriculture. To this end Dyer rescues the medieval goat (smelly, ugly, lusty, sinister, devilish, destructive, presumptuous and comic) from the silence of the

record. He finds them in hilly and wooded places, on demesnes as well as small farms, in the north west but also in the south east and elsewhere. Good at reclaiming poor land, they were also labour intensive and so women's work. Never as numerous as sheep, which outnumbered them ten to one at Domesday, goats nonetheless survived as 'a large and persistent' population in the north west in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Their presence suggests that in addition to the oscillation of mainstream and alternative agricultures there was a more continuous subsistence agriculture in the hands of peasants or small farmers: an agriculture more for use than for sale. Perhaps some of the turves, peat, conies, fish and fodder taken from fen commons, well-described by Peter Edwards in his essay on intercommoning conflicts in Shropshire, served a similar purpose. These came under threat in the late sixteenth century when population growth made drainage a profitable operation for those with 'mainstream' ambitions.

Growing medicinal liquorice was a long-term peasant practice that fits Thirsk's view that 'alternative' products were well-suited to small operators who were often their originators. It flourished in the deep, friable soils of Pontefract in the eighteenth century. Chartres notes the scot and lot franchise here and suggests that the votes of the growers also protected their enterprises – though merchants won the lion's share of the profits. In contrast to liquorice, little peasant dairying survived the eighteenth century. Broad, like others including Deborah Valenze who offers a more gendered account, sets the onset of its decline in the second half of that century. His contention that few peasants kept cows in pastoral-industrial villages is more surprising, though no one would argue that cows could be kept without land or extensive commons – as Thirsk pointed out many years ago. The standardization of cheese types in response to the demands of wholesalers completes this description of the tendency of population growth in England to undermine both diversity and small producers.

A final illustration of the strategies pursued in periods of alternative agriculture is the practice of 'letting to halves' in which the landlord shared some of the costs of production and took a share of the return. Elizabeth Griffiths suggests that landlords were more willing to take on responsibilities like this in the late seventeenth century than they were later on. She proposes that a 'cultural shift' occurred in the early eighteenth century as gentry families moved from a close connection with the running of their estates to a more distant reliance on leases and land stewards. Some years ago, Trevor Raybould and John Beckett noted a similar pattern in the exploitation of minerals on aristocratic estates, but here initial engagement gave way to rentier status a century later. Perhaps the different development of industrial and agricultural 'crops' determined the need for a landlord's involvement, causing this cultural shift to occur at different times in different places. That it happened in farming in the early eighteenth century offers a cultural context for the engrossment of farms and the parliamentary enclosures that followed.

These essays are a fitting tribute to an exceptional historian. They are meticulously researched, alert to large questions, and written with both wit and affection. Together they add to the rich diversity of writing about rural history that Joan Thirsk has done so much to encourage.

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JOHN BROAD, *Transforming English rural society. The Verneys and the Claydons, 1600–1820* (CUP, 2004). xvi + 292 pp. 13 tables; 8 figs. £50.

Given the amount of scholarly attention that has been devoted to these well-documented Buckinghamshire landowners, it cannot be long before some enterprising institution of higher education starts a degree in 'Verney Studies'. If so, then John Broad's volume on the growth, development and transformation of the family's core estate in the three Claydon parishes deserves to be at the head of the reading list. This volume represents the distillation of Dr. Broad's extensive researches over the last thirty years into the estate policy of the family and the growth of their estates. These are presented in an unusual and impressive amalgam of two increasingly conventional idioms – the local community study and the estate history. By combining the two, this account traces the wider social impact of the Verney family's single-minded pursuit of land and power in north Buckinghamshire, and its effect on fortunes of the three contrasting Claydon villages. In doing so, it illustrates how far a landowner could recast a settlement according to his own priorities, and make its inhabitants' daily life serve his ends. As such, this work provides a valuable addition to the broader social and economic history of rural England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Broad's study of the Verney family traces a cycle of growth and decay – their financial ascent from the return of Sir Ralph from exile in 1653; and their partial collapse in the 1780s under the debts of the 2nd Earl Verney. Both elements have a number of fascinating aspects. Broad demonstrates how the harsh lessons learned by Sir Ralph in the 1640s shaped the financial strategy of the family through his long life, and the two succeeding generations, into the 1740s. In essence, the Verney's

combined a ruthlessly commercial management regime with close personal scrutiny of estate business and of their tenants, particularly in Middle Claydon. Few other rural settlements in later seventeenth-century England can have been under such relentless and pervasive surveillance by their landowner. The family also adopted preferred marriage into prosperous, but unconnected, commercial families over alliances that would bolster their position in the county or in national politics. Until the succession of the second earl in the 1740s, they favoured solvent obscurity to the high stakes (but high risks) of seeking power at court or parliament. Again, they seem to have been perpetuating the lessons learned during the life of the courtier Sir Edmund Verney, whose rewards for service to Charles I were precarious finances and an early death at Edgehill in 1642.

While tight-fisted estate management and a succession of lucrative marriage agreements achieved family prosperity in incremental steps over a century, the dramatic financial disasters of the second earl nearly undid this in a generation. Broad's portrait of this Ralph Verney is subtle and intricate. Diligent and dutiful, rather than the archetypal aristocratic wastrel, he was undone by the two commonplace desires of the eighteenth-century gentry, of building a house and a parliamentary interest. These ambitions brought large debts, but were not in themselves likely to lead to ruin. Verney's rash attempt to fund them by speculating in East India futures was, however. By 1786 his debts totalled £140,095, and he had degenerated into a grasping, destructive and devious character, quite at odds with his previous behaviour. He went into exile, while his trustees sold the outlying estates, and stabilized the situation by his death in 1791.

The rise and near fall of the Verneys had other significant costs. In particular, Broad shows how the open-field, 'peasant' community of Middle Claydon was transformed in the mid-seventeenth century into a tightly-policed estate village. Here the Verneys exercised a hard-edged 'paternalism', ensuring that while their tenants did not have to go to law or go cold in winter, they were sure to pay a market rent, and acquiesce to the family's wishes, particularly the exclusion of migrants. As Parson Butterfield wrote in 1671 'those that are like to multiply may do it for the king, but not for Middle Claydon'. The Verneys depopulated the village and reduced an occupationally-diverse and self-sufficient settlement to a collection of farmers, servants and labourers. In East Claydon, where their landholding brought control rather than dominance, the population stagnated between 1660 and 1800 and some rural craftsmen remained. In Steeple Claydon, which they had failed to enclose in the seventeenth century and where they held only one-third of the land, the population doubled, and the community retained the characteristics of an 'open' village. Only here did a more varied village economy survive, albeit one impoverished by unrestrained in-migration.

In this sense, the Claydons were the canvas on which the Verneys' financial ambitions and social imperatives were drawn. The great strength of this depiction is that this landscape is full of people, so that estate policy is set in its wider social context, to show the human costs of the Verneys' actions. It would have been enlightening to discover the social consequences in the Claydons of the financial crisis of the 1770s and 1780s, but the main legacy of this period is a sketchy estate archive. Similarly, the extensive correspondence of the first Sir Ralph Verney depicts his paternal interference in the villages more strongly than that of his successors, who may have been equally involved, but who failed to leave such an extensive archive. Of necessity, therefore, this study of the relationship between the family and the Claydons is able to say more about the seventeenth rather than the eighteenth century. Despite this, it remains a comprehensive and enlightening illustration of the social consequences of the widespread phenomenon of the growth of the 'great estate' during the long eighteenth century. It deserves a wide readership, both among scholars seeking to discover where the independent, self-sustaining early-modern village went to, and those concerned to establish where the dependent, tied estate-community came from.

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PATRICIA E. C. CROOT (ed.), *The Victoria history of the counties of England. A history of the county of Middlesex*, XII, *Chelsea* (Boydell and Brewer for the Institute of Historical Research, 2004). xviii + 298 pp. 76 illus; 16 plates; 10 maps and plans. £90.

This volume covers a small area, a wedge-shaped parish 660 acres in extent in 1900 after small detached portions had been relocated. The southern boundary is the Thames and small tributaries define its western and eastern extent. The surface geology is predominantly Kempton Park gravel over London clay, with some brickearth and silt. The whole parish lies under the ten metre contour. The village which gave the parish its name originated on the Thames bank, a Saxon settlement whose earliest record dates from 785. Mercian kings were thought to have resided at Chelsea in the eighth century, and through the succeeding centuries the parish was a retreat from London and Westminster for royalty, aristocracy and rich citizenry. The building of the grand Royal Hospital in 1680s attracted further well-to-do settlement. In the eighteenth century Chelsea had a reputation as a suburban resort, with pleasure gardens

and inns in a pleasing riverside setting. Artists were also attracted to the picturesque rural village, and remained when, in the nineteenth century, it lost all agriculture and became a London suburb. Much of the volume describes urban Chelsea but here I will concentrate on the agriculture which preceded bricks and mortar.

The medieval manor of Chelsea was roughly coterminous with the parish. For two periods, 1376–70 and in the mid-fifteenth century, the demesne was held by Westminster Abbey. In the first period barley was the main crop, followed by rye and wheat, then oats and a few acres of mixed grains and vetches. Grain not saved for seed or consumed at home was sent to the Abbey's granary or to Battersea and one has the sense that the food demands of London and Westminster, just down the river, were already being felt. Big changes occurred in the seventeenth century, when closes and the two open fields were increasingly turned over to commercial gardening to serve the metropolis or went out of agriculture as formal gardens and parkland attached to residences of incoming gentry and nobility.

Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries Chelsea was one of a number of parishes near London where vegetables, fruit and nursery produce became of major importance. Unlike the Neat Houses in neighbouring Westminster, where closes of predominantly wet-pasture were converted to gardens, most of Chelsea's vegetables were grown in the open fields, by husbandmen who incorporated spade-cultivated vegetables, particularly roots, into their more traditional grain-based farming. These farmer-gardeners dispensed with fallows, relying on copious amounts of dung from the nearby city to refresh the soil. As elsewhere near London, commercial gardens were eventually superseded by buildings but high rents for garden ground ensured that the open fields of Chelsea, like those of Fulham, survived into the nineteenth century. The gradual encroachment of gardening into Chelsea farming is well described in the section on agriculture but there is no discussion of who the first gardeners were or what was the process of innovation.

Chelsea was particularly famed for its nursery gardens. Beginning probably towards the end of the seventeenth century, the business was well-established by the mid-eighteenth century, supplying a local, national and international market. Nurserymen needed only small areas of land to ply their trade and lasted longer than market gardeners in the area: many opened showrooms in the Kings Road where the larger firms survived into the twentieth century.

There are informative short histories of the leading nursery firms in this volume and from these one can understand the highly specialized nature of this trade. James Veitch & Sons sent plant hunters to China, produced many important hybrids, and worked with scientific institutions. Joseph Knight, who began trading in Chelsea in 1808, had a large collection of exotic plants housed in a conservatory and other buildings. These businesses were supplying exotic and novel plants to the fashion-conscious gentry; no wonder they could pay rents which kept the builders at bay for so long.

There are some faults in this volume. E. J. Willson is misquoted on p. 152. She wrote that a Frenchman in Chelsea was said to have first grown lettuces successfully in England on a large scale in the mid-eighteenth century; the words 'on a large scale' are omitted here making the statement nonsense. The proof-reader has overlooked the garbled sentence on p. 166 beginning, 'In 1886 it was destroyed by fire in 1807 . . .'. A more serious problem is the disappointing maps. There are no maps of market gardening and nursery-ground. Use could have been made of eighteenth and nineteenth century maps to show the spread, and decline, of gardening in the parish, including Thomas Milne's detailed land-use map of 1800. Five of the ten maps and plans are sections of the Ordnance Survey map depicting Chelsea *c.* 1865. Use of this map has merit but the reproduction is poor: the text is too small to read and the sections of map are grey and indistinct. In contrast, the illustrations in the book are plentiful and well-chosen.

Any criticisms are outweighed by the large amount of careful scholarship in this volume which will be welcomed by historians of London and its suburbs.

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JON STOBART, *The first industrial region. North-west England, c. 1700–60* (Manchester UP, 2004). xi + 259 pp. 30 tables; 33 figs. £49.99

Most works on the early phases of industrialization in the north west focus on the thickening of the rural population and the increase in rural manufacture as an adjunct to agriculture. Stobart adopts a rather different approach and, using the skills of the historical geographer, subjects the urban structure of Cheshire and south Lancashire and the development of an integrated regional economy to detailed and extended analysis. This analysis is placed within the context of theories of urban growth which are established at the outset and scattered throughout the remainder of the text.

Stobart's argument is developed in chapters on the textile industries, coal-using industries, the service sector and the spatial integration of the urban system. Overall, Stobart develops a strong case for the centrality of the urban network to patterns of regional economic development and he concludes that we need to

'fundamentally rethink our conceptualization of economic development' (p. 222). In particular, he calls for concepts of regional economic development to be not only spatialized, but for regional urban hierarchies and the inter-connectedness which characterized the urban structure to be placed at the centre of such analysis. This spatialization of economic systems and the sensitivity to sub-regional economies and structures are major strengths of the work and raise important conceptual issues that others will need to take on board. Furthermore, the focus on the period before the classic industrial revolution is a major strength, even if one cannot help but read the text with a degree of hindsight.

Whilst the book has many strengths, I have many reservations. As the concept of the region is central to Stobart's analysis and argument, one might have expected some discussion on the definition of the region and some justification for the selection of Cheshire and south Lancashire as the region. My suspicion is that the region was selected because it broadly coincides with the area of jurisdiction of the probate court at Chester, as wills form the major archival resource for the analysis. Perhaps this explains why places such as Frodsham and Malpas are included while other places which were indubitably part of the same regional economy such as Buxton, Garstang, Lancaster and perhaps even Ulverston and Kendal are not. Also, given the importance of urban/rural integration in Stobart's model, the exclusion of the Fylde, which was probably the region's most productive arable area in the early eighteenth century, is difficult to comprehend. Moreover, the integrity of the region as Stobart defines it is undermined through the text. In Chapter Three, Stobart establishes a series of distinct sub-regional economic systems, and yet the rest of the book refers to the single region. One is left wondering if indeed we have a single region or a plurality of regions. Furthermore, the interconnectedness of Cheshire and Lancashire is not firmly established. Chester and Liverpool developed the strongest links, undoubtedly the product of the relative decline of the former, and the rapid development of the latter, partly as a result of the relocation of Chester merchants to Liverpool. However, the evidence for further connectedness which would have helped establish the region is not always convincing.

Readers of this journal may be particularly interested to know where the agricultural regime fits in with Stobart's view of an integrated, interconnected regional economic system. On this issue, Stobart is particularly disappointing. He asserts that 'commercial agriculture was important across the region, but dominated much of Cheshire and west Lancashire: … these specialisms formed the basis of the industrial geography of north-west England during the industrial revolution' (p. 46). He further asserts that 'western and central Lancashire was, above all, a productive agricultural area … characterized by arable and mixed farming or market gardening, and by a relatively prosperous resident gentry willing to invest in agricultural improvement' (p. 70). However, at no point in the book does he offer any evidence to support his assertions of a commercial agricultural system and the references to Aikin (1795) are not convincing evidence given the rapid development of agriculture in the late eighteenth century, attested to by a number of studies which Stobart fails to cite. For instance, although cheese production in Cheshire was undoubtedly commercial, and Stobart is right to point out that some of this found its way onto Liverpool and Manchester markets, he fails to mention the cheese trade with London, nor does he refer to any of Foster's work on the subject.

Stobart's comments on the marketing of agricultural produce are also underdeveloped and fail to convince that there was a commercial agriculture connected to a complex web of urban networks. He points to an increase in rural food and drink retailers, although there is little evidence of specialized town-based wholesalers of agricultural products. Indeed, only nine of thirty urban settlements had a cheese or corn dealer. It is possible that a single town was home to a large number of such individuals who coordinated agricultural marketing across the region; it is further possible that a large number were based in rural settlements, but Stobart does not develop his analysis to this level. Nevertheless, in the light of Scola's work on the period after 1770, both seem unlikely. Although the chapter on the service sector contains frequent if sometimes oblique references to agricultural marketing, no firm conclusions about this issue can be drawn from the text. In the end, this discussion turns to the applicability of Christallerian or Loschian 'theories', and Vancian 'ideas', and to the non-specialist in the field will undoubtedly add confusion.

One final criticism is methodological. Much of the study is based on probate documents which Stobart uses to investigate occupational structure, the interconnectedness of the urban structure and the position within the urban hierarchy of individual settlements. Although this is subject to some statistical analysis, resulting in a great deal of mapping and tabulating of data, the appendix dealing with the methodological problems of using probate sources for this type of work is inadequate. Stobart identifies some of the problems, but fails to identify others, though there is insufficient space to explore this further here. Despite the large probate sample, some of the tables are based on very small numbers and there is sometimes a lack of awareness of chronological change

within his period. Stobart thinks and writes spatially – and asks us to do the same thing – and yet his chronological thinking is not as acute as it could have been.

Despite my reservations and the criticisms I have levelled at this book, it ought to be recognized for its many strengths. Stobart has made an important contribution to the study not just of this region, but of all regions. His conclusions and methodologies, omissions and weaknesses will be debated, but the core concepts of spatializing the region and investigating its internal structures and interconnections are of immense value and will undoubtedly encourage others to adopt similar approaches to their research.

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ROGER J. P. KAIN, JOHN CHAPMAN and RICHARD R. OLIVER, *The enclosure maps of England and Wales, 1595–1918. A cartographic analysis and electronic catalogue* (CUP, 2004). xx + 415 pp. 162 tables; 34 figs. £120.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Roger Kain has been, if not *the* pioneer, then certainly one of the pioneers in the construction of large data sets, and the presentation of those data sets in more user-friendly forms. We need only refer to his work on the tithe files to confirm his place in the historiography of agricultural history and historical geography. In this volume he is joined by two other central figures and pioneers in their own realms, John Chapman, noted for his work on enclosure, and Richard Oliver, a man of maps and of the history of cartography and surveying. In this volume they have brought together their different talents to produce a wonderfully rich source on the enclosure maps of England and Wales from 1595 to 1918 (though we are told that the first map is for 1598 for Haselbech in Northamptonshire). Moreover, they also invite the user to consult the database they have constructed and which is available online through the History Data Service of UK Data Archive at hds.essex.ac.uk/em/index.html. This review therefore will treat the two sources separately.

The narrative in the book occupies more or less half of its pages with the remainder in the form of data appendices. This narrative is divided into three parts. The first is a relatively brief history of the enclosure movement of England and Wales from the late sixteenth to the early twentieth century. It does not tell the reader anything new about this movement. This is not a criticism because the purpose of the book is not to offer a new interpretation or new twists to a well-known tale. Rather it is to introduce the reader to the maps that were generated, including insights into the surveyors and how the maps they produced changed over time. One distinction that is made in defining what or what not to include in the exercise undertaken is to include only formal enclosures. These are defined as those deriving either from parliamentary legislation, or from formal written agreements. Thus informal enclosures, perhaps the result of unity of possession whereby one individual in acquiring all land and common rights in a place then decided to enclose, are not included.

The second part is a county by county analysis of enclosure map characteristics including the area covered by enclosure maps (in both acres and hectares), the extent of the county and hence the density of cover of the maps, the number of maps and their chronological limits, and the average size of the maps. Thus Bedfordshire has 90 maps covering 67.8 per cent of the county from 1761 to 1890 at an average size of 2249 acres. Incidentally that is the highest proportion of enclosure map coverage of all the counties. In contrast Yorkshire North Riding has 143 maps covering 18.5 per cent of the county from 1709 to 1883 with an average size of 1758 acres, and Cheshire has as many as 75 maps but covering just 4.7 per cent of the county from 1762 to 1883 with an average size of only 405 acres. However, Cheshire is second only to neighbouring Shropshire in the proportion of maps that resulted from enclosure agreements as distinct from parliamentary intervention. The commentary which accompanies each county analysis includes details of map scales and of features such as decorative pictorial cartouches found on maps. Of great interest to most historians will be the lists of surveyors, the number of maps with which they were associated, and the areas those maps covered. Top surveyor in any single county seems to have been Robert Corby of Kirstead in Norfolk, working on 32 Norfolk enclosures amounting to 72,380 acres, followed by John Browne of Norwich, also working in Norfolk on 28 enclosures amounting to 67,843 acres, followed very closely by William Church of Abingdon in Berkshire working in Berkshire on 30 enclosures amounting to 66,169 acres.

The third part is an essay on enclosure maps. It takes the story forward by using illustrations from photographic reprints of original maps, and also from reconstructed county-based maps of the proportion of each county covered by surviving maps, distinguishing enclosure agreements from parliamentary enclosure, and distinguishing the distribution of maps constructed at different scales. This chapter also has something to say about the development of cartographic representation, not least the use of colour in maps and whether features like roads, drains and other depictions are present.

More or less half the book is an alphabetical index of first, the surveyors of the maps and secondly, an index of those places in England and Wales with extant

enclosure maps. This is a large database of names, addresses, counties with which the surveyors were associated and the acreages of land they surveyed. Top of this hit parade is Robert Corby, already referred to above, this time for work on 41 enclosures covering 117,964 acres in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. It looks like an old friend of mine, William Collisson of Brackley in Northamptonshire, comes second with 82,653 acres on his own in 17 enclosures of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Gloucestershire, Huntingdonshire, Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire, and a further 20,341 acres in collaboration with other surveyors in five enclosures in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Hertfordshire. I first drew attention to Collisson in 1977 and noted the enclave of surveyors in and around the town of Brackley, notably the Collisson and Russell families. The latter also figures prominently in this wider study.

The second or hidden half of this work is the website. The book is indexed by place name, and the website also allows a search by place name, but one very useful part of the website is that it also allows the user to put in a county name – say Buckinghamshire – and then produce an alphabetical list of all the places for that county for which there is an extant enclosure map. This information includes a unique number, a date, the type of place involved – dominantly described as townships in the north midland and the northern counties, parishes elsewhere in England and Wales, but also including places described as hamlets, liberties, manors, and tithings, or remaining unspecified – the name of the place itself and the county in which it is located, and a record office reference which is usually a county record office but the National Archives for those enclosures enrolled in the central records, especially those under the General Acts dating from the mid-nineteenth century. Moreover, having once selected a place it is possible to delve further into the detail of the map associated with that enclosure. This is categorized under literally dozens of different headings offering sometimes the most intimate details imaginable for a map.

In summary, this is an immense catalogue of enclosure maps which should be a standard source for generations of future researchers.

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JENNY BUCKTON, *The best of breeds. A history of Welsh Black cattle* (Gomer Press, 2004). xviii + 146 pp. 2 tables; 203 figs. £19.99.

If the National Eisteddfod, the incomparable Bryn Terfel and the occasional ageing and subfusc pop singer stand as today's Welsh urban cultural icons, then the Welsh Black cattle breed is foremost among claimants for iconic status in the countryside. Enduringly rugged and capable of withstanding the harshest of environmental conditions, the Welsh Black can be seen as a metaphor both for the landscape itself and for the worthy souls inhabiting it. A modern history of the breed has been long overdue and it was with great pleasure that I opened this handsomely-produced book from the pen of Jenny Buckton and the imprimatur of the admirable Gomer Press. But gloom and disappointment soon descended. Rather than offering a serious study of the biological evolution of the breed and critically discussing the economic (and even cultural) motives which determined temporal changes in its genetic constitution and phenotypic conformation, Ms Buckton takes up more than half of her book trying to explain (via a potted history) the role of cattle in Welsh society. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with this, of course, since as items of trade, tribute and status cattle of all shapes and sizes were of vital social as well as economic significance. The trouble is that Ms Buckton rather overeggs the pudding. Moreover, much of her historical narrative is quixotic and inaccurate and her cause hardly helped by a writing style sometimes so tortuous as to defy comprehension. As she slips confusingly from one historical period to another (using sources which are not only dated, but cited with alarming eccentricity), a fog descends as significant issues tend to get lost in a miasma of irrelevant detail. Throughout the text, mechanisms of change are studiously avoided as the author resorts to infuriatingly unscientific generalizations. Thus the aurochs grew to 'gigantic' proportions, the Neolithic period extended from 10,000 BC to 3000 BC, 'vast ranches' were established in Wales by 1200 BC, and farm tenants between 1790 and 1815 were in a 'pitiful' situation (they were, in fact, doing very well as a result of the Napoleonic blockade). Elsewhere we read of the nineteenth century as the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment, of an enigmatic 'Royal Inquest' of indeterminate date, of the cattle of Wales suffering an 'identity crisis' in the mid-eighteenth century and of the shire (sic) horse becoming a 'new force' in agriculture in the 1700s when in reality the breed was first registered in 1877. The lack of dates in Ms Buckton's text lead the reader down a variety of confused pathways sometimes culminating in statements of some singularity. We are asked to believe, for example, that the celebrated Thomas Johnes of Hafod introduced Friesian cows to his estate in 1840 when the poor man had gone to his reward in 1816. As if all this were not enough, the text is replete with evidence of poor proof-reading. The distinguished *Archaeologia Cambrensis* appears as *Cambrenese*, the well-known Norfolk land agent Hall W. Keary is introduced

as 'Hall Kearny'; we read of 'laying havoc', 'raked rentals' and 'plightlet' (presumably 'pightle' as in Adams *Agrarian landscape terms* or *OED*); *Dunsaetae* becomes *Densetae* and so on. This is all rather unfortunate in a work claimed by HRH Prince Charles in his foreword to be a story 'about the precious culture and heritage of Wales'.

The second half of the book, dealing with the period from the establishment of the earliest Welsh Black Cattle Herd Book in 1873 more or less to the present, offers the inevitable parade of animals and breeders which make breed histories such fun for those involved. While readers of this *Review* may be interested in aspects of the finances and membership of the breed society, and the efforts it has made to promote the Welsh Black and to sponsor exports to southern Africa, South America, India, Europe and elsewhere, I suspect they will approach the final chapter, more-or-less a listing of show-winning cattle and their owners (the former with often impenetrable names) with tepid enthusiasm. On the other hand, those with a practical eye will probably enjoy detecting the subtle differences in the qualities of the many animals illustrated in these pages. As Ms Buckton demonstrates, the Welsh Black cattle breed formerly played a distinguished role in the Welsh economy. As a dual-purpose animal and a suckler dam par excellence, it continues so to do, more especially as modern methods of selection involving progeny and performance testing progressively improve its carcass quality and lean meat potential. Ms Buckton's efforts I fear, fail to do justice to her subject and the Welsh Black awaits the arrival of an historian who will provide a more definitive scientific account of its evolution.

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ROBIN HAINES, *Charles Trevelyan and the Great Irish Famine* (Four Courts Press, 2004). xvii + 606 pp. €85.

To students of the Great Irish Famine (1845–52), Charles Trevelyan is a controversial and generally disliked figure. Despite being a civil servant he, more than any senior politician of the Famine period, has been represented as responsible for relief policies that were parsimonious and inappropriate. This is a serious charge as, in the space of only six years, approximately one million Irish people died and an even higher number emigrated from Ireland. Moreover, demographically (and in many less quantifiable ways) Ireland never recovered from the tragedy of the Famine.

An unusual feature of the Irish Famine was that both administrative and fiscal responsibility for relief measures from 1845 (when blight first appeared on the potato crop) were given to the Treasury, and this role continued despite a change of government in 1846, when the Whig leader, Lord John Russell, replaced the Tory, Sir Robert Peel, as premier. This put Trevelyan in a very strong position, as he was permanent secretary of the Treasury and generally regarded as an authority on Ireland. But it also meant that the Treasury principle of balancing the books, and later, modernizing the Irish economy, were sometimes given primacy over the need to save lives.

Despite the abundance of publications that accompanied the 150th anniversary of the Great Famine in 1995, no major reappraisal of Trevelyan was made. On the contrary, most famine publications have been happy to repeat the assertions made in the 1960s by Cecil Woodham-Smith (author of the best-selling *The great hunger*) and Jenifer Hart (an authority on civil-service history), and have followed their characterization of Trevelyan as cold, zealous and moralistic. One article about Trevelyan was even sub-titled 'A Victorian Cromwell?'

According to Haines, Famine historians have almost universally characterized him as an 'omnipotent dictator' and 'parsimonious egotist'. They also suggest that his actions were motivated by his dislike of Catholics and desire to reform the Celtic character (Trevelyan was from Cornwall and described himself as a 'reformed Celt'). Haines provides a corrective balance to this and similar assertions, arguing that far from being an intolerant Protestant evangelical, he liked Catholics. An even more serious charge, for which Haines offers evidence, is that a number of Trevelyan's detractors have offered judgement without ever having consulted his papers. Haines' reassessment, which is based on an exhaustive reading of not only Trevelyan's documents but a wide range of other sources, is therefore very welcome.

Nor is it just historians who have given Trevelyan a prominent place in the history of the Famine. He is mentioned in a popular Irish folk ballad, 'The Fields of Athenry' written in the 1970s (although often assumed to be older). In it, a women is singing to her lover who is about to be transported because he 'stole Trevelyan's corn, so the young might see the morn'. As a consequence, in popular memory, Trevelyan's central role in famine relief – as a heartless and distant dispenser of food – is confirmed. Yet the folk records of the Famine (which are retrospective anyway) contain few references to any government officials, politicians or even Queen Victoria (who in Ireland is widely remembered as 'the Famine Queen').

Defences of Trevelyan are rare, although in 'Apologia for a Dead Civil Servant' published in 1977, originally in the *Irish Times*, the respected historian P. M. Austin Bourke offered a corrective view of Trevelyan. He

argued, not totally convincingly, that Trevelyan was only a civil servant, albeit a very conscientious one, who did as his political masters bid him. He also briefly suggested that Trevelyan's attitude towards the Irish poor was much more compassionate than traditionally portrayed. These themes are developed by Haines, more convincingly, 27 years later. Haines further claims that by focusing on Trevelyan as the villain of the tragedy, sight has sometimes been lost of the real cause of the Famine, that is, the potato blight (*Phytophthora infestans*). This interpretation, however, contradicts many of the recent histories of the Famine (including my own) which argue that despite the limitations of 1840s communications, more could have been done to alleviate the suffering triggered by the potato blight. Haines, however, concludes that not only is Trevelyan's tarnished reputation not deserved but '*Phytophthora infestans*, not Trevelyan, was the tyrant who brought death and suffering to Ireland on a scale never before witnessed'.

But Trevelyan is nothing if not complex; a cursory glance at the correspondence of many of his contemporaries suggests that he was an exacting colleague, leading to the pejorative reference to 'Trevelyanisms', describing his way of controlling relief provision. Moreover, Trevelyan's authority had the power to intimidate even his aristocratic superiors. There was also consensus, both then and now, that he was a good administrator, honest and hard working. Significantly, Trevelyan was knighted for his services to famine relief in 1848. A strength of Haines' book is that it offers insight into the personal life of Trevelyan, and by doing so, a much warmer person emerges. At the same time, however, Trevelyan was a skilled self-publicist who in 1848 published (at first anonymously) an optimistic view of famine relief. His timing was inappropriate as the potato blight had not run its course and excess mortality, mass evictions and large scale emigration continued; in some areas, on a higher level than in the previous three years.

Overall, Haines' book is well written and engaging. By his own admission, however, he adopts an adversarial style, but this style gives the book much of its energy and clear focus. For some, therefore, it may not make comfortable reading. There are some errors: for example, Thomas Keneally's name is mis-spelt on page 14 (confusing for me and other readers) and in some places the index could have been extended – but in such a large, complex study, a few errors are probably inevitable. In general though, whether you agree or disagree with Haines' interpretation and conclusions, this book is a major addition to famine historiography. It is based on extensive research which is cleverly synthesized and offers a fresh insight into a major event in not only Irish but British history. It is also a further reminder that many of the significant contributions to our understanding of the Famine and its consequences have come from scholars working outside Ireland.

CHRISTINE KINEALY
University of Central Lancashire

DENNIS R. MILLS, *Rural community history from trade directories* (Local Population Studies Supplement, 2001). 111 pp. 27 figs. £6.

This short book is designed to meet a perceived gap – to provide an introductory guide to the systematic exploitation of a familiar source for the non-specialist. In that respect, it is similar in purpose to the author's well-known and valued guides to aspects of the Census. In attempting to provide a didactic introduction to directories for the rural historian, this does cover methodological ground not easily accessible elsewhere, and perhaps urges the agrarian historian to reflect further on their limits and possibilities as a source.

Mills first sets out to define 'community' as the framework for his book, where he stresses people, their interactions, their relationships in society and space, and occupation, before describing the basic characteristics of directories and their publishing history. Trade directories providing sufficient detail to be useful for the rural communities to be studied are said to appear around 1840, and to flourish for roughly a century, appearing for most counties at a rate of perhaps two or three per decade. By contrast, most previous academic work and source guides to the use of directories, such as that by Norton and by Shaw, has focused on the urban, running forward from the mid-eighteenth century. On that series of premises, Mills then sets out a series of fields, methods, and criteria for directory-based research design. Thus guided, the beginner is shown how to explore trades and crafts; population and the differences of large and small villages; the criteria for the selection of a community for study; the thorny problem of multiple occupational descriptions in directories; declining village 'self-sufficiency' and changing interaction of village with village and with town; and the use of directories as potential sources for comparative history of, for example, milling in Dorset.

This is useful, and there are elements of the text which are particularly valuable. The discussion of rural crafts and trades introduces basic issues of market and scale well, and the discussion of the need to record all occupational descriptors is sensible, and set well into the context of the service hierarchy of settlements. Each theme explored is supported by excellent vignettes drawn from primary research on the source, by the author or his students and from a wide range of agrarian and local historians. Thus the directory evidence for the carrier is discussed to

excellent effect through Morgan's Bristol study and the author's own work on Lincolnshire. The caveats and methods are well covered by such microstudies, and the result is a student-friendly and open invitation to pursue this source for rural historical study.

In that, this book succeeds, but there are, of course, elements with which one might disagree. It would have been useful to see some more discussion on the complex problems of comparing directories, storing and recovering information, and of patching together time-series from counties where multiple sets of directories exist, or where a single publisher provenance is lacking. The conceptualization of 'community' is perhaps a little overstated, and it would have been helpful to explore the township more fully as a problem for those dealing with big northern parishes. The author might also have explored more fully the processes of compilation, of which we still know too little, and here perhaps Parson's work for the classic series of Baines directories covering the six northern counties in the 1820s and 1830s would have offered a challenging case. That said, Mills has provided a very useful introduction and guide, and clearly demonstrated the potential for further methodological and empirical work using the directory as source, where the enthusiastic beginner can add significantly to our knowledge of the Victorian rural community.

J. A. CHARTRES
University of Leeds

PETER WORMELL, *Pinewoods of the Black Mount* (Dalesman Publishing Company, 2003). 94 pp. Illustrated with wood engravings by Christopher Wormell. £15.95 standard hardback edition; £85 limited deluxe edition of 100 copies.

Despite popular ill-considered disdain, conifers are the chief renewable resource of raw materials for the paper, board and light structural framing used in Britain. The sole useful indigenous representative is *Pinus sylvestris*, the Scots pine.

In Scotland, the native pinewoods, scattered remnant fragments though they be, are the glory of their glens, the open woods being now regarded as of the highest aesthetic and biological interest. It was not always so. The woods were 'mined' for timber, subject to fire, and when taken as shelter in winter by sheep and deer all regeneration would fail.

Peter Wormell lovingly describes woods that are fragments indeed, clinging to a number of sites around Loch Tulla, close to the A82 trunk road as it rises northwards onto the bleakness of Rannoch Moor. The woods are at altitude, in a high rainfall area, and on poor morainic soils. An early eighteenth-century laird contracted to allow ruinous exploitation of these woods.

In response to enlightened twentieth-century ownership by the Fleming family, Wormell has himself been instrumental in a vigorous ongoing scheme to restore and extend the native woods by planting and regeneration. In early chapters, Wormell charmingly yet accurately describes the pinewood scene and the perils that challenge its existence. His final thoughtful chapter brings us up to date with recently-developed principles and attitudes underlying good woodland management in the highlands.

The book is well produced and has delightful wood engraving illustrations by Christopher Wormell, the author's nephew. This is an inspiring addition to a widening recent literature which has it roots in Steven and Carlisle's account of the pinewoods at their nadir fifty years ago.

HOWARD OVENS
Talybont, Dyfed

Elsewhere and General

ALBERT J. AMMERMAN and PAOLO BIAGI (eds), *The widening harvest. The Neolithic transition in Europe: looking back, looking forward* (Archaeological Institute of America, 2003). (Available through Oxbow Books). xxii + 343 pp. 47 illus. £29.95.

People have argued a lot, and often not in friendly terms, over why European foragers became farmers between 7000 and 4000 BC. Albert Ammerman and Paolo Biagi have provided one of the latest in a series of edited volumes to tackle this question. The principal question they and their contributors address is whether the Neolithic spread through Europe through the movement of people or through the exchange of ideas and domesticated plants and animals. The volume presents work from a conference in Venice marking the twenty-fifth year since Ammerman and Cavalli-Sforza published their 'wave-of-advance' model for the spread of the Neolithic. It is a volume with many excellent contributions by leading students of the Neolithic transition.

The widening harvest included an explicit brief for contributors to comment on how research has unfolded. As someone fascinated by the debate, I enjoyed the historical retrospectives by many of the important figures in the field, even if it occasionally felt as if some of the contributors are a bit too close to the ongoing polemics to be writing their own history and it might have been useful to include voices from the eminent British group represented by Alasdair Whittle, Ian Hodder, Richard Bradley, Julian Thomas, and Nick Thorpe. Substantively, there is much here for the reader new to the literature or interested in up-to-date summaries rather than historical retrospective. Peter Rowley-Conwy

trenchantly refutes the idea that pigs and cattle may have been domesticated indigenously in Europe. Gordon Hillman's and David Harris's chapters on how palaeobotanical and ecological research on the Neolithic grew and changed are wonderfully incisive. While some may not agree with Paolo Biagi's argument that there were actually very few terminal Mesolithic foragers in Southern Europe to acculturate into farmers, his critique that archaeologists have generally regarded Mesolithic people as 'generic foragers' certainly provides a much-needed tonic for this sometimes tired debate. Both Peter Bogucki and Douglas Price provide well-rounded autobiographical accounts of their research combined with authoritative summaries of present knowledge. Jean Guilaine's chapter, inexplicably the only one in French, is well worth reading, with a broad and thoughtful analysis comparing Cyprus, southern Italy and southern France. If anything, Guilaine's work illustrates the variety of Neolithic transitions even under a single broad rubric such as migration, and the difficulty of finding just one story about it – a theme echoed by Kaczanowska and Kozlowski for central Europe.

Two papers at the conclusion of the volume discuss recent attempts to support or refute a demographic expansion explanation for the Neolithic using the human genetics of modern Europeans. Somewhat confusingly, Luca Luigi Cavalli-Sforza argues that a Neolithic contribution of twenty to thirty per cent to the European gene pool underlines the importance of Neolithic movements of people into Europe, while Bryan Sykes argues that precisely the same figure shows that modern European genes are mostly inherited from pre-Neolithic peoples. Let the reader decide whether the glass is half-empty or half-full.

As for the grand theme of the retrospective, many perceptive moments in the book illustrate that the last twenty-five years have seen important rethinkings of the question. Ammerman is more careful than many of his contributors to note the distinction between the demic diffusion model for agricultural expansion (that farming spread to Europe through the actual movement of people) and the wave-of-advance hypothesis (that what drove this was a wave of population growth that saturated available space and forced farmers out beyond the frontier). As Zilhão and Bogucki demonstrate eloquently, in many areas of Europe, a movement of peoples is quite likely, but there is little evidence for one driven by population pressure on a filled-up landscape. Hence, Ammerman rightly notes that the last quarter century of research has vindicated, at least partially, a movement-of-people model for the spread of farming in Europe, but that the wave-of-advance hypothesis per se has largely been relegated to the status of a useful hermeneutic. Demic diffusion is vindicated at least partially, as many of the areas of Europe which are widely considered zones of forager acculturation are not covered in this volume – Britain and Scandinavia are obvious examples. But given the patchy nature of Neolithization in areas such as the northern European plain, simply looking at the first farmers within a macro-region such as a modern nation-state does not really account for the whole landscape. As the summary of the final discussion notes, much more detailed studies of farmer-forager interactions within micro-regions are needed.

On another level, as both several contributors and the final discussion argue, saying that agriculture spread through demic diffusion really is describing the 'how' of the event, rather than the 'why'. For the latter, explanatory hypotheses are needed, and as Zilhão and Price note, these may include social scenarios as well as purely ecological or economic ones. Indeed, polarizing the question into simple categories of 'movement of peoples' versus 'movement of things' is undoubtedly too simple. As Colin Renfrew's discussion of linguistic dispersals implies, movement of people can occur in many ways. Some of these, indeed, would appear, both archaeologically and socially, to have much more in common with acculturation than with the traditional idea of folk migration.

JOHN ROBB
University of Cambridge

GÉRARD BÉAUR, CHRISTOPHE DUHAMELLE, REINER PRASS and JÜRGEN SCHLUMBOHM (eds), *Les sociétés rurales en Allemagne et en France (XVIIIe – XIXe siècles). Actes du colloque de Göttingen (23–25 novembre 2000)* (Association d'histoire des sociétés rurales. Bibliothèque d'histoire rurale, 8, 2004). 302 pp. €32.

This is a quite special volume, offering invaluable insights into the present state of research in the agrarian history of France and Germany, together with a highly instructive summary of the way present-day scholars see the work done over the last fifty years. The editors tell us that their agrarian history sank into obscurity in the 1980s and they recognize a fresh start in the 1990s. Strong misgivings had arisen concerning the facile acceptance of narrow economic criteria and statistics in explaining change, and they moved towards broader exploration of other explanatory factors, encompassing social and cultural influences. Some of the judgements on the primacy that was once given to economic history as a discipline are surprisingly harsh. The themes chosen here plainly show a new generation of researchers focusing on a fine analysis of social relations among peasant families. They are noticeably sensitive to the logic and good sense they find in the diverse strategies used by

peasants to survive changing circumstances. Viewpoints have undoubtedly shifted, and the new approaches are stimulating, some connecting with our current interests, some not.

This book of twelve essays springs out of a colloquium at Göttingen in 2000, when the French and German historians decided that they ought to communicate directly with each other instead of working at the same problems in isolation. So they presented to each other their research and reflections on agrarian development during the years 1700–1900, also offering suggestions for future research. They themselves refer to this period of study as the moment of transition from an agricultural to an industrial society, but, in practice, their papers do not pay attention to industrial growth in rural communities. Rather they concentrate on social and cultural investigations into people's dealings with their land. These light up the great diversity in peasants' manoeuvres to acquire and hold land while lords, adopting varying attitudes, held control in the background. With some exceptions, they pay little attention to the way the land was actually cultivated. But they all agree in eschewing large, national generalizations, for everywhere they identify strong regional, and lesser, local differences; in short, their histories exemplify the resourcefulness and ingenuity of humanity, however humble, while spelling the death of single generalizations.

Twelve essays span a large spatial territory. Dealings in the land market are one prominent theme, not something that we English historians examine at present. Werner Trossbach discusses intriguing questions concerning the relations of lords and peasants east of the Elbe when cereal exports from the Baltic expanded massively, yet without stirring protests from an oppressed labouring population living in a distinctly underpopulated countryside. Since the fall of the German Democratic Republic, a group of historians in Potsdam has set to work on this question. Annie Antoine in sceptical mood examines longstanding assumptions about the heavy burdens laid by parasitic lords on French peasants before the Revolution. She favours the study of lordship as one of several other institutions shaping the practical routine of peasants. Jean-Marc Moriceau asks whether the large farms of the Île de France were indeed at the heart of agricultural improvement. They have received all the credit, and still do, but this overlooks the different ways in which small farms were also innovative. Leasing to halves is mentioned as one such device at this point, along with other technical improvements in traction and cultivation; the author also pays welcome attention to the new editions of *Maison rustique* issued between 1721 and 1763 and the new farming methods they publicized as a result. (It is doubtful if English historians yet realize the influence on the gentry in England of the first editions of that same book in its French original, followed remarkably quickly by two English translations.) This spirited piece leads on to another arresting essay by Jean-Michel Boehler on innovative small farmers in the Rhineland, between Flanders and Alsace, in the eighteenth century. While the Physiocrats set all their hopes on large farms only, small farms were slowly but surely cultivating their small holdings like gardens, using masses of dung, industrial waste, and road sweepings to produce spade-cultivated alternative crops, like carrots, turnips, cabbage, peas, beans, onions, mustard, hemp, flax and tobacco. The whole area has been called a laboratory of invention, engaged in a kind of farming that was totally ignored by the 'salon agronomists'. Boehler cites a significant statement by the Abbé Fauchet in 1789 powerfully denouncing the errors of the economists in believing that small farms were less productive than large. We may hope that that cogent argument will be proclaimed again, as family farmers in the European Union once more fight to save themselves from extinction.

Frank Konersmann explores the variety of social manoeuvres on family farms, paying tribute to the work of Schlumbohm, Medick and Sabean at the Max-Planck Institute in elucidating family structures and inheritance practices by their local studies. Susanne Rouette discloses the alarming superficiality in old generalities about inheritance customs, revealing instead the common-sense practices that were negotiated within families and between peasants and lords. They modified the nonsensical rigour of theories that would have imposed single heirs or resulted in the excessive parcelling of farms between sons.

The role of women inheriting farms as widows looms large in the essay of Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux, emphasizing again the flexibility in their practices and ingenious strategies for keeping families in existence without legitimate heirs. Heide Wunder analyzes the division of labour on farms between men and women, identifying the women's strengths in undertaking tasks of great diversity. It makes a mockery of the convention among historians of allowing only salaried work into their record, and when farms are more finely classified by size, the division of labour presents a yet more complex picture.

Reiner Prass and Nadine Vivier both enquire into the use of commons, dismissing the negative judgement that they were always badly managed, as writers claimed in the later eighteenth century. Chronological and regional histories reveal phases and places with very different experiences: the notion of the commons as 'the patrimony of the poor', they say, was born some time after 1760. Finally, Gérard Béaur and Stefan Brakensiek focus

on land sales, Béaur identifying them as a mirror of family strategies that had different objectives at different times, and were governed by family needs rather than current market conditions, Brakensiek summoning some widely scattered examples of research to show regional variations.

All the papers in this volume are written in French, and follow the publication of a German version of the same essays in 2003. It stirs reflections by this reviewer on the loss of contact that we have suffered in England with German and French scholars. Admittedly, relations with French historians have recently been renewed at Le Mans. But when the *Agricultural History Review* started in 1953, it set a fine example in reviewing the agrarian history of German and French scholars; foreign book reviews were especially numerous in the years between about 1962 and 1982. In contrast, the rich bibliography at the end of this book contains a wealth of references to work that has never been reviewed in the *Review*. So this volume is a precious summary that richly deserves to be widely read.

JOAN THIRSK
Hadlow, Kent

KERSTIN SUNDBERG (ed.), *Work and production on manors in the Baltic Sea region, 1700–1900* (Stockholm: Nordiska museet förlag, 2002). 228 pp. 9 tables; 24 illus; 15 figs. £19.30.

This collection of nine essays arises from a symposium held at the Royal Swedish Academy of Forestry and Agriculture in November 2000. The disciplines represented include ethnology, human geography, economic history, art history and history. All but one of the essays are regional case studies relating to parts of Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Germany (2), Denmark, or Sweden (2). The remaining essay is an art historian's discussion of farm work as seen in pictorial sources of the late medieval and early modern periods across a wide area of continental Europe. Ten of the illustrations are to be found in the latter essay, but the book as a whole is well provided with a variety of tables, maps, pictures and other figures such as graphs.

The text is wholly in English, apart from some technical terms for which exact English equivalents are difficult to find. However, these will not prove troublesome to the British reader without specialist knowledge of continental rural history. For example, the term *corvée* is frequently used to indicate various forms of semi-feudal work services or labour rent, still in use in several areas as late as 1900. On pages 165–6 there are useful definitions and discussion of *Grundherrschaft* and *Gutsherrschaft*.

A feature of the region and period is the large number of international boundary changes, e.g., Scania from Denmark to Sweden, Estonia from Sweden to Russia. These brought many institutional changes down to the level of individual manors, sometimes involving a change in the language of record-keeping, sometimes a reimposition of work services where paid labour had become commonplace.

There were considerable variations in the sizes of manors both between study areas and within them, and consequently in the levels of sophistication in their management. In some areas, the nobility were non-resident for substantial parts of the year, but they had officials administering many aspects of rural life well outside farming, e.g., oversight of the local legal system, or imposition of rules relating to church-going. Yet there were also areas in which manors were smaller than the typical English parish, and the gentry or officer class were resident for much of the year, therefore much closer to their manorial populations.

A theme running through several studies is the extent to which farms were held in return for work services, the levels of such services, and the various ways in which they were performed. For example, it was not unusual for these services to be imposed only on the larger (but still relatively small) farms, yet the work was carried out by crofters (men with holdings too small for complete subsistence) and landless labourers paid by the larger farmers to work on their behalf. This kept family labour on family farms and sheltered them from the arbitrary way in which estate stewards would summon men to work on demesne lands. Traditional and market-based relationships were therefore simultaneously involved in demesne-farming, which most landlords maintained in preference to the British alternative of letting to tenant farmers paying a straightforward cash rent.

Other topics studied vary considerably from one essay to another, depending on the sources available (remarkably detailed in some cases) and the interests of authors: types of husbandry, marketing conditions, levels of technology, population increases, migration and emigration, enclosure and the dispersal of farmsteads, serfdom, life in a ducal household, architectural matters, the class composition of landowners (nobles, bourgeois, gentlemen, service officers, higher civil servants, the church, municipalities), and so on.

Students of continental farming will fully appreciate the regional detail in this volume, but non-specialists would find it a valuable amplification of the contrast so frequently drawn between Britain, especially lowland England, and the continent. After reading this book, it is not so easy to regard as 'normal' the distinctive features of the English estate system of the period.

DENNIS MILLS
Branston, Lincolnshire

JAN LUITEN VAN ZANDEN and ARTHUR VAN RIEL, *The strictures of inheritance. The Dutch economy in the nineteenth century* (Princeton UP, 2004). xvi + 384 pp. 54 tables; 32 figs. £36.95.

There is only a modest amount of material in this fine book which is of direct interest to agricultural historians, for it aims to be a standard work on the general Dutch economy in the long nineteenth century. It is a straight translation (by Ian Cressie) of a book which appeared in Dutch in 2000 (*Nederland 1780–1914: staat, instituties en economische ontwikkeling* (Amsterdam: Balans)), and much of the agricultural history contained in it is derived from the lead author's trailblazing doctoral dissertation of 1985, which was published in English in 1994 as *The transformation of European agriculture in the 19th century: the case of the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: VU University Press). However, although the new nuggets to be found here about Dutch farming and rural affairs are few in number, what we get instead is an unprecedentedly well founded framework of economic history, both in institutional and quantitative terms, in which to place the role of the Dutch agricultural sector. For this book is intended to be the crowning glory of Van Zanden's great project of the 1990s to reconstruct the Dutch national accounts for the period 1800–1940. The results are available at the website nationalaccounts.niwi.knaw.nl/, which also lists the principal publications which have come out of the project, including several in English. *The strictures of inheritance* is intended to reinterpret the history of the period in the light of the new and authoritative estimates which resulted from the ten-year project.

The authors choose a chronological framework of four periods of about a quarter-century, each of which is allocated two of the main chapters. The theoretical approach is one of political economy, rather than production economics (which led the national accounts project): a great deal of attention is paid to the institutional constraints on economic activity, in the form of political regimes in the four periods, citing the authority of Douglass North in giving primacy to the political sphere in determining the success of the economy. Thus the first of each pair of chapters deals with the political situation, and the second with the economic effects and experience in the same quarter-century. The basic narrative is as follows: the political arrangements of the Republic, which had assisted the Dutch economy to giddy heights in the period up to 1670, became a distinct liability in the eighteenth century, causing economic stagnation, and it took the efforts of the Revolutionary regimes of the French period (1780–1813), the political-economic autocracy of the rule of King Willem I (1813–40), and the constitutional and economic reforms of the classical liberals (1840–70) to shake off the inheritance of the devolved, corporatist United Provinces, and allow modern economic growth to begin around 1860. No sooner had it begun, however, than a new form of corporatism emerged, to do with the pillarization of Dutch society into ideological organizations along Protestant, Catholic, Liberal or Socialist lines, all of which wanted their share of the state and the economy; this form of 'neo-corporatism', however, proved quite compatible with economic growth, and the Netherlands did very well from then onwards.

The strength of the book lies in its summaries of the economic situation in every other chapter, based on the massive amounts of new data generated by the national accounts work. The chapters on the political situation are also good, but more conventional, based on older sources and not deviating much from received opinion. There is now quite a healthy amount of material in English on modern Dutch history, including economic (and agricultural) history, and this is a welcome addition. The translation is excellent, although the editing is not: difficult Dutch terms and phrases riddle the text without proper translation, sometimes italicized and sometimes not: I found it irritating and others will find it confusing. The parts of special interest for historians of agriculture are a case study on the *marken* or common lands in the east of the country (some of which appeared in an article in the *Review* in 1999), and the passages on the massive growth of agricultural exports in the period after the mid-century (principally to Britain), and on the reaction of the sector to the crisis of the 1880s.

The book is promoted in Dutch as a new standard work on the period: it is indeed that. International comparison takes place, especially with Britain and Belgium, but the relative achievements of the Dutch economy in the period of European industrialization are understated. The insistence on the causal link between politics and economics is useful but a little dogmatic: on the one hand it is assumed that government economic measures were effective, which of course they seldom were, or at least not in the way that were intended; on the other, the concentration on government structures reduces (though does not eliminate) a focus on other cultural determinants of the economy, such as ideas about technology and entrepreneurship, religious attitudes, and the like. This book unlocks the results of Van Zanden's national accounts project to the non-Dutch speaking world: that is more than welcome, but no one book is ever going to be the last word.

MICHAEL WINTLE
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Conference Report: The Society's Winter Conference, 2004 'Farming in upland Britain'

by Jane Whittle

British agricultural history tends to concentrate on the experience of southern and eastern England. This year's conference therefore made a refreshing change, with papers on Scotland, Wales, the Lake District and northern Pennines, and the Peak District, stretching in time from prehistory to the present day. Further variety was added by the wide range of research strategies the speakers brought to bear on the history of upland farming, from pollen analysis to oral history, not neglecting the more traditional study of documents such as manorial court rolls and Board of Agriculture reports. Nonetheless a number of common themes emerged, such as the causes of and responses to changes in upland farming systems, the need to regard the 'traditional' nature of farming practices with caution – although upland farming is often perceived as 'traditional' it has actually undergone significant changes over time – and the importance of understanding farmers' own motivations for adopting or ignoring new practices.

The integration of different research approaches was a strong theme in the first paper by Althea Davies of Stirling University on 'Farming systems and communities in the Scottish Highlands over the last 1000 years: case studies integrating pollen and historical evidence'. She discussed three case studies from upland Scotland which illustrated her own transition from being a paleoecologist, interested primarily in prehistory, to an environmental historian, working with historians and ecologists to integrate data from different disciplines. Central to her research was pollen analysis. Pollen sequences can provide long-term insights into the changing patterns and composition of vegetation, including changes in the distribution and availability of potential resources, and the impact of alterations in land management. However, although human impacts are visible, the people themselves are not. As a result, she noted, pollen analysis data can sometimes appear rather dry and inaccessible to a wider audience. In addition, the reasons behind changes in land use can be misinterpreted without an understanding of the motivations (economic or otherwise) and perceptions of the people who lived in these landscapes. These can only come from other sources, principally documentary evidence. Davies found that there were challenges in integrating pollen analysis with documentary evidence: not all areas provide ideal records, either written or sedimentary. However, she noted that her experience of working in the more recent historical period allowed her to pose questions to historians which challenged both approaches, causing a review of ideas about how people lived and coped with conditions in upland landscapes, for instance in terms of responses to climate, economics and new technological ideas.

The second paper, on 'Manor courts and common land in upland northern England, 1450–1700', by Angus Winchester of Lancaster University demonstrated in more detail what historical documents, in this case court rolls, offer to those studying the management of upland farming. Focusing on two localities, the Lake District and the north Pennines, he explored the nature of common rights, and how their regulation in manorial courts changed over time under impact from population growth, which resulted both in the fragmentation of holdings and an increase in the landless population; and alterations to the farming system with increased enclosure, more flexibility in stock management and higher stocking levels. These changes put pressure on all three of the traditional common rights: the pasturing of stock, turbary or peat digging for fuel, and estover, the collection of bracken, rushes and heather for a variety of purposes. In some ways the period 1450–1700 marked a heyday for the tenants' common rights. Medieval court

rolls demonstrate a predominant concern for protecting the lord's, rather than the tenants', rights, while after 1700 manorial courts declined and enclosure allowed private exploitation by farmers to replace the communal regulation of resources. During the interim period courts attempted to achieve a balancing act of claiming to uphold 'ancient custom' and maintaining 'good neighbourhood', that is, the management of commons in the interests of the tenantry as a whole rather than individuals, while at the same time accommodating the effects of enclosure and the increasingly large landless population. Despite their claims of upholding traditional practices, the 'paines' or by-laws recorded in court rolls do reflect change over time, such as a moving forward of the start of the closed season, increased control over stocking numbers, an abandonment of transhumance practices, and increasingly careful regulation of peat-digging to protect tenants' rights to fuel.

In his paper on 'Fatalistic conservatism or risk aversion? Upland farming in south-west Wales, 1650–1850', Diccon Cooper of Cambridge University reversed the theme from coping with change to explaining lack of change in a farming system. Contemporary comment, including Board of Agriculture reports, portray the uplands of south-west Wales in this period as blighted by conservative farmers who lacked the proper education to improve their techniques. To support this view, commentators cited evidence of farming methods including very low stocking ratios, poor crop management, an unwillingness to enclose, failure to improve grassland by the removal of stones, gorse and heather, and a reluctance to lime the soil. Cooper argued that while these accusations were partly true, and farming in this region was unproductive, the strategy of low investment, low productivity farming was a sensible choice in an area where high elevation and rainfall, thin soils, and a restricted growing season was always going to make farming difficult. Board of Agriculture Reports made unfair comparisons with farming in lowland areas, where improvements paid off, and higher yields could be achieved. It was important to look at what was possible and sensible, rather than be led by the fashions of the day as such commentators had been.

The final contribution to the day, by Mark Riley of the University of St Andrews, also stressed the importance of understanding farmers' motivations for adopting, or ignoring, new methods, in this case looking particularly at the management of hay meadows and the adoption of silage. His paper on 'Farming in the post-war Peak District: possible lessons from agricultural history for nature conservation', utilised oral history to question farmers about the timing and choice of particular strategies adopted on their farms. He demonstrated how the intimate knowledge which farmers have of their farms and past practices can complement sparse documentary sources on hay meadow decline and change. Interviews with farmers reveal the often underplayed significance of 'community' and non-financial considerations on farming practice. Oral histories also challenge official narratives of the move from hay to silage production, again suggesting that failure to adopt new methods was not a sign of 'backwardness', but the result of more practical considerations. Riley's research demonstrated that although current conservation schemes claim to return to 'traditional' management practices, they are often introducing quite novel practices. Oral history, Riley argued, can make a valuable contribution to the evolution of future conservation strategies for the British countryside.

We might argue that a larger claim, that agricultural history has an important role to play in the conservation and management of the countryside, was supported by all four papers. Only by understanding the way in which farming systems in upland Britain have changed or stabilised over long periods of time and adapted to a variety of pressures, can we take a more informed position about how to tackle future challenges.

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Winter Conference 10 December 2005

Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, London

English landed society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: A celebration of the work of F. M. L. Thompson

John Beckett and Michael Turner
'F. M. L. Thompson and the English land market, 1918–21'

Mark Rothery
'Probate records, non-landed wealth and the financial diversification of the English landed gentry in the late nineteenth century'

Anthony Taylor
' "The British aristocracy, probably the most unnecessary as a body that any civilised society exhibits and endures": J. E. Thorold Rogers, land utopianism and anti-aristocratic sentiment in late nineteenth-century Britain'

David Cannadine
'The country house from the twentieth to the twenty-first century'

Please note the date of this Winter Conference.
Early booking is urged as numbers are limited.

Conference fee £23 with lunch, £10 without. A booking form can be downloaded from the Society's website, BAHS.org.uk, or obtained from Dr Jane Whittle, History Department, University of Exeter, Amony Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter, EX4 4RJ to whom bookings should be sent.

Spring Conference 2006

The Society's Spring Conference will be held at the University of Exeter on 3–5 April 2006. Further details will be circulated in January 2006.

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Society notices

Agricultural History Review

The archive of back issues of the *Review* (to 1998) is now available on-line at the Society's web site. Copies of past issues continue to be available for purchase from the Society's Exeter office. We have also taken the opportunity to mount the figures illustrating Dr Lyle's and Dr Shaw-Taylor's papers in this issue of the *Review* on the website in colour from where they may be downloaded.

Managing tithes in the late middle ages*

by Ben Dodds

Abstract

Tithes were an important resource for monasteries in the late middle ages. This study of one major tithe owner shows they were either collected directly or sold before harvest. Management decisions were not unlike those made for manorial demesnes but with some differences related to the process of tithe collection, national and regional agricultural trends and changing methods of obtaining household grain supply. The sale of tithes represented an opportunity for certain groups in society but does not necessarily imply declining interest in management by tithe owners. Responsiveness to change is reflected in the adaptation of bureaucratic arrangements.

Landlords in the middle ages faced the choice of whether to manage sources of income such as demesnes, mills, ovens and dovecotes directly or to lease them out and collect a rent.[1] Direct management of demesnes peaked in the thirteenth century when some major landlords ran commercialised networks of 'federated grain factories'.[2] From the end of the fourteenth century the leasing of demesnes became more common as a response to the lower profitability of direct management caused by rising labour costs and low grain prices. These changes have been interpreted as a withdrawal by landlords into a more passive form of management.[3] Barbara Harvey, for example, described the 'undemanding exercise of lordship' by the abbot and convent of Westminster in the fifteenth century and their unresponsiveness to economic change, demonstrated by the extension of the terms of years of their leases.[4]

Tithe represented a diversion to religious uses of around one-tenth of England's agricultural wealth. The tax was intended to sustain parish priests, maintain church buildings and provide alms for the poor, but religious corporations could appropriate parish tithes to their own purposes. Just as landlords chose whether to manage their manors directly, tithe owners could choose to collect their tithe or sell it before collection. If tithes were kept 'in hand', officials would oversee their collection in the fields and the preparation of the grain for sale or

* I am grateful to Professor R. H. Britnell, Dr M. M. Harvey, Mr A. J. Piper, and the anonymous referees for their suggestions.

[1] M. Bailey, *The English manor, c. 1200–c. 1500* (2002), p. 17.

[2] M. M. Postan, 'The fifteenth century', *EcHR*, first ser., 9 (1939), p. 162.

[3] J. Langdon, *Mills in the medieval economy: England, 1300–1540* (2004), pp. 231–2; R. A. L. Smith, *Canterbury Cathedral Priory: a study in monastic administration* (1943), p. 203.

[4] B. F. Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its estates in the middle ages* (1977), p. 160.

consumption.[5] Otherwise, an agreement was drawn up before the harvest by which the buyer agreed to pay for the tithe grain on specified days the following year.[6] Tithes were often sold on an annual basis but could also be leased for a number of years.[7] In the records of Durham Priory, for example, it appears that over two-thirds of tithe sales were annual.[8]

Much research has been done on the chronology of the leasing of manorial demesnes and the institutional response to changing economic conditions which this represents. Less attention has been paid to the management of tithe income, a study of which may be justified on two grounds. In the first place, tithes from appropriated parishes were a major economic resource for monasteries, amounting to around a quarter of their total income in England on the eve of the Dissolution.[9] In the second place, tithe was a different type of resource to manorial demesnes as may be seen, for example, by the importance of annual sales. It was therefore managed in a different way and a study of these differences will complement what we know about the management of manorial demesnes.

In 1449–50 the Durham bursar's cash receipts from tithes were more than 25 per cent higher than those from manorial demesnes.[10] The importance of tithe for the monks of Durham Priory, and the exceptional quantity of surviving records, afford a valuable opportunity for a study of the management of tithe income to be undertaken. This paper will establish a chronology for the methods of disposal of tithes and this will be compared with that for the leasing of manorial demesnes. Possible explanations for changing management policy will then be discussed including the cost and benefits of direct collection, the role of tithes in provisioning the household with grain, and the availability of tithe buyers. This sheds light on the responsiveness of tithe owners and buyers to economic changes as well as the nature of these changes themselves.

I

The last two centuries of the middle ages saw changing policies of sale and direct collection in Durham Priory's management of tithe income. Figure 1 shows that the tithes from large numbers of vills were kept 'in hand' prior to the Black Death with a move away from this policy after 1350. However, a substantial number of tithes were brought back 'in hand' in the middle of the fifteenth century. The return to direct collection lasted from the fourth to the sixth

[5] E.g. in 1380–1 the monks of Durham kept the Southwick tithes 'in hand' and then sold them: Durham Cathedral Muniments (hereafter DCM), bursar's account 1380–1, tithe receipts. In 1379–80 tithe peas and beans were used as fodder for horses: DCM, bursar's account 1379–80, *Empcio avene fabarum et pisarum.* All townships mentioned are between the rivers Tyne and Tees unless otherwise stated. In many cases, individual sections of account rolls are referenced with their original heading. However, the inconsistent labelling and regular position of some receipts sections in the bursars' accounts mean labels in English are less confusing.

[6] E.g., an agreement on 1 August for the payment for tithes the following year: DCM, Miscellaneous Charter 3957.

[7] E.g., the tithes of Romanby (N. Yorks.) were leased for three years in 1431: DCM, bursar's account 1431–2, tithe receipts.

[8] Accountants rarely distinguished explicitly between leases and annual sales. This estimate is based on a count of the number of receipts recorded in the accounting material which are the same as those from the same township in the previous year. DCM, bursars' accounts.

[9] A. Savine, *English monasteries on the eve of the dissolution* (1909), pp. 100–1.

[10] DCM, bursar's account 1449–50, receipts.

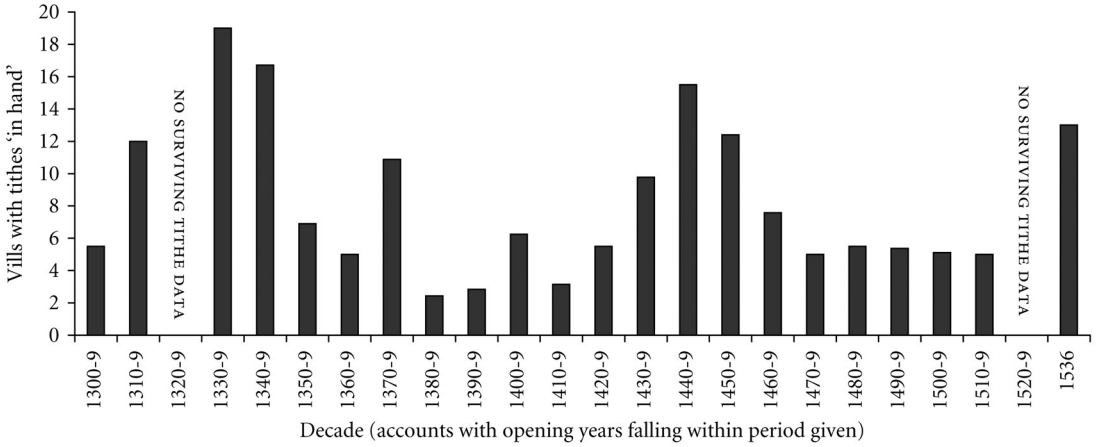


FIGURE 1. Tithe receipts kept in hand by the Durham Priory bursars (decennial averages)

Note: Tithes were also received by other office holders. The bursars were by far the most important recipients of tithes, however, collecting income from some or all of nineteen of the thirty-five appropriated parishes of the Priory and its dependencies. Other office holders have not been included in this chart because different patterns of survival of runs of accounts would have a distorting effect on the data.
Source: Bursars' accounts listed in A. J. Piper, Durham University Library Archives and Special Collections searchroom handlist: *Muniments of the Dean and Chapter of Durham, medieval accounting material* (1995). Only accounts with complete tithe receipt sections were included.

decades of the fifteenth century after which there was a fall in the number of vills from which tithes were kept 'in hand'. The bursars' tithe management policy was simpler in the second half of the fifteenth century than at any other point in the two and a half centuries from which accounting material survives. Over 80 per cent of tithes recorded as 'in hand' in the bursars' accounts after 1460 were from Billingham parish, compared with less than 40 per cent before this date. The 1536 data included in Figure 1 suggest this policy did not continue right up to the Dissolution but the lack of surviving bursars' accounts between 1519–20 and 1536–7 makes comment on any further change in policy impossible.

This chronology shows some similarities with that established for the leasing of demesnes. Grain prices and labour costs were important factors influencing decisions on both types of resource.[11] Profit margins were reduced if labour costs were high and grain prices low. Most obvious is the contrast between the direct exploitation of both resources during the early fourteenth century and the leasing and sale of the late fourteenth century. The monks of Canterbury Cathedral Priory, for example, leased their demesnes at the beginning of the 1390s.[12] The process was slower but comparable chronologically on the estates of the archbishops of Canterbury.[13] The same pattern appears to have applied in northern England. On the Percy

[11] R. H. Britnell, *Britain and Ireland, 1050–1530: economy and society* (2004), pp. 225, 430–1.
[12] Smith, *Canterbury Cathedral Priory*, p. 191.
[13] F. R. H. Du Boulay, 'Who were farming the English demesnes at the end of the middle ages?', *EcHR* 17 (1965), p. 445.

manors in Yorkshire there was a decline in direct management in the late fourteenth century and leasing was universal on the entire estate by 1416.[14] The main phase of leasing manorial demesnes on the Durham Priory estate came between 1373 and 1416.[15] Indeed, on this estate the management of tithes and manorial demesnes was connected. During the early fourteenth century tithe grain from surrounding peasant vills was used as seed corn on the manors, perhaps in order to maximise yields.[16]

However, the chronologies of tithe sale and demesne leasing also present some dissimilarities. In particular, landlords often began leasing small parcels of demesne land before the Black Death.[17] Tithes could not be easily subdivided in this way, however, and the Durham monks increased the number of townships from which tithes were kept in hand during the 1330s and 1340s. Figure 1 suggests that the Black Death saw an immediate reduction in direct collection whereas the decisive point in the leasing of manorial demesnes usually came later.[18] What is more, there was a return to the direct collection of tithes in the fifteenth century for which there is no parallel in the history of manorial demesnes.

II

The list of parishes or townships from which the Durham monks kept the tithes 'in hand' varied from year to year because the process of collecting tithe grain was less complicated than running a demesne.[19] Sometimes rectories had their own accounting administration. For example, a serjeant was appointed to collect and dispose of tithe grain at the bishop of Winchester's rectory of East Meon (Hants.).[20] This system was rarely necessary for the Durham office holders partly because of the allocation of the small tithes to the vicar. The monks only collected the garb tithes, that is the major grains in the fields, and the vicars were left with items of relatively low value that were difficult to collect, such as eggs.[21] In Northumberland parishes,

[14] J. M. W. Bean, *The estates of the Percy family, 1416–1537* (1958), p. 13.

[15] R. A. Lomas, 'The priory of Durham and its demesnes in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries', *EcHR* 31 (1978), p. 345.

[16] E.g. DCM, Pittington manor account 1331–2, *Trituracio.* D. Oschinsky (ed.), *Walter of Henley and other treatises on estate management and accounting* (1971), pp. 174–5, 325.

[17] E.g. B. F. Harvey, 'The leasing of the abbot of Westminster's demesnes in the later middle ages', *EcHR* 22 (1969), p. 19.

[18] *Ibid.*; E. Miller, 'Occupation of the land: the southern counties', in Miller (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales,* III, *1350–1500* (1991), p. 143; C. Dyer, *Lords and peasants in a changing society. The estates of the Bishopric of Worcester, 680–1540* (1980), pp. 147–8; G. A. Holmes, *The estates of the higher nobility in fourteenth-century England* (1957), p. 116.

[19] E.g. the tithes of the Aycliffe were taken in and out of hand in the 1450s: DCM, bursars' accounts 1453–4, 1454–5, 1456–7, 1457–8, 1458–9, tithe receipts.

[20] M. Page (ed.), *The Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester, 1301–2* (Hampshire Record Ser., 14, 1996), pp. 291–6; id., *The Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester, 1409–10* (Hampshire Record Ser., 16, 1999), pp. 273–81.

[21] F. A. Gasquet, *Parish life in medieval England* (1909), pp. 12–16. For Durham examples of the endowments of vicars, see DCM, prior's register, II, fos 95r, 97r. See Calendar of Durham Cathedral Muniments, Register 2 at http://flambard.dur.ac.uk:6336/dynaweb/handlist/ddc/dcdregr2/ [viewed 16 Feb. 2005]. I am grateful to Dr L. S. Rollason for these references. Proctors were appointed in the hostiller's parish of St Oswald, however, where the vicar was not endowed with the small tithes: A. J. Piper, Durham University Library Archives and Special Collections searchroom handlist: *Muniments of the Dean and Chapter of Durham, medieval accounting material* (1995).

where pastoral agriculture was particularly important, the monks collected or sold the wool tithes.[22] South of the Tyne, however, there is much less information on wool tithes and it is likely they were gathered by the vicars. This division of the types of tithe income meant priory tithe collectors only needed to be appointed for a few weeks each year. Their payments were entered in the central accounts without an intermediate accounting official. Even though owners of manorial demesnes sometimes tried to preserve flexibility by continuing to receive accounts after leasing, the process could involve structural modifications which were difficult to reverse.[23] By contrast, it was undoubtedly much easier to collect a tithe directly one year and sell it the next than to bring a demesne in and out of hand.

Nevertheless, tithe collection was laborious. Tithe sheaves were usually left on one side as the field was harvested and then gathered afterwards.[24] More detailed rectory accounts from Essex suggest two separate jobs were performed by *equitatores* and *decimatores*, the former presumably supervisors on horseback.[25] A reference to 'one horse bought for collecting the tithe' in a Durham chamberlain's account hints that some of the tithe collectors in the northeast might have performed similar roles.[26] Careful supervision was important because there were many ways in which those owing tithes might defraud the tithe owner. In an adaptation of the Old Testament story in the *Towneley Plays*, for example, Cain was very reluctant to prepare a tithe for the Lord. Eventually cajoled by Abel, he chose the best of his corn for himself and double counted his offering so he paid a twentieth instead of a tenth. God did not accept the gift.[27] The emphasis on the importance of paying the correct tithe in this type of text is likely to reflect the prevalence of attempts to defraud tithe collectors.

The Essex *decimatores* were presumably the equivalents of the Durham collectors who were employed to bind the tithe sheaves and remove them from the fields.[28] Tithes then had to be carried from their place of collection to a tithe barn for which wagons or human porters were used.[29] This process may have been more onerous in Durham than further south because of the dispersed nature of the settlement in parishes in the northeast.[30] Although grain was occasionally stored in places other than barns, purpose-built constructions were usually

[22] DCM, accounts of the proctors of Norham.

[23] F. R. H. Du Boulay, 'Late-continued demesne farming at Otford', *Arch. Cantiana* 73 (1959), p. 117; M. Saaler, 'The manor of Tillingdown: the changing economy of the demesne, 1325–1371', *Surrey Archaeological Coll.* 81 (1991–2), p. 28; J. N. Hare, 'The demesne lessees of fifteenth-century Wiltshire', *AgHR* 29 (1981), p. 2; D. Roden, 'Demesne farming in the Chiltern Hills', *AgHR* 17 (1969), p. 22.

[24] N. J. G. Pounds, *A history of the English Parish. The culture of religion from Augustine to Victoria* (2000), p. 58; A. Wharam, 'Tithes in country life', *History Today* 22 (1972), p. 428.

[25] Feering account 1316–17, Great Sampford accounts 1332–3, 1334–5: TNA, PRO, SC6/841/5; 846/27, 28. See also S. J. Chadwick, 'Account rolls of Dewsbury rectory, 1348/9–1355/6', *Yorkshire Archaeological J.* 21 (1911), pp. 372–3. I am grateful to Professor R. H. Britnell for these references.

[26] DCM, chamberlain's account 1364–5 (A) and (B), *Minute expense et necessarie.*

[27] G. England and A. W. Pollard (eds), *The Towneley Plays* (Early English Text Soc., Extra Ser. 71, 1897), pp. 12–17; Gen. iv. 3–5.

[28] e.g. DCM, bursar's account 1362–3 (A), *Collecciones decimarum.*

[29] e.g. J. Raine (ed.), *The Priory of Finchale. The charters of endowment, inventories and account rolls* (Surtees Soc. 6, 1837), pp. clxxxix-cxc. DCM, bursar's account 1376–7, *Collecciones decimarum.*

[30] e.g. tithes were carried to the head vill in Dalton-le-Dale parish. DCM, chamberlain's account 1355–6, *Expense.*

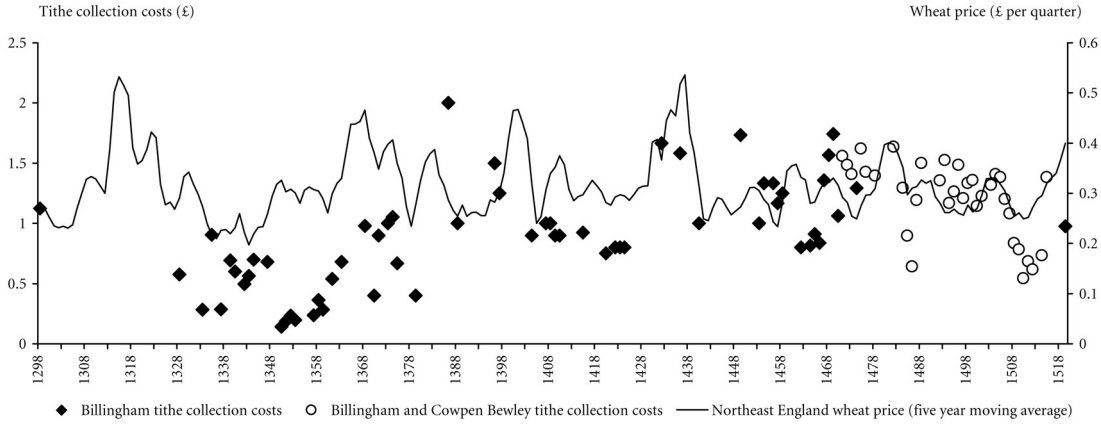


FIGURE 2 Billingham tithe collection costs, 1298–1519

Source: Tithe collection costs extracted from Billingham manor accounts and Durham Priory bursars' accounts listed in A. J. Piper, Durham University Library Archives and Special Collections searchroom handlist: *Muniments of the Dean and Chapter of Durham, medieval accounting material* (1995). Wheat prices taken from Beveridge's Durham Priory data to be found in Boxes, C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, C8(i) and C8(ii), Beveridge Price History Archive (British Library of Political and Economic Science). However, for the period before 1339 the Beveridge Durham data are very patchy so 'national' data have been used from D. L. Farmer, 'Prices and wages' in H. E. Hallam (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, II, *1042–1350* (1988), pp. 716–817.

maintained and used for the time-consuming and expensive processes of threshing and winnowing tithe grain.[31]

The costs of tithe collection and processing must have been affected by short-term factors such as the weather. Wet tithes, for example, must have been more laborious to collect and process than dry tithes. The most consistently recorded costs are those paid for the collection of the Billingham tithes kept 'in hand' (Figure 2) and these show considerable fluctuation from one year to the next. Like other agricultural tasks, however, there were also longer-term factors affecting costs. Tithe collection and processing became more expensive with the Black Death and subsequent population decline.[32] In 1334–5 Billingham barley was threshed for 2*d.* per quarter and by labour services.[33] This is the last reference in the Durham accounting material to the use of bondsmen for threshing tithe grain, however, and the piece rate increased to 3*d.* in the second half of the fourteenth century.[34] Although there was a temporary fall in tithe collection costs in the late 1340s (Figure 2), probably the result of the collapse in production levels associated with the disruption to agriculture caused by the Black Death, the pattern of long-term

[31] R. W. Brunskill, *Traditional farm buildings of Britain* (1987), pp. 36–44. For the use of the 'old church' for the storage of tithe grain, J. Raine (ed.), *The inventories and account rolls of Jarrow and Monkwearmouth* (Surtees Soc. 26, 1854), pp. 157–8. For the Bishop Middleham and Cornforth barns: *Priory of Finchale*, p. cxxi.

[32] D. L. Farmer, 'Prices and wages, 1350–1500,' in Miller (ed.), *Agrarian history,* III, pp. 431–525; B. Dodds, 'Workers on the Pittington demesne in the late middle ages', *Arch. Aeliana* 28 (2000), pp. 147–61.

[33] DCM, Billingham manor account 1334–5, *Trituracio.*

[34] DCM, bursar's account 1349–50, *Trituracio decimarum*; DCM, bursar's account 1366–7, *Collecciones decimarum et trituraciones* . . .

increase in costs between the mid-fourteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries is clear. By the 1450s, nearly four times more was being spent on Billingham tithe collection than before the Black Death yet grain production in the parish had fallen by up to 50 per cent.[35] The low labour costs in the first two decades of the fifteenth century (Figure 2) are puzzling and do not coincide with evidence for continued high wages on the demesnes in the area in the same period.[36] We do not have further tithe collection labour payment data for comparison but it seems unlikely there was a substantial fall in wage levels at this point. In any case, labour payments seem to have risen again by the 1430s.

A comparison between demesne leases and tithe sales suggests that their development was not altogether parallel. Wheat prices are also shown on Figure 2 to test the connection between labour costs, grain prices, and the Priory's management policy. Like elsewhere, on the Durham Priory estate demesne leasing was stepped up before the Black Death, which coincides with the falling grain prices in the late 1320s, 1330s and 1340s.[37] By contrast, these decades saw an increase rather than a decrease in the direct collection of tithes. This may have been a way of maintaining Priory grain supplies when the demesnes were being leased.

After the Black Death there was an 'Indian summer of demesne farming' on the Durham Priory estate as elsewhere, during which rising labour costs were offset by high prices and most demesnes continued to be directly managed.[38] It was not until the fall in prices in the mid-1370s that leasing was more widely adopted. The curtailment in the number of tithes kept in hand in the 1350s and 1360s (Figure 1) shows that there was no 'Indian summer' of direct tithe collection in the decades after the Black Death despite the rising labour costs and grain prices of the period. It is true, however, that the temporary increase in direct collection during the 1370s does suggest the monks may have taken advantage of the high prices of the late 1360s and early 1370s. Nevertheless, the shift away from the direct collection of tithes occurred earlier than the abandonment of direct demesne management and this may reflect the smaller risk involved in buying tithes. The variables which determined the tithe buyer's level of profit were more ascertainable than for the demesne farmer. In order to calculate profit levels, the tithe buyer and seller needed to know tithe yield, grain prices and collection and storage costs.[39] Calculating these for a limited number of tasks (the collection and processing of tithes) for one harvest and estimating the return from grain already standing in the fields was much simpler than making cost estimates for the wider range of tasks paid for by a demesne farmer over the period of a lease covering several years and for much less certain returns. The upshot of these differences was that the Priory stood to lose less by selling tithes than by leasing demesnes since less 'risk factor' had to be allowed for in the negotiated price for tithe sales. This meant the shift away from direct tithe collection could be made relatively painlessly and before the widening gap between trends in wages and prices made demesne leasing imperative. It is suggested below that

[35] B. Dodds, 'Estimating arable output using Durham Priory tithe receipts, 1341–1450', *EcHR* 57 (2004), pp. 245–85. Billingham manorial accounts from 1303 to 1343 record average wheat tithe receipts of nearly 40 quarters and between 1420 and 1460 the bursars' accounts record average wheat tithe receipts from the same vill of only just over 25 quarters: DCM, Billingham manor accounts; bursars' accounts.

[36] Dodds, 'Workers', pp. 151–4.

[37] Lomas, 'Demesnes', pp. 341–3.

[38] A. R. Bridbury, 'The Black Death', *EcHR* 26 (1973), p. 584; Lomas, 'Demesnes', p. 345.

[39] Dodds, 'Estimating arable output', pp. 254–6.

the sudden switch to tithe sales after the Black Death was the result of a change in the method of sourcing the household grain supply.

From the mid-fifteenth century, high labour costs and generally low grain prices seem to have been decisive in restricting the direct collection of tithes to a handful of townships, notably those of Billingham parish. This system of keeping a few assets in hand is paralleled in the management of manorial demesnes where landlords often kept one or two demesnes in hand even after the others had been leased. The archbishops of Canterbury, for example, kept some manors, associated with their itinerant household, in hand into the early decades of the fifteenth century and the abbots of Westminster kept the manor of Denham (Bucks.) in hand after 1420.[40] The Durham monks were no exception. The demesnes at Pittington and Bearpark were kept in hand much later than other manors because these were the sites of two country residences belonging to the prior, where he entertained guests and his brethren.[41] Neither manor house was in Billingham parish, however, so it appears the decision to keep these tithes in hand was not related to the temporary residence of monks.

Although Billingham parish is furthest from Durham of all those between the Tyne and Tees, it had long been an exceptionally important part of the estate. It was one of the earliest possessions of the Cuthbertine community south of the Tyne and contained fertile agricultural land.[42] Tithe income from Billingham was often twice as high as that from the Priory's second most valuable parish in the area, Heighington. It also contained an exceptional concentration of Priory manors and a large number of customary holdings which must have provided the labour services on the manors.[43] This suggests the Priory may have been heavily involved in developing the structure of this part of its estate during the early thirteenth century.[44] Although estate management changed in Billingham parish in the period after the Black Death, the bursars continued to maintain a more direct interest there than elsewhere. Unusually, the bondlands in Billingham and Cowpen Bewley were not leased but rather their works were sold: this gave the bursar greater flexibility to resume the works if necessary.[45] Even after the lease of the arable manors in the parish, the bursars maintained a direct interest in the livestock operation at Saltholme until the late fifteenth century.[46] The final stage of the leasing process was the emergence of the syndicate, a group of tenants who leased most of the holdings and often the demesne, and this happened only very late in the case of Billingham townships.[47]

The high productivity of Billingham parish, along with the density of Priory tenants and the care with which Priory interests there had been developed and maintained meant direct collection of tithes was still economical despite low grain prices and high labour costs. There are

[40] Du Boulay, 'Demesne farming at Otford', p. 117; Harvey, 'The leasing of the abbot of Westminster's demesnes', p. 10.

[41] Lomas, 'Demesnes', pp. 344–5.

[42] E. Craster, 'The patrimony of St Cuthbert', *EHR* 69 (1954), pp. 186, 189; T. Lomas, 'South-east Durham: late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries,' in P. D. A. Harvey (ed.), *The peasant land market in medieval England* (1984), p. 255.

[43] R. A. Lomas and A. J. Piper (eds), *Durham Cathedral Priory rentals*, I, *bursar's rentals* (Surtees Soc., 198, 1986), pp. 208–11; R. A. Lomas, 'Durham Cathedral Priory as a landowner and a landlord, 1290–1540' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Durham, 1973), p. 23.

[44] See also *Priory rentals*, I, pp. 209, 211.

[45] Lomas, 'Durham Cathedral Priory as a landowner and a landlord', pp. 31–2.

[46] *Priory rentals*, I, pp. 208–9. The last surviving Saltholme livestock account is from 1481–2.

[47] Lomas, 'Durham Cathedral Priory as a landowner and a landlord', pp. 39–40; *Priory rentals*, I, pp. 208–11.

parallels with the late continuation of direct cultivation on some manors. Those kept in hand by Battle Abbey in the fifteenth century, for example, were not those closest to the monastery but rather those on the chalk lands further west which were best suited to arable cultivation.[48] Likewise, just as close management of a manorial demesne could make it viable for a landlord with the time and inclination, so the collection of tithes could presumably be made profitable, especially if integrated with other activities in the township.[49] Cost cutting expedients were also available, about which we can only speculate. Just as demesne managers reduced sowing rates in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, so tithe owners or buyers could presumably save money by enforcing their rights less strictly.[50] It seems unlikely, however, that those who owed tithes benefited much from the Priory's withdrawal from direct collection since purchasers of tithe seeking a profit from their contact with the priory may have been rather more exacting in the enforcement of their rights than monks' officials collecting grain for their masters.[51]

III

Labour costs and grain prices were clearly an influence on the Durham bursars' management of tithes. They were not the only factors in the decision-making process, however. Another explanation for the changing policy is the method by which the monks supplied their household with grain. At its most basic level, this affected the division of the tithe income among the priory's officeholders. Appropriated parishes tended to be apportioned to those monks responsible for looking after the food needs of the convent at Durham or the dependent cells. This could be a major task. Very large supplies of grain were needed to feed as many as 113 monks at the end of the thirteenth century and around seventy in the early sixteenth, along with numerous servants and guests.[52] Between them, the Durham bursar and heads of cells accounted for tithe income from over two-thirds of the appropriated parishes. These same office holders also made much more sustained use of direct collection of tithes than other recipients. Nearly 10 per cent of approximately 9,000 bursar's tithe receipts listed in 178 individual accounts of this office were for tithes kept 'in hand'. The equivalent figure for the hostiller is under 5 per cent.

In the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, direct cultivation of manorial demesnes

[48] J. N. Hare, 'The monks as landlords: the leasing of the monastic demesnes in southern England,' in C. M. Barron and C. Harper-Bill (eds), *The Church in pre-reformation society: essays in honour of F. R. H. Du Boulay* (1985), p. 92.

[49] D. Youngs, 'Servants and labourers on a late medieval demesne. The case of Newton, Cheshire, 1498–1520', *AgHR* 47 (1999), pp. 145–60; R. A. Lomas, 'A northern farm at the end of the middle ages: Elvethall Manor, Durham, 1443/4 – 1513/14', *Northern Hist.* 18 (1982), pp. 26–53.

[50] P. F. Brandon, 'Demesne arable farming in coastal Sussex during the later Middle Ages', *AgHR* 19 (1972), p. 125.

[51] Compare the greater productivity of demesnes managed for commercial purposes with those supplying the household: B. Harrison, 'Field systems and demesne farming on the Wiltshire estates of Saint Swithun's Priory, Winchester, 1248–1340', *AgHR* 43 (1995), pp. 17–18; C. Thornton, 'The determinants of land productivity on the bishop of Winchester's demesne of Rimpton, 1208 to 1403,' in B. M. S. Campbell and M. Overton (eds), *Land, labour and livestock: historical studies in European agricultural productivity* (1991), pp. 183–210.

[52] A. J. Piper, 'The size and shape of Durham's monastic community, 1274–1539', in C. D. Liddy and R. H. Britnell (eds), *North-eastern England in the later middle ages* (2005), pp. 154, 159.

had provided a significant proportion of the Priory's grain needs, and, in particular, large quantities of wheat. From around 1330, however, the significance of directly cultivated manors for household grain supply declined as more land was leased. As already noted, this had an immediate impact on tithe management as tithe corn was substituted for produce from the Priory's demesnes: the 1330s and 1340s were the two decades of the most extensive direct collection of tithe grain. There was then a sudden fall in direct collection in the 1350s which coincides with the wider change in the Priory's system of supplying the household with grain first observed by R. A. Lomas.[53] The new system permitted the use of both sold and directly managed assets as sources of grain.

Prior to the 1350s very few grain purchases were recorded by the Durham Priory bursars. Their accounts usually only record the purchase of malt, although occasionally other grains were bought in years of shortage. Other grain needs were supplied by manorial demesnes and, latterly, tithes. However, from 1357–8 the grain purchase sections of the accounts become more complex with the regular appearance of a growing number of wheat purchases.[54] Many of these so-called 'purchases' were actually receipts in kind for rent payments or tithe sales rather than transactions made in the market place. This is suggested by the appearance of purchases described as made *in villa et in patria* in 1363–4; the latter category appears to signify the receipts in kind.[55] The operation of this system only becomes clearer in 1379–80, however, when grain 'purchase' sections list grain 'bought' from sold tithes.[56] The best demonstration of how this system operated is the bursar's rental of 1495–6 which shows that payments entered as a cash sum were paid in kind, often in the form of a number of different products. This applied to both rents and tithes. The tithe of Aycliffe, for example, was paid for with cash, a horse and 9½ quarters 1 bushel of barley.[57] Miranda Threlfall-Holmes has used the bursars' accounts to examine household grain supply in the late fifteenth century and found that nearly all of the Priory's grain was supplied through payments in kind.[58] Whilst it was common for landlords to supply themselves with fixed quantities of produce from leased properties, the Durham system was considerably more complicated because of the variations in the form in which rents were paid.[59] Reaching mutually acceptable values for the goods exchanged in lieu of payments, matching the goods received to the needs of the house, then disposing of the surplus must have been major tasks.

Most importantly, after the Black Death the meeting of household grain needs ceased to be affected by whether tithes were collected or sold: both management methods could be used to source grain supplies. The disruption caused by the Black Death and the following years of readjustment seem to have encouraged the monks to adopt permanently a more flexible system of receiving grain and supplying their household. This change in the monks' method in supplying themselves with grain must help explain the sudden fall in tithes kept in hand in the 1350s.

[53] Lomas, 'Demesnes', pp. 342–3.

[54] DCM, bursar's account 1357–8, *Empcio frumenti.*

[55] DCM, bursar's account 1363–4, *Empcio frumenti.* Lomas, 'Demesnes', p. 344.

[56] DCM, bursar's account 1379–80, *Empcio frumenti.*

[57] *Priory rentals*, I, p. 194.

[58] M. Threlfall-Holmes, *Monks and markets. Durham Cathedral Priory, 1460–1520* (2005), p. 139.

[59] Smith, *Canterbury Cathedral Priory*, p. 193.

IV

However payments were made, the tithe owner was dependent throughout the late middle ages on the availability of willing purchasers. Tithe buyers were people of very varied social and economic standing. They included some of the most important men in the kingdom such as Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, and Ralph Neville, recently created Earl of Westmorland, who both bought tithes in 1399.[60] Local gentry families were also prominent, including the Bowes who bought the tithes of townships in Dalton-le-Dale parish in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[61] At the other end of the scale, tithes were sometimes bought by those who actually cultivated the land in the township in question. For example, in 1495 the tenants of Westoe, Over Heworth and Monkton bought the tithes of their own vills.[62] Tithes were also bought by those who appear to have made their living by trade, such as Roland Sotheron who bought tithes from the bursar and sold Spanish iron to the hostiller in 1486 and William of Durham, described as 'merchant', in 1334.[63]

Evidence from elsewhere suggests tithe sales involved competitive bidding.[64] Such a range of purchasers suggests that Durham tithes were a desirable investment and in general the monks appear to have enjoyed buoyant demand. Some tithe purchasers clearly had a landed interest in the township where they bought tithes. The Earl of Northumberland owned the manors of South Charlton and Ellingham in Ellingham parish where he bought the tithes in 1399.[65] William Bowes bought tithes in the 1440s and 1450s in Dalton-le-Dale where his grandfather had inherited land through marriage.[66] Likewise, the farmers of Priory demesnes sometimes bought what amounted to exemption from tithe on the demesne they were leasing.[67] The same applies, of course, to the consortia of tenants buying the tithes of their own townships. Other buyers, sometimes without a landed interest in the area, clearly regarded the purchase as a profitable speculation. Vicars buying tithes in their own parishes represent a special case. Given they already received the small tithes from the same vills, collection was probably easier than for anyone else.[68] Geographical proximity probably encouraged Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmorland to buy the tithes of Kirk Merrington, less than ten miles distant from the family seats at Raby and Brancepeth.[69]

The best examples of tithe purchase for profitable speculation are the local merchants who bought such a large proportion of the bursar's tithes during the 1320s and 1330s and to whom

[60] DCM, bursar's account 1399–1400, tithe receipts.

[61] E.g. DCM, chamberlain's account, 1453–4 (A), *Recepta*.

[62] DCM, bursar's account 1495–6, tithe receipts.

[63] DCM, bursar's account 1486–7, tithe receipts; hostiller's account 1486–7, *Expense necessarie*; bursar's account 1334–5, beforehand receipts.

[64] J. Ruwet, 'La mesure de la production agricole sous l'Ancien Régime: le blé en pays mosan', *Annales ESC*, 4 (1964), p. 637; M. Baulant, 'Du bon usage des dîmes dans la région parisienne,' in J. Goy and E. Le Roy Ladurie (eds), *Les fluctuations du produit de la dîme. Conjoncture décimale et domaniale de la fin du Moyen-Age au XVIIIe siècle* (1972), pp. 35–7.

[65] C. Given-Wilson, *The English nobility in the late middle ages: the fourteenth-century political community* (1987), pp. xxi–xxii.

[66] R. Surtees, *The history and antiquities of the county palatine of Durham* (4 vols, 1816–40), I, p. 5, IV, p. 102. I am grateful to Dr C. D. Liddy for this information.

[67] E.g. Merrington in DCM, bursar's account 1399–1400, tithe receipts.

[68] e.g. Pittington and Monk Hesleden: DCM, bursar's account 1399–1400, tithe receipts.

[69] Given-Wilson, *English nobility*, pp. xii–xiii.

the bursars became heavily indebted. For example, the name of John Kelloe, a Darlington merchant, appears in the tithe sections of the bursar's accounting material over fifty times during the 1330s. In 1330 he paid £52 for the tithes of a number of townships 'beforehand', that is for the harvests of subsequent years, in this case 1331 and 1332.[70] In 1334 he was assigned the tithes of six separate townships over three years for the derisory price of £15 by way of repayment for debts owed him by the Priory.[71] Then in 1336 he paid the enormous sum of £120 for the tithes of the same six vills for the harvests of 1338, 1339 and 1340.[72]

The range of individuals we find purchasing demesne leases and tithes is not dissimilar. On the estates of the archbishops of Canterbury in the early sixteenth century, for example, the demesne lessees were 'gentlemen', 'yeomen' or 'husbandmen' and London merchants.[73] Hare found similar types of individual taking over demesne leases in Wiltshire, including those closely associated with the manor in question and some outsiders.[74] Tithes probably represented a more convenient speculative investment than manorial demesnes since the purchase was a smaller undertaking. Demesne leases were sometimes speculative since demesnes could be sublet, but taking on a lease usually meant a commitment to cultivating the land. A tithe buyer, by contrast, only needed to collect the tithe at harvest time, to dispose of the grain and to make the payments on the appointed days.

Sometimes, however, economic circumstances restricted the range of tithe purchasers. In the 1320s and 1330s the monks found themselves in dire financial straits and appear to have used discounted tithes as a means of paying off their creditors. The origin of their difficulties was the conflict between England and Scotland which had made it impossible to collect revenue from their Scottish lands and parishes. A series of devastating Scottish raids during the 1310s and 1320s had also seriously affected agriculture in Northumberland and south of the Tyne.[75] It may be that the Percy policy of leasing manors in Northumberland in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries was a result of the same pressures of war.[76]

Sometimes lessors were unable to find takers for their demesnes. The Durham monks experienced the same problems for their tithe sales.[77] The unusual circumstances following the high mortality from the Black Death in 1349 meant that tithe grain had to be sold when possible, often in small quantities, presumably as a result of the death in the pestilence of contracted purchasers.[78] It may also have been a shortage of buyers that meant so many tithes were kept in hand during the second quarter of the fifteenth century, perhaps as a result of the lack of sufficiently high bids offered for their purchase. Cases are known from eighteenth-century France of tithes which were kept 'in hand' because the bids for their purchase were so low.[79] This suggestion is supported by the lack of consistency in the townships from which tithes were

[70] DCM, bursar's account 1330–1 (B), beforehand receipts. C. M. Fraser, 'The pattern of trade in the north-east of England, 1265–1350', *Northern Hist.* 4 (1969), pp. 50–3.

[71] DCM, bursar's account 1334–5, tithe receipts.

[72] DCM, bursar's account 1336–7, tithe receipts.

[73] F. R. H. Du Boulay, *The lordship of Canterbury: an essay on medieval society* (1966), p. 232.

[74] Hare, 'The demesne lessees of fifteenth-century Wiltshire', pp. 4–13.

[75] See the monks' own tabulation of tithe receipts in J. Raine (ed.), *Historiae Dunelmensis Scriptores Tres* (Surtees Soc. 9, 1839), pp. ccxlviii-cclii. I shall discuss the difficulties of this period in a future publication.

[76] Bean, *Percy family*, p. 15.

[77] Brandon, 'Demesne arable farming', p. 121.

[78] B. Dodds, 'Durham Priory tithes and the Black Death between Tyne and Tees', *Northern Hist.* 39 (2002), p. 18.

[79] Baulant, 'Du bon usage,' p. 35.

kept 'in hand' during the 1440s by comparison with the 1410s.[80] The 1430s, 1440s and 1450s were years of severe agricultural depression in northeast England and the Priory experienced extreme difficulties in the collection of its rent.[81] Whilst rising labour costs in the wake of the Black Death made it desirable for the bursars to collect fewer and fewer tithes directly at the end of the fourteenth century, this policy does not seem to have been sustainable during the second third of the fifteenth century.

V

The analysis of the reasons for changes in the monks' management of tithes shows that, in order to make a decision on whether to collect or sell tithes, information was needed on their value in previous years, the cash value of the tithe yield and so on. Even if a tithe was sold, the practice of receiving goods in lieu of cash meant some knowledge of market prices was needed. For this reason, the monks developed a sophisticated system of recording tithe receipts in their account rolls.

The bursars' accounts, where the majority of Priory tithe receipts were recorded, listed these receipts in a series of subsections for each parish. Before the final quarter of the fourteenth century, the accounts dealt with receipts from vills where the tithes were kept 'in hand' simply with a mention in the summing up at the end of the subsection for each parish. The bursar did occasionally enter quantities of grain, but this was nearly always in the case of tithes sold for corn.[82] During this early phase, a valuation of grain was only very occasionally made.[83] A new system of accounting for grain tithe receipts was introduced by which quantities of grain received were valued and double-entered as fictitious cash receipts and fictitious cash expenses. The accountants seem to have calculated annual average prices for each type of grain.[84] The 1384–5 bursar's receipt from Westoe in Jarrow parish is the first tithe receipt entry with a clear double entry but a more primitive version of the system had been adopted in 1379–80.[85] The fictitious purchase system became the standard technique in the bursars' accounts gradually over the following decade or so and was adopted by other Priory office holders.[86]

This system of recording grain receipts in cash accounts must have facilitated the auditing process. Given the level of detail of all office holder accounts, the matter of tithe receipts in kind represented a considerable blind spot. There was little an auditor could do, without referring to additional documentation, with an entry such as that found at the bottom of the Aycliffe tithe receipts section in the bursar's account of 1350–1: 'And no more in cash because the tithe

[80] During the 1410s the bursars only kept Billingham parish tithes 'in hand', with two one-off exceptions. During the 1440s, however, tithes from the parishes of Aycliffe, Billingham, Heighington, Jarrow, Kirk Merrington, Monk Hesleden, Northallerton and Pittington were kept 'in hand' with little regularity.

[81] A. J. Pollard, 'The north-eastern economy and the agrarian crisis of 1438–40', *Northern Hist.* 25 (1989), pp. 89–105; Dodds, 'Estimating arable output', pp. 271–3.

[82] E.g. Kirk Merrington parish: DCM, bursar's account 1362–3 (A), tithe receipts.

[83] E.g. DCM, bursar's account 1342–3 (B), tithe receipts.

[84] See Threlfall-Holmes, *Monks and markets*, pp. 76–8.

[85] DCM, bursar's account 1384–5, tithe receipts, *Empcio frumenti*; DCM, bursar's account 1379–80, tithe receipts, *Empcio frumenti*.

[86] E.g. *Priory of Finchale*, pp. clxiii-clxv.

of Brafferton in the hand of the Prior'.[87] The need for such detailed information on the cash value of grain receipts is suggested by earlier attempts at valuation. In 1368–9, for example, the Prior of Finchale accounted for the sale of the tithe of Cornforth for quantities of corn which 'were worth not much less than £20'.[88] The fictitious purchase system put more information at the disposal of the auditors. The coincidence of the change in accounting technique with the phase of exceptionally small numbers of tithes received in hand shown in Figure 2 suggests the two phenomena may have been associated. When large amounts of tithe grain were received directly, as in the early fourteenth century, the auditing of cash receipts and grain receipts separately may have been worthwhile. In a period when so few tithes were collected directly, it must have made sense to audit all tithe receipts together.

The new system also permitted the comparison of the relative value of tithes sold and tithes 'in hand'. This is suggested by a 1443–4 entry from the granator's account:[89] grain received from the tithe of Bewley manor was worth £1 5*s.* 7*d.* but the accountant observed that the tithe of the manor used to produce a cash receipt of £2 13*s.* 4*d.* when leased to John Ster.[90] This type of comparison must have been useful in deciding whether or not to accept a bid for the purchase of a tithe. Indeed, more detailed and accessible knowledge of the value of tithes when sold and when collected as grain may go some way to explaining the phase of 'in hand' receipts in the first half of the fifteenth century since it would have sharpened the monks' awareness of the value of their tithes and encouraged them not to accept low bids.

Whilst the fictitious purchase system is evidence of some degree of flexibility in the procedure of accounting for tithes, the system was not always efficient. Most spectacularly, in 1446–7 Henry Feriby, Prior of Finchale, accounted for the fictitious receipt of £15 14*s.* 8*d.* for the tithes of Bishop Middleham parish which were received in kind. However, he omitted the crucial expenditure entry meaning that he was accounting for nearly 10 per cent more than he actually received.[91] This shows very poor auditing which may have been associated with the resignation of Prior Wessington in the same year. Such examples of carelessness are rare, however, and can be countered with many cases of meticulousness in the recording of tithe receipts. For instance, in his account of 1433–4, the master of Wearmouth pointed out that no tithe was received from Hylton in Monkwearmouth parish because the vill was not sown in that year. The bursar's account of the same year also records that Hylton was not sown.[92] Given that the tithes of the vills of Monkwearmouth parish were divided between the bursar and the master of the cell, the anxiety of both accountants to justify their nil receipt suggests they expected any auditors to be sharp enough to check both documents.

This system, which permitted a non-cash receipt to be recorded in a cash account, was by no means confined to Durham Priory. At Peterborough, the abbot's receiver was using the fictitious purchase system to record tithe receipts by 1505–6.[93] The notional sale system used to

[87] DCM, bursar's account 1350–1 (A), tithe receipts.

[88] *Priory of Finchale*, p. lxxxii.

[89] In 1438–44 the bursar's endowment was divided between the bursar, cellarer and granator: R. B. Dobson, *Durham Priory, 1400–1450* (1973), pp. 233–7.

[90] DCM, granator's account 1443–4, tithe receipts.

[91] *Priory of Finchale*, pp. ccxlvii-ccxlix; DCM, Finchale account, 1446–7.

[92] DCM, Wearmouth account 1433–4 (A), *Recepta*; DCM, bursar's account 1433–4, tithe receipts.

[93] J. Greatrex (ed.), *Account rolls of the obedientiaries of Peterborough* (Northamptonshire Record Soc. 33, 1984), pp. 188, 193.

record grain consumption in household and manorial accounts is also similar to Durham's fictitious purchase system.[94] The household accountant of Richard Turberville at Sampford Peverell (Devon) in 1358–9 entered grain consumption in the *Vendicio bladi* section of his account, explaining how the grain had been used, and then cancelled out this fictitious receipt in the expenses section.[95] It appears that this accounting method was relatively widespread and may have constituted part of the body of techniques in which accountants were trained in the late middle ages.[96] A comparable shift in the character of documentation associated with manors is also observable as the management of this resource changed. Whilst the detailed accounts associated with direct management disappear as lands were transferred to lessees, the rents sections of accounting material and the leases themselves became more sophisticated.[97]

VI

In some ways, the management of tithes was similar to that of manorial demesnes. Prices and wages had a comparable, though not identical, impact and we see the same policy of concentrating on one part of the estate in the fifteenth century. However, the greater flexibility possible in tithe management permits us to define crisis points other than that in the late fourteenth century associated with demesne leasing. Regional phenomena were important around Durham including the impact of conflict with the Scots in the early fourteenth century and the severe agrarian crisis of the 1430s. Just as the leasing of demesnes created a new group of individuals with landed interests, so the tithe management crises represented opportunities for speculative purchasers.

This study of tithe management encourages us not to underestimate the complexity of the administration of major landlords. Decisions on household grain supply involved much more than simple leasing or keeping in hand of demesnes. There were many other sources of grain which had to be taken into account, including tithes for ecclesiastical lords. What is more, even leasing or sale of sources of grain did not automatically end their significance in household grain supply. The Durham monks' system of receiving grain in lieu of cash payments for resources apparently leased or sold was extraordinarily complex. With the introduction of the fictitious purchase accounting system, we catch a glimpse of the administration it required. A large number of more ephemeral documents must have been produced which no longer survive.

Changing landlord involvement in their estates cannot be defined simply as withdrawal during this period. Certainly the tendency to lease and to sell became more marked, meaning the monks' agents may have been less prominent in overseeing the day-to-day agricultural tasks in the villages. However, Mark Bailey has recently warned against the idea that administration became slack towards the end of the middle ages. He suggested instead that landlords had to

[94] L. Poos, *A rural society after the Black Death: Essex, 1350–1525* (1991), p. 303.

[95] C. M. Woolgar (ed.), *Household accounts from medieval England* (2 vols, British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, new ser., 17–18, 1992), II, pp. 489, 491.

[96] *Ibid.*, I, p. 48; H. G. Richardson, 'Business training in medieval Oxford', *American Historical Rev.* 46 (1940–1), pp. 259–80.

[97] Bailey, *English manor*, pp. 41, 91–5, 109.

'work harder' to secure their income.[98] In a period of declining income from rents, landlords had to be particularly punctilious. The Percies introduced a series of innovations in their estate management in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, achieving some success in raising revenue from certain parts of their estate.[99] Sir John Fastolf, once the paragon of chivalric *largesse*, earned a rather different reputation in his old age for his activities as a landlord: 'cruell and vengible he hath byn euer and for the most parte w[i]t[h]oute pite and mercy'.[100] No doubt the Durham monks enjoyed a similar reputation with some of those with whom they did business. They certainly maintained a dynamic managerial policy and bureaucracy capable of responding to the often difficult economic conditions of the final two and a half centuries of their community's existence.

[98] *Ibid.*, pp. 40–1.

[99] Bean, *Percy family*, pp. 48–68.

[100] K. B. McFarlane, 'The investment of Sir John Fastolf's profits of war', *Trans. Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 7 (1957), pp. 113–16.

Regionality in the late Old Poor Law: the treatment of chargeable bastards from Rural Queries*

by Margaret A. Lyle

Abstract

In 1832 the Royal Commission enquiring into the administration and practical operation of the old Poor Law sent a questionnaire, the *Rural Queries*, to parishes throughout the country. This paper reports the results of a computer analysis of their answers to the commissioners' enquiry into the amounts given to the mothers of chargeable bastards. The results give a good countrywide overview of the treatment of those mothers and their children and reveal distinct regional variations in the amounts awarded to them.

A full century after the Webbs published their account of the Old Poor Law, its operation continues to be the subject of interest and debate.[1] The Old Poor Law, it will be recalled, was administered at the level of the parish (in the North of England, the township) by parochial or township overseers operating within a national system of law first laid down in 1598 but amended on many subsequent occasions. The system was funded by locally raised rates on property. By the early nineteenth century the poor law had come to be regarded as profligate and extravagant. Costs were seemingly out of control. In 1785 the total spent on poor relief in England was £2 million but by 1830 it was a little over £7 million, although there had been a few peaks and troughs in between.[2] The government sought a reduction in poor rates, but feared that any such reduction would further aggravate the social unrest that had precipitated rural riots and incendiarism in 1831. The government established a Royal Commission in February 1832 with the brief of 'inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the poor laws'. The nine commissioners appointed to investigate and report in turn appointed twenty-six assistant commissioners to collect evidence from different parts of the country. In parallel with the work of the assistant commissioners, questionnaires were sent to both urban and rural parishes. The Rural Queries were a suite of 53 questions enquiring into, *inter alia*, parish land use, the employment and earnings of men, women and children and their accommodation, the relief available to them, how it was administered and at what cost to the rate

* I thank Professor Richard Hoyle for his tireless encouragement and sound advice during the writing of this paper. I also thank Dr. Nicola Verdon for kindling my initial enthusiasm for Rural Queries.

[1] S. and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History*, I, *The Old Poor Law* (1927).

[2] S. King, *Poverty and welfare in England, 1700–1850. A regional perspective* (2000), pp. 81–2; P. Slack, *The English poor law, 1531–1782* (1990), p. 30.

payer, and the number and cost of bastards in the parish.[3] The volume, detail and diversity of these replies made it impossible to analyse them at the time, and only with recent developments in computing has it become possible to analyse the data expeditiously.[4] The mass of information gathered in 1832–3 therefore contributed less to the formulation of policy than might be expected. Instead, the commissioner's report was, as Blaug argued some years ago, in many instances guided by prejudice.[5] The reforming statute of 1834 ended parochial control over the parish's own poor, shifting discretion from the parish to poor law unions under the control of a central government department.

At first sight, the contrast between the two systems – one highly devolved, the other highly centralised – seems considerable, but it is not clear that the individual parish under the Old Poor Law operated with as much freedom as some commentators have thought. Parish officers were subject to supervision by magistrates and individual paupers who were dissatisfied with their treatment could appeal to them. It has recently been suggested that the old poor law operated in different ways in different regions. The level of generosity varied, with the north-west being particularly meagre in the support it gave the dependent poor. The leading advocate of the regionality approach, Professor King, has gone so far as to divide England into eight regions according to their treatment of 'entitlement, nominal relief levels and sentiment of relief giving' (Figure 1). Professor Hindle has suggested that there were 'already significant differentials in the level of pensions between northern and southern parishes by the mid-seventeenth century'.[6] This should perhaps not surprise. It is now agreed that the implementation of the 1598/1601 statute was achieved over two or more generations, with the north and west being slow to adopt relief in the form of doles paid out of rates. The allowance system devised at Speenhamland in 1795 never achieved national currency.

The problem with establishing the degree of diversity within the Old Poor Law is locating data which is drawn from a large number of parishes whilst being simple enough to be gathered on consistent lines. King, for instance blended published and unpublished studies of less than 120 communities to produce the map presented in Figure 1. The answers to the Rural

[3] This paper looks at the Rural Queries only. The Commissioners decided which parishes should receive Rural Queries and which Town Queries. A few settlements received both and the parish decided which one to answer, e.g. St. Mary Reading, Berkshire, received both sets but recorded on the Rural Queries that they had answered the Town set, so is not included in this dataset. Of the 1,152 parishes that returned answers to the Rural Queries, nine have been excluded because their population densities (based on the 1831 population and the parish size in acres, as recorded in their answers) indicated they were more likely to have the characteristics of towns. In descending order of population density the excluded parishes were: Sunderland (Durham), 487 people per acre; Walsall (Stafford), 64; Wakefield (Yorks., WR), 28; Brighthelmstone [Brighton], (Sussex), 26; St Mary (Notts.), 25; Boroughbridge (Yorks., NR), 21; Clifton (Glos.), 19; Falmouth (Cornw.), 13; Tottenham (Middx), 13. The remaining 1,143 parishes are the dataset used in this paper.

[4] Mark Blaug was the only person to attempt quantitative analysis before computer use became routine, 'The Poor Law Report re-examined', *JEcH* 24 (1964), pp. 229–45. He manually analysed and tabulated some of the answers and used this analysis to reassess relief policies in the early nineteenth century. Recently Nicola Verdon used computer analysis of the answers to good effect in 'The rural labour market in the early nineteenth century. Women's and children's employment, family income, and the 1834 Poor Law Report', *EcHR* 55 (2002), pp. 299–323.

[5] Blaug, 'Poor Law Report re-examined'.

[6] S. Hindle, *On the parish? The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England, c. 1550–1750* (2004), p. 283.

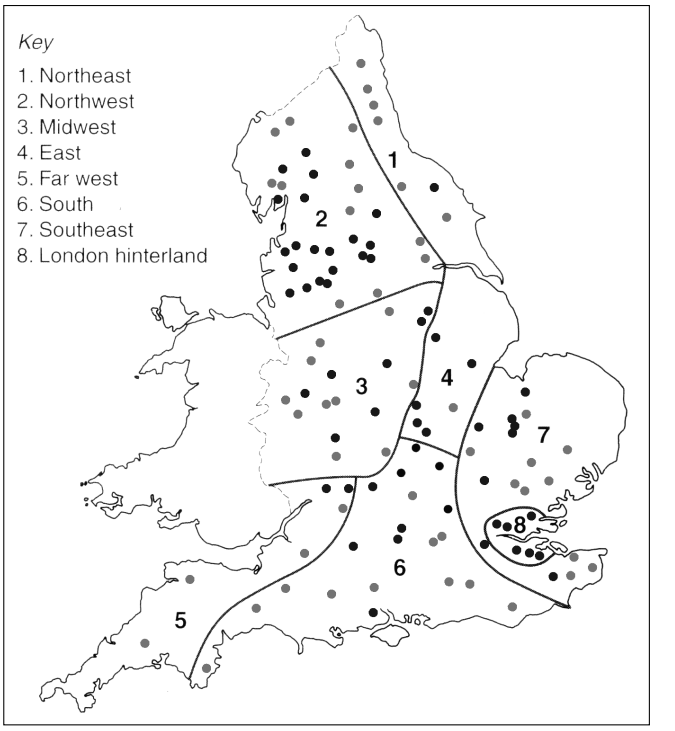


FIGURE 1. Division of counties suggested by King.

Note: these are hypothetical sub-regional divisions based on 'distinct experiences of issues such as entitlement, nominal relief levels and the sentiment of relief giving'.
Source: S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700–1850* (2000), p. 262.

Queries supply such data in the form of the allowance given to the mother of a bastard child. Question 47 enquired,

> What is the allowance received by a woman for a bastard, and does it generally repay her, or more than repay her, the expense of keeping it? And is the existing law for the punishment of the mother whose bastard child becomes chargeable often executed for the first or for the second offence?

The answers to the first part of this question will be used as the data source for this study. In undertaking the analysis as part of a larger study of the treatment of bastards in the dying days of the Old Poor Law, it became clear that the allowances paid for the support of a bastard child showed marked regional variations and it is these which will be explored in this paper.

It is not argued that the answers to the Rural Queries are a perfect source. The wording of the questions, the nature of the sample and the interests of those who replied all need to be understood. It is impossible to ignore the reality that the analysis cannot be statistically valid. The sample is not random: parishes could answer or not as they chose. Only about 10 per cent of the total number of parishes in the country, representing about one fifth of the population, returned a set of answers.[7] Even then they usually did not answer all questions in the set, so for some counties the number of parishes that answered any one question was very small. There

[7] P. Bagshaw, 'The 1832 Poor Law Commission's answers to rural queries. Goudhurst, a case study of a Wealden parish', *Arch. Cantania*, 118 (1998), p. 64.

is no way round this, but Blaug's caution on the result of his pioneering analysis of Rural Queries ('. . . the tabulated replies cannot claim to be of statistical value: all that can be claimed is that they are more meaningful than nine volumes of untabulated replies or than the method of selecting quotations . . .') applies equally to these results.[8]

A further handicap is the lack of impartiality in some replies. Whilst some queries required answers that were matters of fact, some asked for an opinion and opinion can never be impartial. While a wide range of people did complete the returns – from a labouring gardener to the Deputy Lieutenant of a county through churchwardens, vestry clerks, honorary overseers, paid assistant overseers, magistrates and land owners – the majority of parishes delegated the task to the overseer of the poor or a local clergyman.[9] It can be anticipated that any answers that required an opinion would be biased towards the viewpoint of the respondent and, of course, all answers came from a male perspective: not one return was completed by a female.

On the other hand, this countrywide survey has two great strengths: its geographical spread and the fact that it relates to a single date. Data from a countrywide survey gives a much needed overview, a skeleton on which the flesh picked from the detailed studies may be hung. This analysis of the answers given by 818 individual parishes reveals a pattern of regional variation in the amounts given to the mothers of bastard children. It allows comparison of all regions at one point in time, a possibility not afforded by King's method of aggregating isolated studies covering a wide range of years.[10]

I

Fiscal responsibility for a bastard child who could not be supported by the mother ultimately resided with the parish, but the parish would seek to defray the expenditure by recourse to the father. There were thus two elements in this dynamic: the generosity of the parish to the needy mothers and the ability of the parish to recover money from the putative father. It was the responsibility of the parish to find the alleged father, take him before the magistrates and then move to extract maintenance payments from him. Any shortfall from this process had to be made good from the poor rates.[11]

An added complication in comparing the allowances set by the magistrates was the duration, as well as the rate, of any support.[12] The parish responsibility was from birth until economic independence, but economic independence was considered to occur at different times in

[8] Blaug, 'Poor Law Report re-examined', p. 234.

[9] *Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws*, Appendix (B. 1), *Answers to Rural Queries*, pt 1 (BPP, 1834, XXX), pp. 64e, 23e: John Denson, Waterbeach, Cambridge was a labouring gardener and Frederick Page of Speen was the Deputy Lieutenant of Berkshire.

[10] County boundaries and county names are those used in the Rural Queries.

[11] This paper is concerned only with the amounts awarded to the mothers. It does not look at the recovery rates by parish, which was covered by question 48 in the Rural Queries and will be the subject of a further publication.

[12] The amounts awarded to the mothers were set by the magistrates, but whether at their own whim, or whether by local tradition, cannot be determined from this study. In this paper, the amounts awarded to the mothers will be referred to as the 'amounts awarded by the parish' although it is understood that those amounts were ultimately set by the magistrates.

different parishes. Therefore any award made, and any cost to the parish, could continue for different numbers of years in different parishes. Seven years was by far the most usual, after which time the child was either considered self-sufficient or was maintained as a parish pauper in its own right. After economic independence the father had no further financial responsibility. As respondents to Rural Queries said, 'After the term of seven years for nurture, they become chargeable upon the parish which gave them birth'; 'It is generally 2*s.* per week, which will not repay her if the child lives seven years'; and '. . . some men will run away till the child is seven years old, and then suffer three months imprisonment'.[13] There were, of course, exceptions; two parishes reported that support was given until nine years old which added a significant 29 percent to parish costs.[14] One parish was exceptional in offering support until the child was 14 years old, which doubled the usual costs to that parish if the father could not be made to pay'; '. . . it is more than sufficient while she suckles the child, but insufficient before 14 years, after which age the father is rarely called upon, the child being considered capable of earning its own maintenance, or is bound out apprentice by the parish'.[15]

Because of this long term commitment to fund the mothers, overseers endeavoured to keep the allowance as low as possible. The fear was that the fathers, through accident or design, would not make maintenance payments and a financial burden would fall upon the parish for many years. The overseers sometimes took it upon themselves to alter the amount set by the magistrates and women did not always receive the full amounts originally awarded. As the allowances were channelled through the overseers there was little recourse available to the women. When the mother was already in the workhouse and receiving parish assistance for herself and her child, the overseers took the allowance for parish funds. '. . . if . . . the Mother is in the workhouse, of course, she derives no benefit from the allowance; in this case it is paid to the parish, and they support the mother and child'.[16] In other cases the overseers simply reduced the amount awarded. They relied on most women accepting this new arrangement. If she did not, she could go back to the magistrates with a complaint. This would have involved her in inconvenience, expense and loss of any (however little) goodwill she already had from the overseers. As a Cumberland parish reported,

> It may average 1*s.* 6*d.* per week; and when the mother agrees to keep and support her child, no further sum is required, or given by the parish. It very frequently happens that nothing, or very little, is obtained from the putative father, and in that case the mother does not receive more than 1*s.* or 1*s.* 3*d.* per week from the parish.[17]

Magistrates set the amount after examining the woman and the named man, when they

[13] BPP, 1834, XXX, p. 72e (Robert Hardwicke, Senior Magistrate of the Isle of Ely, Wisbech St. Peter, Isle of Ely, Cambridge); p. 2e (Jacob Henry Brooke Mountain, Rector and JP, Blunham-cum-Muggerhanger, Bedford) and p. 618e, (Samuel Washington, Clerk, and James Wambersley, Assistant Overseer, Hipperholme with Brighouse Township (Halifax Parish), County of York (West Riding)).

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 136e (John Alsop, Overseer, Woolborough, Devon); p. 396e (E. S. Davenport, Vicar and JP, Worfield, Shropshire).

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 465e (John Garden, Surveyor, Redisham Hall, Ringsfield, Suffolk).

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 265e (John Alexander Ross, Curate, Westwell, Kent).

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 108e (Thomas Dixon, Hesketh, Cumberland).

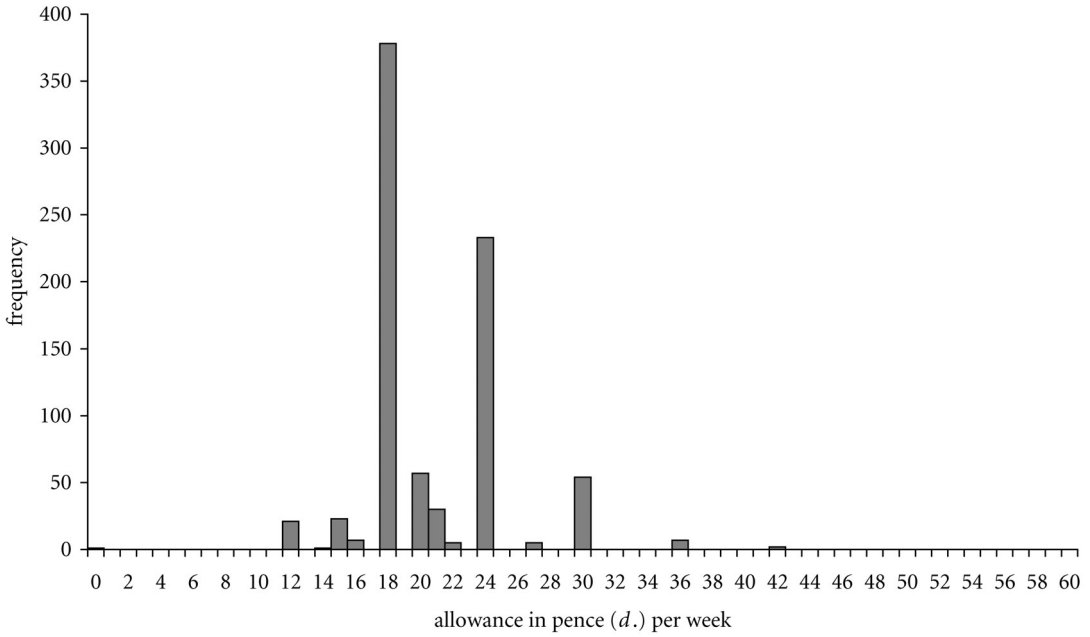


FIGURE 2. Usual weekly allowance awarded to mothers (in pence)

Source: BPP, XXX, 1834. Data compiled from responses to Question 47: single amounts returned by parishes together with the lower amount if parishes returned a range.

then issued an order of affiliation and maintenance. (The man could deny that he was the father.) [18]

The amounts awarded were matters of fact and the first part of question 47 which enquired into this, 'What is the allowance received by a Woman for a Bastard …', had a good response. About three quarters of the parishes that returned a set of answers replied to this question. Consequently there is – within the parameters already discussed – a reliable dataset which allows the amount awarded and its variability throughout the country to be determined accurately; it also allows an insight into the impartiality or otherwise on the reporting of this amount in the Commissioners' Report. In addition to the regional differences, there were different amounts awarded within each parish, the amount being loosely indexed to what the father could be assumed to afford to pay. The allowance was '. . . governed by the situation in life of the father'.[19] Any agricultural labourer, because of his lower income, would generally be expected to pay less than a farmer or tradesman so when looking for evidence of regional differences the lowest allowance was used.

Fortunately, almost all parishes reported a flat rate cash payment to the mothers. This differed from the allowance system which indexed poor relief to family size and the price of

[18] A study of magistrates' examinations of mothers and putative fathers at Chelmsford, Essex, has recently been undertaken. T. Nutt, 'The parochial (mis)management of bastardy: Chelmsford, Essex, *c.* 1814–1834', unpublished paper given at Economic History Society Conference at Royal Holloway (2004).

[19] BPP, 1834, XXX, p. 67e (George Cuming, late assistant Overseer, Trumpington, Cambridge).

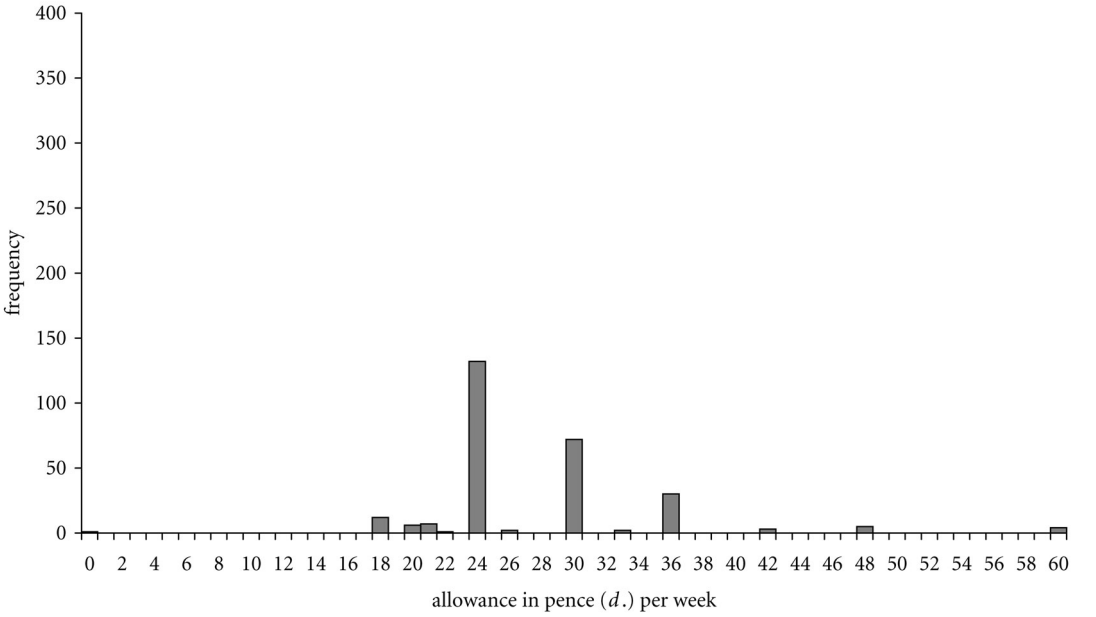


FIGURE 3. Maximum weekly allowance awarded to mothers (in pence)

Source: BPP, XXX, 1834. Data compiled from responses to Question 47: single amounts returned by parishes together with higher amount if parishes returned a range.

bread and which had for a short time been widespread for general poor relief, especially in parishes in the south-east. Only three parishes reported awarding an allowance linked to bread or flour prices. Two of these were totally indexed. Thatcham in Berkshire, a parish only five miles from Speen where the allowance system was devised in 1795, reported 'From 1*s.* 6*d.* upwards according to the price of bread'. Finchingfield in Essex reported that, 'The rate of allowance to a woman and bastard, being poor and destitute and without other means, is set at the price of one and a quarter peck of flour per week'.[20] The third, Compton Chamberlaine in Wiltshire, operated a partially indexed system by giving a smaller cash component and including a loaf as part of the allowance, '1*s.* 3*d.* per week for the child, and a loaf and 3*d.* to the woman till she is able to work; it does not repay her'.[21]

The bread index, however, was still the standard against which a few parishes judged the adequacy of their bastardy allowance. George Fort, the magistrate of Alderbury Parish and Sarum Division in Wiltshire, considered the 1*s.* 6*d.* allowance too little because 'at the present price of bread from 15*d.* to 18*d.* per gallon, it scarcely pays'.[22] The Rector of Great Waldenfieed (*sic*) in Suffolk reported, '2*s.* which, according to the present price of flour, is two-pence more than is allowed to a legitimate child'.[23] The results from the analysis of the amounts awarded to the women are shown in Figure 2. They were arrived at by counting the number of parishes that

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 24e, 174e.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 570*e* (James King, Churchwarden and Overseer).

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 566*e*.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 470*e* (Francis Creswell, Rector).

TABLE 1. Frequency of amounts awarded, pence (*d.*) per week, to the mothers

County	*0*	*12*	*14*	*15*	*16*	*18*	*20*	*21*	*22*	*24*	*27*	*30*	*36*	*42*	*Average*
Middlesex (2/2)												2			30.0
Northumberland (11/20)				1						7		2	1		25.4
Sussex (67/83)						14	1			30		19	3		24.9
Huntingdon (7/13)						3				2		1		1	24.9
Nottingham (21/27)				1		1				17		2			23.9
Kent (36/57)						4				29		3			23.8
Surrey (20/29)					1	4				11		4			23.6
Durham (27/37)						7	2	4		9		3	1	1	23.5
Derby (7/7)							1			6					23.4
Essex (33/50)		1				9		1		18		4			22.6
York (North Riding) (10/17)						2	4			2	1	1			22.1
Lincoln (12/20)		1				4		1		5			1		21.8
Leicester (10/18)						4				6					21.6
Cambridge (34/43)						14				20					21.5
Southampton (37/57)						19		2		13		3			21.2
Cornwall (22/29)						5	12		1	3			1		20.9
Hertford (9/18)		1				3				5					20.7
Hereford (16/19)		1				8	1			5		1			20.4
Warwick (32/38)						22				8		2			20.3
Oxford (18/29)						6	9			2	1				20.2
Gloucester (21/26)						13		1	3	3	1				20.0
York (East Riding) (3/5)						2				1					20.0
Bedford (14/16)						10				4					19.7
Buckingham (18/35)		1				12				4		1			19.7
Westmorland (17/21)						10	3		1	3					19.6
Worcester (14/19)						10	2			1		1			19.6
Rutland (4/4)						3				1					19.5
Chester (10/16)						6	3			1					19.2
Suffolk (26/50)				1		19		1		5					19.2
Stafford (9/13)						4	5								19.1
Northampton (14/18)						12		1				1			19.1
Norfolk (26/41)		1				15	1	8		1					19.0
Cumberland (32/47)		3		2	1	11	7	7		1					18.5
Berkshire (21/29)		2		1	1	12	3			1		1			18.3
Shropshire (20/22)				1		17	1			1					18.3
Devon (19/24)				1	3	13		1			1				18.2
Somerset (18/25)		1		4		11				1	1				17.8
Dorset (15/16)			1	3	1	8				2					17.8
York (West Riding) (48/56)		7		2		35				2		2			17.8
Wiltshire (21/28)				5		16									17.3
Lancaster (17/19)	1	2		1		9	2	1		1					16.8
Total (818/1143)	1	21	1	23	7	377	57	28	5	231	5	53	7	2	20.7

Notes:
(i) Counties are ranked by overall average award in pence per week.

(ii) Numbers in parentheses in the left hand column following the county are the number of parishes that replied to this question followed by the total number of parishes that returned a set of answers.
Source: BPP, 1834, XXX. Data complied from responses to Question 47.

returned a single amount together with the number of parishes that gave the same amount as the lower end of a range.[24] Almost half the parishes awarded 18*d.* and just over a quarter 24*d.* There was a small cluster around 20*d.* and 21*d.* with a small peak of seven per cent at 30*d.* Only seven parishes (0.8 per cent) gave 36*d.* The most generous were Abbotsley in Huntingdon and Mainsforth Township in Durham where 42*d.* was given in both places. However, even that amount was considered by the curate of Abbotsley to be not more than the woman required to support herself and her child.

Where the response contained a range, the incidence of the higher allowance in each parish is shown in Figure 3.[25] For the majority of the 277 parishes that gave a range instead of a single amount, the most frequent higher allowance was 24*d.* with 30*d.* the next most common.[26] The spread within any parish was therefore most likely to be from 18*d.* to 24*d.*, with the range from 24*d.* to 30*d.* the next most likely.

There was great variation within counties. Adjacent parishes made very different awards as may be seen from Table 1 and in more detail on Figure 4. In the West Riding seven parishes gave 12*d.*, two gave 30*d.* but the majority gave 18*d.*, while in Sussex, fourteen gave 18*d.*, nineteen gave 30*d.* and thirty 24*d.* The wide range found in almost every county highlights the parochial nature of the allowance, but at a higher level regional patterns become discernible.

Of the 818 parishes that replied (71 per cent of the 1143 returns), 814 could be mapped, which gives a good spatial distribution over the whole country. When those that gave the mothers 24*d.* and over per week are compared with those that gave 18*d.* and under, seven distinct regions can be seen, shown in Figure 4.

Region 1, the east of the Pennines, is made up of Northumberland, Durham (where the majority of parishes awarded 24*d.* per week), together with the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire. (The two areas were included here for geographical convenience as scarcity of data makes it impossible to determine what was the usual amount given, but also see Region 3 below.) Region 2, the west of the Pennines and towards the Welsh border, consists of Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire, most of the West Riding, Cheshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, the northern part of Derbyshire and the north-west of Herefordshire. Here the majority of parishes gave the women 18*d.* or less per week, 75 per cent of what was usual on the other side of the Pennines. Region 3, the eastern part of the 'Midland diagonal', is made up of the south-eastern part of the West Riding, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, south Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Rutland where parishes awarded mainly 24*d.*, the same as Region 1. No attempt has been made

[24] The amounts given as the top end of the range were analysed separately, e.g., Bolton by Sands, Lancaster, reported 'From 1*s.* 3*d.* to 2*s.* per week', so 15*d.* was included in Figure 2 data and 24*d.* in Figure 3.

[25] Gillingham in Kent was not shown because it mentioned the possibility of an abnormally high award and would have greatly distorted the scale, '2*s.* a week in common cases which is not more than repayment to her. The stipend increases with the circumstances of the Father, and is sometimes as high as 8*s.* or 10*s.* a week'.

[26] 48 per cent and 26 per cent respectively.

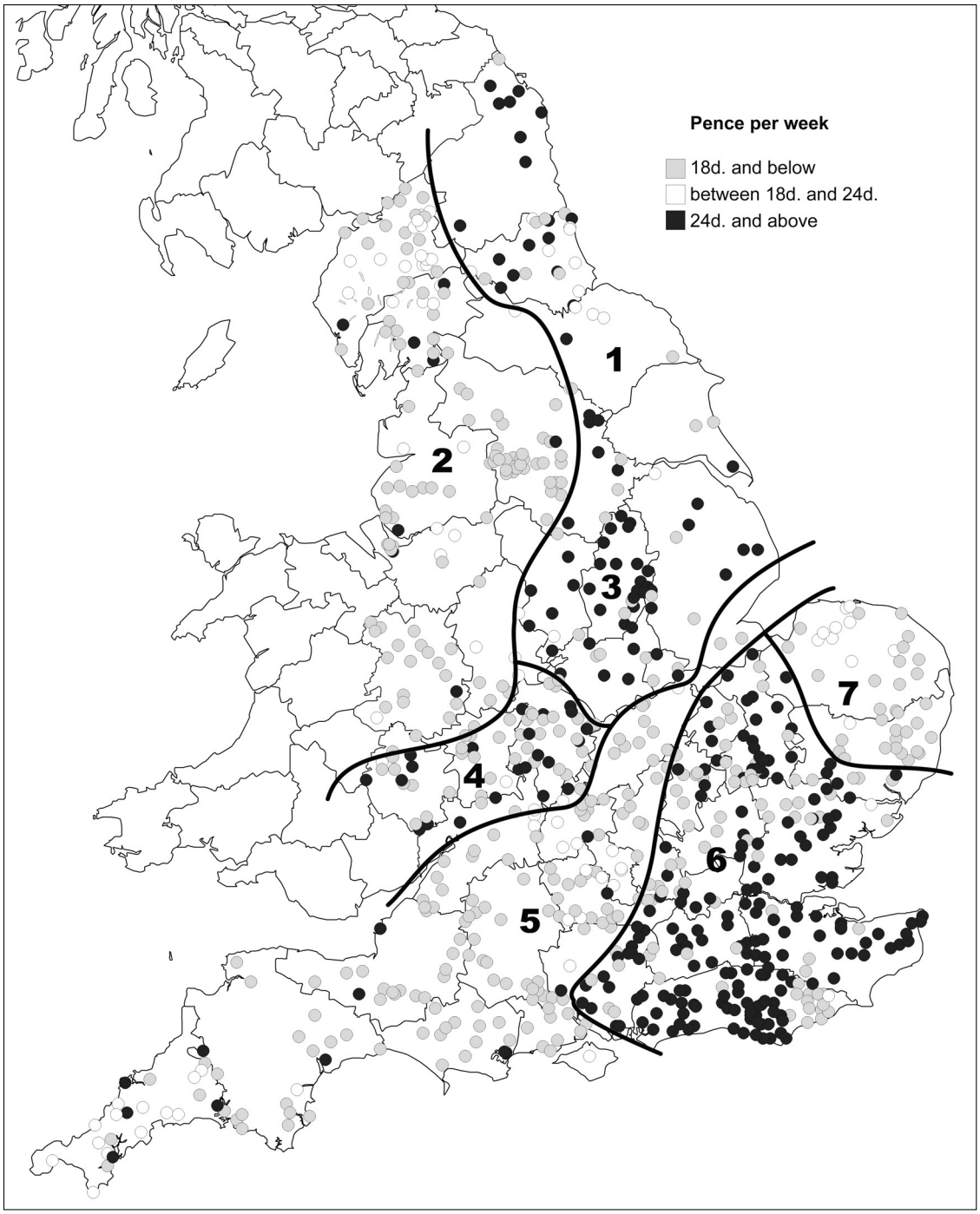


FIGURE 4. Regional divisions based on the amounts that parishes awarded the mothers of chargeable bastards (low stratification).

Note: boundaries are the best fit by inspection of the data compiled from responses to Question 47.
Source: BPP, 1834, XXX. Data compiled from responses to Question 47.

to draw a boundary between Region 1 and Region 3 because of the lack of data from the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire.

Region 4, the western part of the 'Midland diagonal', is a distinctly mixed region; some parishes awarded 24*d.* and more while others close by awarded 18*d.* and less. Region 5 is the diagonal strip from Land's End to the Wash. In this region almost all parishes gave 18*d.* and in many instances less than that amount. The monetary relief given to the women in Region 5 was similar to that given in Region 2.

Region 6, the south-east excluding Norfolk and most of Suffolk, is made up of Cambridgeshire, Huntingdon, Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Middlesex, the east of Berkshire, the extreme south of Suffolk, Surrey, Kent, Sussex and the east of Hampshire. In this Region, parishes normally gave 24*d.* per week to the women and in some instances more than that; it was this region that was most generous with the amounts awarded.[27] Finally Region 7 is Norfolk and most of Suffolk. This must be treated as separate from Region 6 as the majority of parishes gave 18*d.* and none gave 24*d.*

When more detail is brought out by the use of greater stratification – more than 24*d.*, 24*d.*, 23*d.* to 19*d.*, 18*d.* and 17*d.* and less – sub-regions within most of the main regions can be detected, as shown in Figure 5. A small cluster of parishes in Durham gave slightly less than the usual for Region 1 and a similar cluster in Cumberland gave slightly more than the usual for Region 2, as may be seen in Figure 5.

In Region 5 there are two areas giving slightly higher amounts than usual; the county of Cornwall and a patch in Oxfordshire. A small area in north Norfolk showed parishes there awarded slightly more than the usual 18*d.* of Region 7. Region 6 shows a distinct sub-region around Hastings where the lower 18*d.* per week was dominant; this could be the Hastings magistrates behaving in a way uncharacteristic for that region as a whole. There is also a hint that Region 6 could possibly be sub-divided; the amounts given by parishes in Cambridgeshire, Huntingdon, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire were more mixed than the rest of the region, but that may be starting to examine the trees instead of looking for the shape of the wood.

King's proposed regional pattern obtained from the collated single place studies of local communities and their poor law accounts for the early nineteenth century, was not totally dissimilar, as may be seen when Figure 1 is compared. His suggestion that the country could be considered as eight sub-regions (one of which was the London hinterland, which is not part of this study), each showing different attitudes to administering the poor law and each giving different amounts in pauper pensions is supported by this study.

Given the good overall response, it might have been expected that the Commissioners' report on this question would be a model of clarity and accuracy, but it was not. They wrote 'The sum charged on the man varies from 7*s.* or 8*s.* a week to 1*s.* The average was about 3*s.* or 2*s.* 6*d.* in towns and 2*s.* in the country.[28] For the rural parishes this statement, although technically correct, was misleading. Analysis revealed that almost half the rural parishes awarded 18*d.* and just

[27] No comment can be made on London and its immediate environs as this study was confined to rural queries only.

[28] *Report from His Majesty's commissioners for enquiring into the administration and practical operation of the poor laws* (B. Fellowes, London, 1834), p. 168.

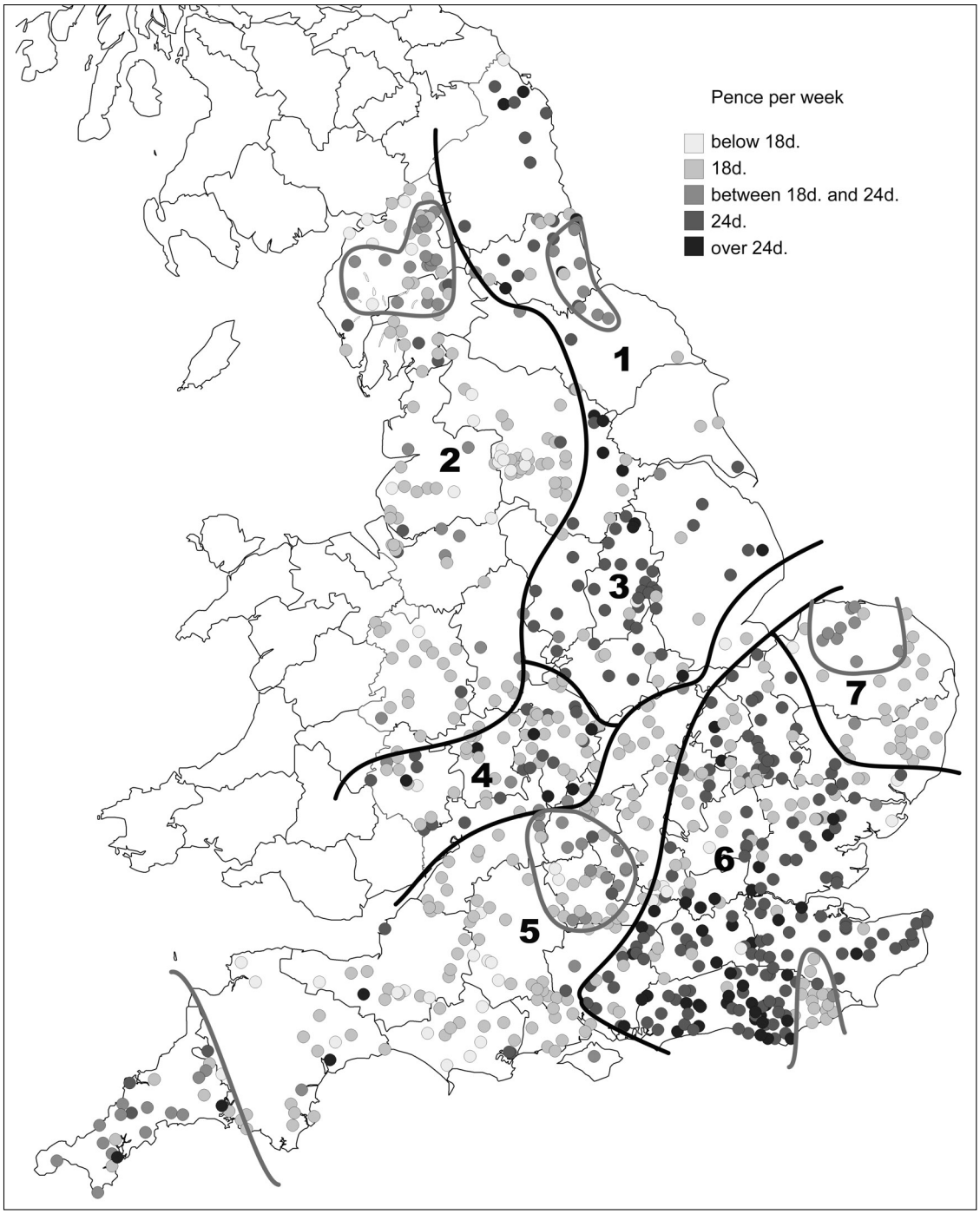


FIGURE 5. Regional divisions based on the amounts that parishes awarded the mothers of chargeable bastards (high stratification).

Note: boundaries are the best fit by inspection of the data compiled from responses to Question 47.
Source: BPP, 1834, XXX. Data compiled from responses to Question 47.

over a quarter 24*d.* while only one parish mentioned 7*s.* or 8*s.* The national average for rural parishes was 1*s.* 9*d.*, not the 2*s.* they reported; the lower end of the range, the 1*s.* per week, was the only amount reported correctly.[29] The Commissioner's Report did not reflect the treatment of the majority of women in rural parishes.

II

The answers from the second part of question 47, '. . . does it generally repay her, or more than repay her, the expense of keeping it?' provide a set of the attitudes of the local administrators. Analysis showed that, unlike the amounts given to the mothers, these attitudes followed no distinct regional pattern. The analysis also demonstrated the bias of the Commissioners against the results of their own survey. The Commissioners' expectation of the response was obvious from the wording of the question. The omission of the neutralising 'or less than repay her' proposition clearly indicated to the respondent what was expected. Yet those who replied flew in the face of the Commissioners' implicit direction in what was a well answered question.

Not unexpectedly, more (35 per cent) of the more generous parishes (defined as those who gave 24*d.* or more) thought the amount they gave the woman either 'repaid' or 'more than repaid' her while less (21 per cent) of the less generous (paying 18*d.* or more) thought this. The corollary was also true; less (22 per cent) of the more generous parishes thought their allowance 'did not repay her' as did more (40 per cent) of the less generous, Table 2. But no matter what allowance they gave, a majority of the parishes thought it less than adequate; three quarters said the allowance either 'did not repay', or 'no more than repaid' the mother, only a quarter reported it 'repaid' her and a minuscule 2 per cent that it 'more than repaid' her.

Mapping shows that, in contrast to the amounts awarded to the women, there was no regional component in the opinion as to the adequacy of the allowance as Figure 6 shows. Parishes which reported that the allowance 'did not repay' the mother for the upkeep of her child were scattered throughout the country as were the twelve parishes that reported the allowance 'more than repaid' her. This randomness demonstrates the difference between matters of fact and matters of opinion; the matters of fact reveal something about the system, the matters of opinion reveal something about those who filled in the forms.

The curate of Abbotsley, Huntingdon was the only person who attempted to quantify the amount a mother would need to bring up her child. 'The same allowance as would be made for any single mother and child, about 3*s.* 6*d.*, per week. This is not more than she requires for the support of herself and her infant'.[30] If 3*s.* 6*d.* per week was in fact what was necessary to maintain a mother and her child, then the high percentage of parishes that thought the award either 'did not repay' or 'no more than repaid' her is not surprising. The curate's estimate of 42*d.* was more than twice the usual allowance of 18*d.* and almost twice the second most usual of 24*d.* In effect in every parish the amount given to the mothers of bastard children was inadequate and parish officials recognised this.

In giving an opinion on the adequacy of the allowance, parish officials presumably had in

[29] Twenty one parishes recorded 12*d.*, the lowest allowance reported.

[30] BPP, 1834, XXX, p. 228e (Stephen B. Dowell, Curate, Abbotsley, Huntingdon).

TABLE 2. Opinion on the adequacy of the allowance to the mothers of chargeable bastards

	does not repay her		*no more than repays her*		*repays her*		*more than repays her*		*Total*	
	n	*(%)*	*n*	*(%)*	*n*	*(%)*	*n*	*(%)*	*n*	*(%)*
Over 24*d.* (up to 42*d.*)	11	22	22	43	17	33	1	2	51	100
Over 18*d.*, up to and including 24*d.*	69	27	111	43	73	28	4	2	257	100
Up to and including 18*d.*	138	40	136	39	70	20	3	1	347	100
Allowance not recorded	50	43	43	37	20	17	4	3	117	100
Total	268	35	312	40	180	23	12	2	772	100

Source: BPP, 1834, XXX. Data complied from responses to Question 47.

mind not only the amount itself but the period over which the allowance was given.[31] Those making the return, observing the day-to-day plight of the mothers, often reported how the costs of maintaining a child increased as the child grew, and while the allowance may have been adequate for an infant, it was soon outstripped by costs.

There were many examples, for instance, '. . . whilst the child is very young it is sufficient, but not afterwards . . .'; '. . . 2*s.* per week, which repays her during infancy'; 'In infancy, 2*s.* more than pays, but not afterwards' and 'Such an allowance is sufficient to support the child only while it is very young . . .'.[32] There was no agreement about exactly how young 'very young' was and when 'infancy' ended; different parishes suggested different ages. Two, three and four years old were all mentioned, for instance, '. . . does not repay her after the child is two years old'; 'It is sufficient for its maintenance for the first two years; after that period the child becomes burdensome to the mother'; 'It does not repay after the child is two or three years old'; and '. . . which repays her for 3 or 4 years, when she usually receives further assistance from the parish for clothes, &c'.[33] Some parishes thought she could manage on the allowance until the child was six or seven. 'While young it repays her, perhaps not after 6 years of age; but they are generally put out apprentices at 9 or 10 years of age'; '. . . is sufficient to repay the expenses of keeping the child till it is 6 or 7 years old'.[34] Although there was no agreement on exactly the age at which the allowance became insufficient, there was general agreement that, sooner or later, it did. That virtually no respondent thought the allowance was more than sufficient should have been a conclusion obvious to the Commissioners.

Some parishes set the allowance deliberately low not only as a deterrent, but also as a punishment as in these examples. 'Ordinarily 1*s.* 6*d.* per week is ordered by the magistrates, whose

[31] The question in the Rural Queries did not enquire separately about the adequacy of allowance during the early years and later years.

[32] BPP, 1834, XXX, p. 566e (John James Calley, St. Andrews, Blunsdon, Wiltshire); p. 235e (G. R. Gleig, Minister, Ash, near Sandwich, Kent); p. 268e (George Moore, Wortham, Kent); p. 39e (John Brickwell, Farmer, Leckhampstead, Buckingham), p. 78e (W. Carter, Tatton Park, Knutsford, Rostherne Township, Chester).

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 378e (Philip Serle, Clerk and JP, Oddington Parish and Ploughley Hundred, Oxford); p. 190e (Thomas Tracy, Overseer, Witham, Essex); p. 555e (John Ellis, Vicar, Wooten Waden, Warwick).

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 210e (J. R. Smythies, an extensive occupier of land in the County for 30 years, Eardisland, Hereford); p. 560e (Edward W. Wakefield, Kendal and surrounding Country, Westmorland).

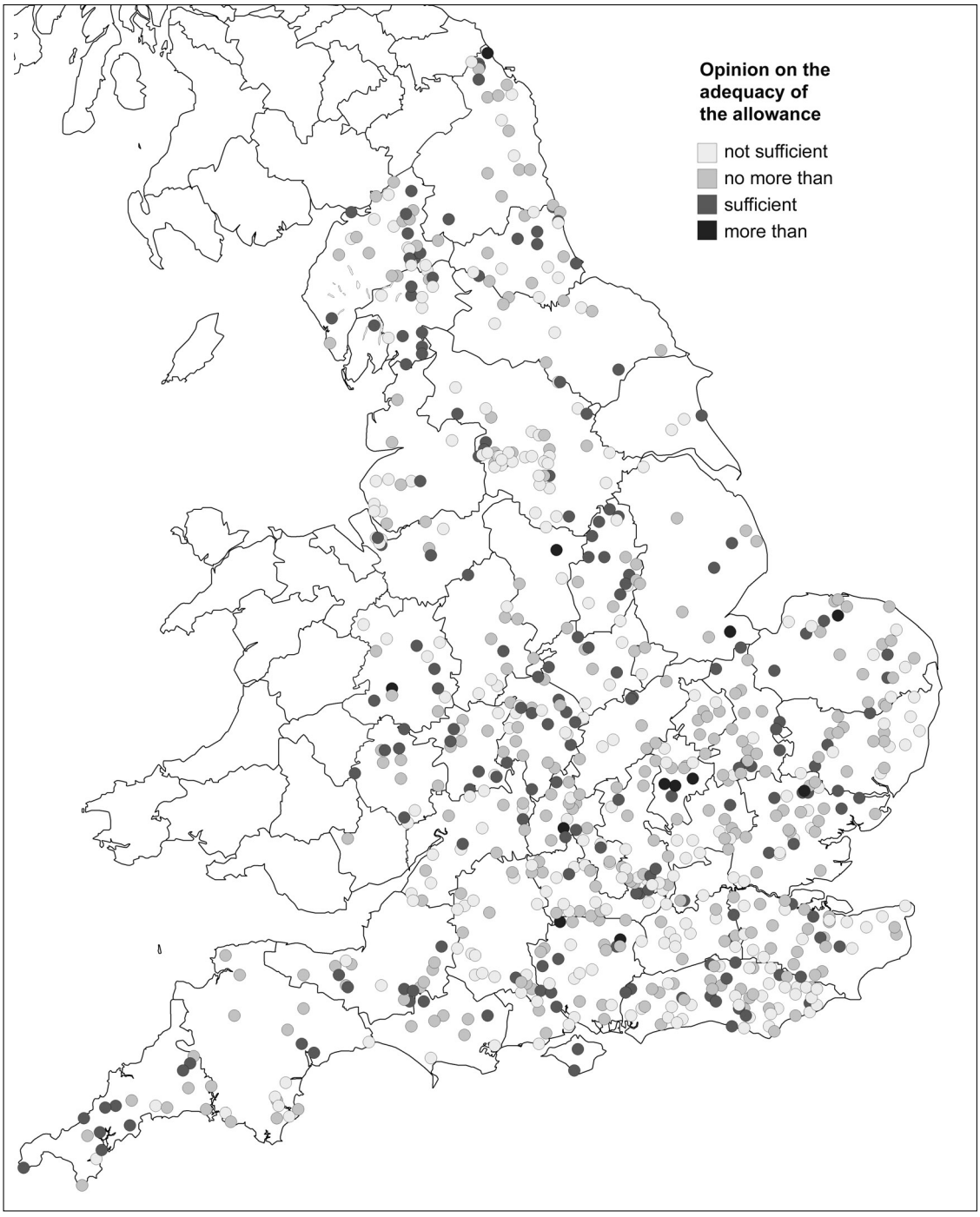


FIGURE 6. Parish opinion of the amounts awarded the mothers of chargeable bastards.

Source: BPP, 1834, XXX. Data compiled from responses to Question 47.

object has always been to discourage bastardy by the smallness of the allowance'; '1*s.* 6*d.* a week is allowed; a sum which does not repay the Mother. It is fixed so low as a punishment for her misconduct' and finally '. . . when the father is employed well, or in circumstances to repay, we fix the allowance very low'.[35] In the North Riding 'It is the object of the magistrates of this neighbourhood to make the amount of maintenance for a bastard child barely sufficient to enable the mother to nurse the child, without deriving any profit from it, and without being compelled by necessity to deliver it up to the overseer'.[36]

In at least two parishes the tactic proved a failure. '. . . the parish pays nothing to the mother unless what is received from the father; and this has been acted on for the last nine years, when a change was made, but with little effect in preventing bastardy'.[37] 'Magistrates have reduced the allowance to 1*s.* 6*d.* per week to try if it would make the women more prudent, but it has produced no such effect.'[38] Castle Donnington, Leicestershire, withheld part of the allowance ordered by the magistrate from the mother; they thought this smaller amount, never more than 1*s.* 6*d.*, would discourage bastardy. Their return showed very little change in the annual number of bastards for the years 1828 to 1832, so the tactic proved unsuccessful.[39] Despite this evidence the Commissioners recommended setting the allowance low to discourage further 'crimes' of bastardy.

Answers concerning the adequacy of the allowance were not objective: there was little attempt to quantify the cost of keeping a child and to compare the estimate with the actual. These answers included personal opinion, best guesses, and unsolicited comments which, while they cannot be mathematically analysed, help to form a more rounded picture of official thinking. That which could be analysed showed that a high percentage of parishes considered the allowance inadequate. So when the Commissioners wrote '. . . to the woman, therefore, a single illegitimate child is seldom any expense' they were misrepresenting the rural situation.[40] In addition, while technically correct to write '. . . two or three are a source of positive profit', it was, arguably, a red herring as fewer than 10 out of 772 rural parishes mentioned any women in their parish with more than one bastard child.

III

Despite the many warnings on the soundness of using the answers to the Rural Queries, the analysis does supply a useful set of quantifiable countrywide results. These fulfil at least two useful functions; they show regional tendencies that place micro studies in a wider context and they highlight the bias the Commissioners built into their report.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 632e (George Broadrick, JP, Lower Division of Strafford and Tickhill Wapentake, County of York (West Riding)); p. 33e (Sir Henry Verney, Bt. JP, Steeple Claydon, Buckingham); p. 161e (George Pringle, Police Commissioner, South Shields Township (Jarrow Parish), Durham).

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 604e: John Headlam (Archdeacon, Rector, JP, and Chairman of the Quarter Sessions, Wycliffe, County of York (North Riding)).

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 275e (Henry Linaker Bradley, Assistant Overseer, North Meols Township, Lancaster).

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 630e (Joseph Patrick, Thomas Harrison, George Roberts, Overseers, Stanley cum Wrenthorpe Township (Wakefield parish), County of York (West Riding)).

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 280e (Jonathan Woodward, Churchwarden).

[40] Answers to the Town Queries may have supported their opinion; this study analysed Rural Queries only.

The wide geographical coverage gives a snapshot of the treatment of chargeable bastards and their mothers for the whole of England in 1832. From the analysis, some generalisations may be made with confidence; the usual monetary amount awarded was either 18*d.* or 24*d.* per week, only a few parishes considered the amounts adequate and the pattern of the amount given produced distinct regions which did not follow county boundaries. Yet, despite the regional nature of the awards, the parish was still the key determinant; in almost all regions two adjacent parishes can be found giving very different amounts to the mothers. The experience of the mothers of bastard children depended on the attitude of the local magistrates and overseers which could vary significantly from one parish to the next. Extrapolations from the results of individual micro studies must therefore be treated with caution; by chance the parish selected may be atypical for the region. A combination of the micro and the macro is necessary to obtain a fully rounded picture.

How though were the sums paid determined? It is possible that they represent customary norms but then the question then arises of how those norms had originally been set. There was some evidence that magistrates might attempt to force allowances down to punish bastard-bearers and deter women who might bear illegitimate children in the future. There is also a logic in supposing that they should reflect prevailing wage rates. However preliminary comparison between agricultural labourers' day rates for winter work as given in Rural Queries and the allowance given to the women showed no strong correlation.[41] The regional nature of the allowances is unmistakable, but exactly what it represents remains to be established.

This study acknowledges the difficulty the Commissioners had in handling such a large amount of data, but there was little excuse for the obvious bias in their report. The bias could have occurred either because it was not possible, at that time, to obtain a statistical analysis, or because the Commissioners had not, from the beginning, been neutral observers. It appears the latter is the case; in their summary they referred to chargeable bastardy as '. . . a branch of the Poor Laws, distinguished from the rest both as to the principles on which it is founded and the evils which it has produced'.[42] They then carefully selected answers from the returns that demonstrated these 'evils'. Despite the appearance of well-researched opinion, it can be agreed with other recent writers that their conclusions were chiefly a function of the prejudice they brought to the subject and were not based on the data in the returns.[43]

[41] The author is currently analysing the answers in the Rural Queries which reported agricultural labourers' day rates (these rates refer to day labourers only and not to live in farm servants). When completed, this should help establish whether or not there is any correlation between agricultural labourers' daily wages and amounts given to the women.

[42] *Report*, p. 92.

[43] This is in agreement with Blaug's conclusion from his manual analysis of the answers on the causes of agricultural unemployment, '. . . where they did not ignore the findings, they twisted them to suit their preconceived opinions', Blaug, 'Poor Law Report' p. 243. Eastwood reflects a large body of modern opinion when he refers to the new poor law being 'constructed, in part, from bureaucratic half-truths about the old'. D. Eastwood, *Government and the community in the English provinces, 1700–1870* (1997), p. 132.

Family farms and capitalist farms in mid nineteenth-century England*

by Leigh Shaw-Taylor

Abstract

The published 1851 census contains a series of tables documenting, for every British county, the distribution of farm sizes and the employment levels for adult males. Hitherto these data have largely been ignored on the grounds that they were unreliable. This paper shows that the data are in fact reliable and can be used to document the geography of farm size and employment patterns at county level. These data in turn are used to investigate the relative importance of agrarian capitalism and family farming and its geography in England. Agrarian capitalism was more important than family farming everywhere. Large-scale agrarian capitalism was dominant in the south and east of the country. A substantial family farm sector survived only in the far south-west and north of England by 1851.

The decline of family farms and the growth of large, labour-employing farms over the early modern period is one of the major themes in English agrarian history. As long ago as 1923, J. H. Clapham noted that in Britain as a whole, as late as 1831, when geographically comprehensive and reliable data become available for the first time, the number of proletarian families employed in agriculture exceeded the number of entrepreneurial families in agriculture by as little as 2.5 to 1. He went on to suggest that if agrarian historians of the early modern period had a proper understanding of the modest scale which capitalist farming had reached by this late date, then they would have an appropriate end-point against which to assess the importance of developments in their own period.[1] Clapham's admonition to early modernists of his own generation has had little or no discernible influence on the considerable body of material published on early modern developments in the intervening decades. Although Clapham may have gone too far in stressing the small scale of nineteenth-century agrarian capitalism, the importance of understanding the extent to which agrarian capitalism had developed by the nineteenth century remains both to put the scale of early modern developments in a longer

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[1] J. H. Clapham, 'The growth of an agrarian proletariat, 1688–1832: a statistical note', *Cambridge Historical J.*, 1 (1923), pp. 92–5.

context and to achieve a proper understanding of nineteenth-century rural society. Despite this, we do not have, at present, a clear, statistically based picture of the relative importance of agrarian capitalism or the family farm sector during the nineteenth century. Nor do we know with any precision how farm sizes varied around the country.[2]

Yet an abundance of material, from which such a picture can be constructed, is readily available – if largely unexploited by historians – in the published Census Report of 1851.[3] These data relate both to the size of farms and to farm employment levels at national and county level. This article assesses the meaning and value of those data and presents a preliminary picture of the scale and geography of both agrarian capitalism and family farming in 1851. It is worth stressing, at the outset, that the distinction being drawn here between family farms and capitalist farms is one of labour use. Capitalist farms are farms which are predominantly dependent on wage labour. Family farms are those farms predominantly dependent on family labour. It is not being suggested that family farms were less market-orientated than capitalist farms in this period.[4]

This article has three aims. The first is to clarify the nature of the data recorded in the 1851 Census Reports and in the Agricultural Returns published from 1866 onwards. It will be argued that on the one hand the 1851 Census data provide a good guide (albeit with some caveats) to both farm size and farm employment levels, so long as the term 'farm', in this context, is understood to mean an agricultural holding which provided the primary employment for the occupier of the holding. In other words, the Census data do not include part-time smallholdings. On the other hand it will be argued that the Agricultural Returns may or may not provide a good guide to the size and number of 'agricultural holdings', of all sizes, but, in contrast to the Census data, they are of very limited use as a guide to the size and numbers of 'farms' (agricultural holdings which provided the occupier with their principal occupation) precisely because they also include a very large number of part-time smallholdings. The second aim of the article is to present some basic data on the size of farms and employment patterns in England in the mid-nineteenth century. Finally, the article considers the wider implications of this evidence. Although the data are available for England, Wales and Scotland, the present article

[2] The current state of knowledge is summarised in J. H. Porter, 'The development of rural society', in G. E. Mingay (ed.) *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, VI, *1750–1850* (1989), pp. 838–937. Robert Allen, in his chapter on agriculture during the industrial revolution in the recent *Cambridge economic history of Britain*, is reduced to stating that around 1800, farms averaged 100 acres in the north and 150 in the south. The southern figure is based entirely on data from the south Midlands while the northern figure derives from Ross Wordie's work on estates in Cheshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire. As will be seen later, in Figure 2, these areas cannot be taken as representative of either the south or of the north as a whole. R. C. Allen, 'Agriculture during the industrial revolution, 1700–1850', in R. Floud and P. Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge economic history of modern Britain* (3 vols, 2004), I, p. 100. J. R. Wordie, 'Social change on the Leveson-Gower estates', *EcHR* 27 (1974), pp. 593–609.

[3] Pioneering use of these data were made by J. H. Clapham: see his *An economic history of modern Britain* (2 vols, 1926–32), I, pp. 450–3; II, pp. 263–6. Some of the points made there mirror arguments made here. For a dissenting view of Clapham's analysis, J. Saville, 'Primitive accumulation and early industrialization in Britain', *Socialist Register* (1969), pp. 247–71.

[4] On the market-orientation of small farms in the nineteenth century, see Michael Winstanley, 'Industrialization and the small farm. Family and household economy in nineteenth-century Lancashire', *Past and Present* 152 (1996), pp. 157–97 and A. J. Gritt, 'The "survival" of service in the English labour force: lessons from Lancashire, *c.* 1651–1851', *AgHR* 50 (2002), pp. 25–50. For an alternative view see Mick Reed, 'The peasantry of nineteenth-century England: a neglected class?', *History Workshop J.* 18 (1984), pp. 53–76.

relates only to the English data. Having established the reliability of the Census data further use will be made of the English data in a further study on the decline of small farms and the rise of agrarian capitalism over the period 1600–1851.[5]

I

The 1851 Census Report prints a table for each county which enumerates the numbers of men and women in a large number of distinct occupational groups. From these it is possible to compare the number of farmers with the size of the farm workforce at the county level. However, much doubt exists over how well women's occupations are recorded, particularly in agriculture.[6] What follows therefore focuses on the relatively reliably recorded male farm workers. Figure 1 shows the ratio of male agricultural workers to farmers, for every English county in 1851.[7] The ratio for England as a whole is 5.4 which is significantly higher than Clapham's figure of 2.5 to 1 cited above. The discrepancy is in part because Clapham's data pertained to Britain as a whole and some twenty years earlier, but it may also in part be due to differences in the construction of occupational categories in 1831 and 1851 which cannot be explored here.[8]

The exclusion of the female workforce means that Figure 1 inevitably understates the size of the proletarian workforce in agriculture but this is most unlikely to affect substantially the regional patterns shown here. Everywhere south and east of a line from Norfolk to Dorset, the ratio of male farm workers to farmers exceeded seven to one. In a large block of contiguous counties covering all of northern England except Northumberland and the East Riding of Yorkshire, there were fewer than three male farm workers per farmer. Everywhere else, except Cornwall which followed a 'northern' pattern, fell between three and seven male farm workers per farmer. Male farm workers outnumbered farmers everywhere. But in south-eastern England, broadly defined, agrarian capitalism clearly operated on a substantially larger scale than in the rest of the country. The scale of operation of agrarian capitalism in northern England was much more modest. If family farms survived in large numbers anywhere in mid-nineteenth century England, Figure 1 suggests that it would have been in northern England. The broad regional differences are very similar to those mapped by Overton using the 1831 census.[9]

These data illustrate average male farm worker to farmer ratios in each county. But within any given county, some farms were relatively large and others were relatively small.[10] It follows that some farms employed much labour and others employed little or none. Data

[5] Provisionally titled, 'The development of agrarian capitalism and the decline of family farming in England, 1600–1851'.

[6] See Edward Higgs, 'Occupational censuses and the agricultural workforce in Victorian England and Wales', *EcHR* 48 (1995), pp. 700–16.

[7] All those described as farmers or graziers, whether male or female, have been counted as farmers. Male farm workers includes all those described as agricultural labourers, agricultural servants and shepherds.

[8] The 1831 material may be problematic. The categories used are internally inconsistent, refer to families not individuals and to occupiers of land rather than farmers. Space precludes further examination of these issues.

[9] M. Overton, 'Agriculture', in J. Langton and R. J. Morris (eds) *Atlas of industrializing Britain, 1780–1914* (1986), pp. 34–53; id., *Agricultural revolution in England. The transformation of the agrarian economy, 1500–1850* (1996), pp. 178–83.

[10] There were of course regional variations in farm size distributions within counties. This has been explored for Lancashire in Winstanley, 'Industrialization and the small farm' and Gritt, 'The "survival" of service'.

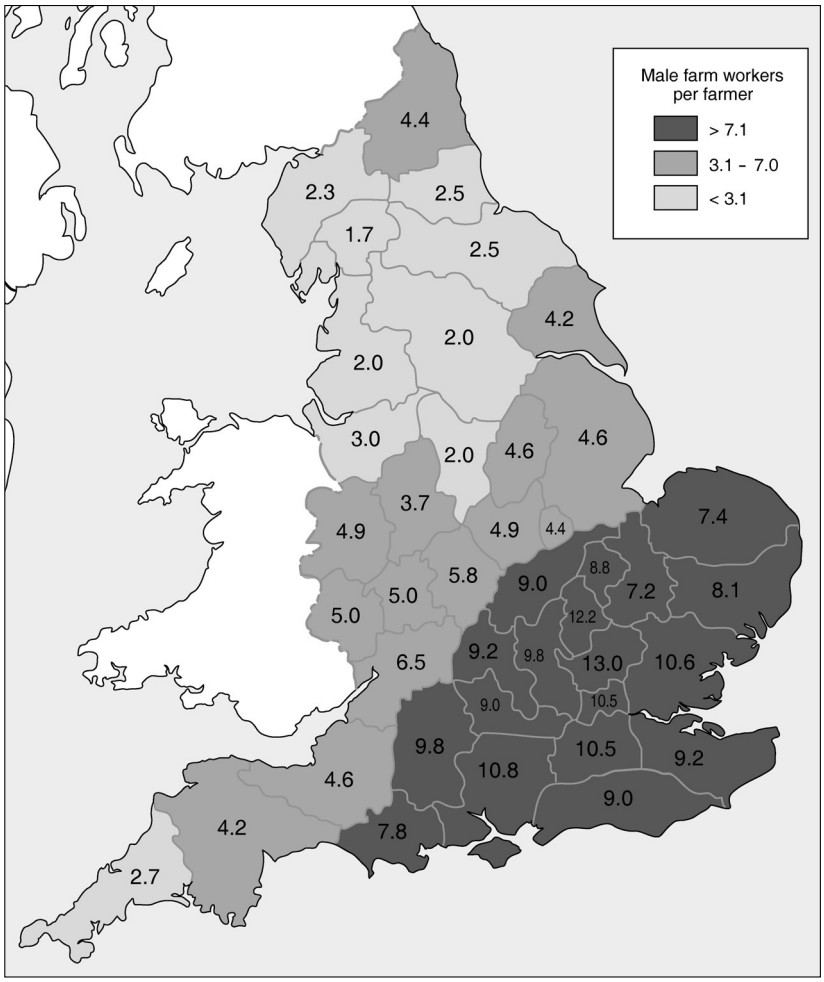


FIGURE 1. Male farm workers per farmer in 1851

Source: BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII (i), *Census of Great Britain, 1851, Population Tables*, II, vols 1 & 2, 'Occupations of the people, divisions I–X'.

aggregated at county level in this way can shed only limited light on the relative importance within a county of farms with different employment characteristics. However, there are tables in the published Census Report that bring this issue into sharp focus but much doubt has been cast upon the reliability of this material. The next three sections deal with this issue at some length.

II

The occupational tables in the 1851 Census which underlie Figure 1 are familiar to historians. What is less well known is that for every English and Scottish county as well as for North and South Wales and Monmouthshire, the published 1851 Census report contains a table indicating the distribution of farm sizes and adult male employment levels on the 31 March 1851.[11] Dennis

[11] There is a further table covering the 'Islands in the British Sea' (Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man). BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII (i), *Census of Great Britain, 1851, Population Tables*, II, vols 1 & 2, 'Farmers, with the numbers of labourers employed and of acres occupied, divisions, I–X'.

TABLE 1. Farmers, with the number of labourers employed and of acres occupied in Buckinghamshire on 31 March 1851

Acres	*No Men employed or not stated*	*1 Man*	*2 Men*	*3 Men*	*4 Men*	*5 Men*	*6 Men*	*7 Men*	*8 Men*	*9 Men*
Under 5	18	5	1	1						
5-	34	6								
10-	58	23	8	2	3					
20-	27	25	17	4		1				
30-	14	24	26	8	2	2				
40-	9	19	20	10	8					1
50-	14	30	55	35	24	9		3		
75-	16	8	23	27	30	20	7	1	1	3
100-	10	2	19	45	78	51	51	31	16	6
150-	4	1	4	15	17	32	34	38	22	16
200-	3	1	1	3	11	12	14	14	29	24
250-	2		1	2	3	2	8	10	13	9
300-	1				1		2	3	9	5
350-								2	5	2
400-	1					1	1			1
500-						1				
600-										
700-										
800-										
900-										
1000-										
1200-	1									
1500-										
2000 and up										
Acreage not stated		1	4	5	3		2	1		1
Total of farmers	212	145	179	157	180	131	119	103	95	68

Source: BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII (i), *Census of Great Britain 1851, Population Tables*, II, vol.1, 'I Farmers, with the numbers of labourers employed and of acres occupied', p. 277.

Mills recently published a very useful general overview of the farm statistics in the Census and the holding size statistics in the later Agricultural Returns. This contains a detailed discussion of some of the problems with this body of material. However, Mills was more interested in the unpublished manuscript Census Enumerators' Books, and made no use of the published material, and shied away from any overall assessment of its utility.[12] Table 1 reproduces the

[12] D. R. Mills, 'Trouble with farms at the Census Office. An evaluation of farm statistics from the censuses of 1851–81 in England and Wales', *AgHR* 47 (1999), pp. 57–77. The account offered here differs from Mills on a number of points. Where this is so, attention is drawn to it in the text or the footnotes.

10-Men	*15-Men*	*20-Men*	*25-Men*	*30-Men*	*35-Men*	*40-Men*	*45-Men*	*50-Men*	*55-Men*	*60 Men and upwards*	*Total Number of Farms or Holdings*
											25
											40
											94
1											75
											76
1											68
1		1									172
2											138
13											322
42	4										229
50	15	1									178
62	23	5	3								143
41	24	4				1					91
14	15	7		1							46
12	20	9	2								47
	4	9	3	1		2	1				21
2	1	4	1	1					1		10
	1		1		1				1		4
					1	1		1			3
				3							3
		1									1
					1				1		3
											0
											0
1	1	2									21
242	108	43	10	6	3	4	1	1	3	0	1810

published table for Buckinghamshire. If taken at face value it gives an exceptionally detailed statistical account of farm sizes within the county and of adult male employment levels on farms of given size.[13]

The 1851 Census data were collected and published 'with a view of giving a definite idea of the term "farmer," and of laying the foundations of a further enquiry'.[14] Remarkably, in the intervening century and a half no such enquiry has ever been made. This is particularly

[13] I am very grateful to Rebecca Tyler for inputting the farm size and employment data from the published census report for every English county.

[14] BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII, p. lxxvii.

surprising given that, as David Grigg has noted, the '*only* comprehensive survey of the size of *farms* in England and Wales was taken at the population censuses of 1851, 1861 and 1871'.[15] Moreover, only in 1851 were the results actually published for every county in the country.[16]

The reason for this neglect is simple: historians have generally regarded the 1851 farm size data as unreliable. The central criticism that has been levied against the 1851 farm returns is that many small farmers did not supply the relevant information.[17] Mark Overton, for instance, argues that 'the data are unreliable because the question was a voluntary one and many small farmers did not bother to give an answer'.[18] In fact the question was not a voluntary one, in law, and the instructions delivered to householders stated that 'Persons who refuse to give CORRECT information, incur a *Penalty of Five Pounds*; beside the inconvenience and annoyance of appearing before two Justices of the Peace, and being convicted of having made a willful mis-statement of age or, of any other particulars'.[19] Nor is it clear, as we shall see later, that 'many' small farmers failed to supply returns.

The view that the published Census tables omit large numbers of small farms is based on a comparison with the later Agricultural Returns. The *Agricultural Returns* were published annually by the Board of Trade and contain a wide variety of agricultural statistics, including much information on land use patterns, crop yields and livestock numbers, and, in the 1870 Returns, the number of agricultural holdings of various sizes. They were the published result of an 'agricultural census' which was taken annually from 1866.[20] This agricultural census was conducted entirely independently of the Census Office.

The nature of the disparity between the two sources of data can be seen in Table 2. Comparison is complicated by the fact that only in 1851 did the Census Office publish the farm size data for every county. In 1871 they published data for seventeen counties they described as 'representative'.[21] Thus a direct comparison at national level is only possible between the Census data for 1851 and the Agricultural Returns data for 1870. This is shown in the top panel of Table 2. The two distributions are radically different and the differences are starkest for the smallest farms and holdings. In 1851 only 3.4 per cent of farms were reported as being below five acres whereas in 1870 almost 25 per cent of agricultural holdings were reported in the same category. Although twenty years separates the two sets of figures it is wholly improbable that there was an explosion of smallholdings on this scale between 1851 and 1870. The 1871 Census data can be compared directly with the 1870 Agricultural Returns data if the comparison is restricted to the 17 'representative counties' and this is shown in the bottom panel of Table 2.

[15] D. Grigg, 'Farm size in England and Wales, from early Victorian times to the present', *AgHR* 35 (1987), p. 181.

[16] In 1861 and 1871 only data for 17 'representative counties' were published. *Contra* Grigg, the data were also collected in 1881 but none of it was published.

[17] Mills suspects that omissions may have been most prominent amongst both the smallest and largest farmers. However, this supposition appears to rest only on *a priori* reasoning. Mills, 'Farm statistics', p. 67.

[18] Overton, *Agricultural revolution,* p. 174. This view receives qualified support from Mills, 'Farm statistics', pp. 59, 71.

[19] BPP, 1851, XLIII, *Census of Great Britain 1851, Instructions to enumerators*, p. 6. In fact the instructions were somewhat more forbidding than the letter of the law. The pertinent act of parliament specified a fine of between £2 and £5, p. 39.

[20] Grigg, 'Farm size', p. 181.

[21] In fact the 'representative counties' somewhat under-represented the counties with smaller farms in 1851. Compare columns three and five in Table 4, Mills, 'Farm statistics', p. 70.

TABLE 2. Distribution of farm sizes 1851 and 1871 censuses and agricultural holding sizes, 1870

	Under 5 acres	*5 to 20 acres*	*20 to 50 acres*	*50 to 100 acres*	*100 acres up*	*Total Number of Returns*
1851 Census: England[a]	3.4	19.1	20.4	19.2	37.8	187,022
1870 Agricultural Returns: England[a]	25.4	28.5	16.1	11.7	18.3	376,574
1871 Census: 'Representative Counties'[b]	3.3	16.9	17.7	17.5	44.6	59,870
1870 Agricultural Returns: 'Representative Counties'[b]	24.9	27.2	15.6	12.0	20.2	149,711

Notes:
[a] All English counties except Monmouth.
[b] Cumberland, Berkshire, Derbyshire, Durham, Essex, extra Metropolitan Kent, Hampshire, Leicester, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Northumberland, Rutland, Suffolk, extra Metropolitan Surrey, Sussex, Westmorland.
Sources: 1851, BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII (i), *Census of Great Britain 1851, Population Tables II,* vols 1 & 2, 'Farmers, with the numbers of labourers employed and of acres occupied, divisions I–X'; 1870, BPP, 1870, LXVIII, *Agricultural Returns of Great Britain 1870*, Appendix to Report, p. 20; 1871 BPP, 1873, LXXI (ii), *Census of England and Wales 1871*, Vol IV, *Appendix to report, appendix A*, p. 123.

The Agricultural Returns again show a massively higher proportion of smallholdings than does the Census.

In fact, the aims of those who organised the data collection in 1851 and 1870 were quite different in nature. It is the argument of this paper that in 1851 the Census Office wanted to shed light on the meaning of the term 'farmer' and attempted to gather data on the size of 'farms' and on employment levels on 'farms'. In 1870, however, the object of study was agricultural holdings, not 'farms.' Accordingly the tables published in 1851 were described in the Census Report as relating to 'farms' whereas the data published in the 1870 Returns were labelled as pertaining to 'holdings' although there was an unhelpful conflation of 'holdings' with 'farms' in the accompanying text.[22] In 1851 the term 'farm' was used to mean an agricultural holding from which the occupier derived their primary employment and the term 'farmer' was restricted to those whose primary occupation was farming. In 1870 an 'agricultural holding' meant any agricultural holding of more than a quarter of an acre in size regardless of the principal occupation of the occupier.

That these were the respective intentions behind the data collection in 1851 and 1870 can be demonstrated easily enough by considering how those who organised the data collection wished it to be collected. The situation in 1870 was relatively straightforward. Returns were supposed to be despatched to 'all *occupiers* of more than ¼ acre of agricultural land . . .'.[23] There was no attempt to distinguish 'farms' from part-time smallholdings because this was not the purpose behind either the collection or the publication of the data. If data collection proceeded as intended by its organisers, then these returns cannot furnish a guide to either the number

[22] BPP, 1870, LXVIII, *Agricultural Returns of Great Britain, 1870*, pp. 20 and 4 respectively.

[23] Grigg, 'Farm size', p. 181.

or the size of farms in the census' sense of agricultural holdings providing the occupier with their principal employment. Whether or not the 1870 Returns are really a complete account of agricultural holdings of ¼ acre and above is a matter outside the scope of this article. However, without further investigation it might be unwise to assume that these returns do not themselves under-represent the smaller agricultural holdings of ¼ acre and up.

The situation in 1851 was much more complex. Every householder was issued with a household schedule to complete together with an accompanying set of instructions. Under the heading 'INSTRUCTIONS for filling up the Column headed "RANK PROFESSION, or OCCUPATION"', there were a number of notes pertaining to specific occupational groups. Amongst these was one that stated that:

> The term FARMER is to be applied only to the occupier of land, who is to be returned – '*Farmer of* [317] *acres, employing* [12] *labourers*;' the number of acres, and of in and out-door labourers on March 31st, being in all cases inserted. Sons or daughters employed at home or on the farm may be returned – '*Farmer's Son*', '*Farmer's Daughter*'.[24]

In other words only those who described themselves as 'farmers' were requested to return the acreage of their holding and the numbers of in and out-door labourers.[25] There was no request for other occupiers of agricultural land to supply this information. Actual practice by householders will be considered later. The household schedules were subsequently collected by local Census Enumerators who were charged with checking the household schedules. The household schedules were then transcribed by the Census Enumerators into the Census Enumerators' Books which were ultimately sent on to the Census Office in London.[26]

But which occupiers of land were and were not supposed to describe themselves as farmers? In particular how were those who mixed farming with another occupation supposed to have described themselves? The instructions for those with multiple occupations were admirably clear and succinct: 'A person following MORE THAN ONE DISTINCT TRADE may insert his occupations in the order of their importance'.[27] In other words only those whose primary occupation was farming should have recorded their occupation simply as 'farmer'. Those for whom it was a secondary occupation should have listed their primary occupation first.

This does not, however, mean that those occupiers of land for whom farming was a secondary activity would necessarily have interpreted the instructions to mean that they should not supply an acreage return. The instructions are somewhat ambiguous on this point and, *a priori*, it seems likely that some interpreted it one way and some the other. But it should have been

[24] BPP, 1851, XLIII, p. 6.

[25] In fact all employers were requested to report the number of men they employed. The account given here both of the questions asked and as to whom they were directed differs from that given by Mills which suggests that householders who were occupiers of land were asked to supply this information and that they were asked to return the numbers of women and children. Mills, 'Farm statistics', p. 59. Mills' account conflates firstly, the instructions to enumerators with the instructions to householders and secondly, actual practice with the instructions of the Census Office.

[26] A fuller description of the process may be found in D. R. Mills and K. Schurer (eds), 'The enumeration process', in Mills and Schurer (eds), *Local communities in the Victorian census enumerators' books* (1996), pp. 16–26.

[27] BPP, 1851, XLIII, p. 6.

very clear to all those who returned their primary occupation as farmers that they should complete the farm return. The extent to which 'farmers' actually complied is another matter which will be addressed shortly.

The intention of the Census Office was thus to collect data on the size of farms and employment levels of those for whom farming was either their only or their most important occupation. In the Agricultural Returns from 1866 onwards, the intention was to gather data on all of those who occupied agricultural land of one quarter of an acre and upward. This inevitably included a large number of individuals who were not 'farmers' in the sense that farming was not their principal economic activity.

A comparison of the numbers of individuals describing themselves as 'farmers' or 'graziers' in the 1871 census with the numbers of those reporting agricultural holdings in 1870 is instructive in this regard. The data are shown in Table 3. In England as a whole in 1871 there were some 208,980 individuals described as farmers in the occupational tables of the census.[28] Yet there were 376,574 agricultural holdings enumerated in the Agricultural Returns in 1870. It is therefore likely that the Agricultural Returns include something of the order of 160,000 holdings held by individuals whose primary occupation was not farming. In the Census sense of the term such individuals were not therefore farmers. Table 3 makes it clear that the differences between the two sources were consistent for every county for which data are available. The numbers of farmers and graziers in the occupational tables bears a rough correspondence to the number of farm returns in 1871. But in every single case the number of 'agricultural holdings', as published in the Agricultural Returns, greatly exceeded the numbers of farmers and graziers. This is hardly surprising, because the 1870 Returns were not, and were never meant to be, returns of farms but of agricultural holdings.

III

We can now turn to the question of who did not supply acreage returns for the 1851 Census. According to the data for Buckinghamshire published in the 1851 census report, there were 1,996 individuals whose only or principal occupation was farmer while the published farm size table for the same county in 1851 derives from 1,789 returns.[29] On the evidence of the data in the published table, one might conclude that 90 per cent of farmers did in fact complete the return. Regrettably, things are not so simple. Table 4 shows the number of farmers reported in the occupational tables and the number of farm acreage returns for every county published in the 1851 census. Again, when taken at face value, the figures might be taken to suggest that, in England as a whole, 92 per cent of all farmers completed an acreage return. However, in the counties of Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Rutland and Westmorland the number of returns slightly exceeded the number of farmers. This suggests that the farm size tables must include some individuals who were not in fact 'farmers' in the strict Census sense of the term.

[28] 190,405 male and 18,575 female farmers and graziers. BPP, 1873, LXXI (ii), *Census of England and Wales, 1871, Population abstracts*, III.

[29] According to the census report, there were 1839 male farmers and 157 female farmers in the county.

TABLE 3. The number of farmers and farm returns in 1871 and the number of agricultural holdings in 1870

County	*Number of farmers and graziers: 1871 Census*	*Number of farm Returns: 1871 Census*	*Number of agricultural holdings: 1870 agricultural Returns*
Berkshire	1963	1604	3927
Cumberland	5410	2708	7473
Derbyshire	6178	5435	12,736
Durham	4274	3457	6157
Essex	3925	3574	9381
Hampshire	3549	2749	8434
Kent	5019	3977	10,319
Leicestershire	3757	3033	8044
Lincolnshire	11,788	10,093	24,518
Norfolk	6473	5748	16,995
Northumberland	3336	2654	5497
Nottinghamshire	4292	3603	8265
Rutland	596	538	1369
Suffolk	5077	4670	9328
Surrey	1738	1243	5153
Sussex	4156	3532	8492
Westmorland	2564	2144	3623
Representative Counties	74,095	60,762	149,711
England	208,980	N/A	376,574

Sources: Farmers and graziers, BPP, 1873, LXXI (ii), *Census of England and Wales 1871, Population abstracts*, III, 'Tables of the ages, civil conditions, occupations, and birth-places of the people', Tables 15 and 16, Division I to IX; Farm returns, 1871 BPP, 1873, LXXI (ii), *Census of England and Wales 1871*, IV, *Appendix to report, appendix A*, Tables 110–27; Agricultural holdings, BPP, 1870, LXVIII, *Agricultural returns of Great Britain 1870*, Appendix to report, p. 20.

In fact a footnote to the farm size table make it quite clear that the farm returns were sometimes completed by individuals whose primary occupation was not farming and, worse still, that the Census Office included at least some of these individuals in the published tables. The footnote reads as follows:

> The number of Farmers appearing in this series of Tables will not agree with the number returned in the Occupation Tables for the same localities, the difference being caused partly by the omission of all such Farmers as made no return respecting either the acreage of their farms or number of men employed, and partly by the fact that in the Occupation Tables, either persons who had *formerly* been farmers but who at the time of the Census had retired from business or become inmates of institutions, were referred to their former occupation. On the other hand, a certain number of persons who, besides being engaged in farming, carried on some other business, are here included among "Farmers" while in the tables of Occupations they are referred to that other business as their chief pursuit. The

TABLE 4. The number of farmers and the number of farm returns in each English county in 1851

County	*Number of farmers*	*Number of farm returns*	*Ratio of returns to farmers*
Bedfordshire	1508	1449	0.96
Berkshire	2164	1839	0.85
Buckinghamshire	1996	1810	0.91
Cambridgeshire	3618	3291	0.91
Cheshire	7239	6663	0.92
Cornwall	8042	7217	0.90
Cumberland	5262	4961	0.94
Derbyshire	5744	4789	0.83
Devon	11,637	10,427	0.90
Dorset	2564	2331	0.91
Durham	4064	3425	0.84
Essex	4411	4116	0.93
Gloucestershire	4232	3586	0.85
Hampshire	3337	3080	0.92
Hereford	2894	2534	0.88
Hertfordshire	1839	1743	0.95
Huntingdon	1026	953	0.93
Kent	5028	4690	0.93
Lancashire	17,789	15,450	0.87
Leicestershire	3493	3744	1.07
Lincolnshire	10,973	11,017	1.00
Middlesex	840	814	0.97
Norfolk	6957	6532	0.94
Northampton	2922	2820	0.97
Northumberland	3275	2821	0.86
Nottinghamshire	4313	4393	1.02
Oxfordshire	2437	2234	0.92
Rutland	659	726	1.10
Shropshire	5396	4935	0.91
Somerset	8438	7190	0.85
Staffordshire	6508	6026	0.93
Suffolk	5637	5092	0.90
Surrey	1932	1888	0.98
Sussex	4189	3872	0.92
Warwick	3964	3416	0.86
Westmoreland	2549	2634	1.03
Wiltshire	3362	3080	0.92
Worcestershire	3187	2844	0.89
Yorkshire E.R.	4547	4134	0.91
Yorkshire N.R.	7453	6807	0.91
Yorkshire W.R.	18,292	17,385	0.95
England	205,717	188,758	0.92

Sources: Farmers, BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII (i), *Census of Great Britain 1851, Population Tables II*, vols 1 and 2, 'Occupations of the people, divisions I–X'; Farm returns, BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII (i), *Census of Great Britain 1851, Population Tables II*, vols 1 and 2, 'Farmers, with the numbers of labourers employed and of acres occupied, divisions I–X'.

> secondary occupations of Farmers will be found in a general Table, for which, and for further explanations of this Return, see Report.[30]

Having attempted to collect the farm returns only from those whose primary business was farming in accordance with the original purpose of collecting the data (to shed light on the meaning of the term 'farmer'), it is unfortunate that other individuals who erroneously completed the farm return were not then excluded by the Census Office clerks when compiling the farm size table, as would have been consistent with the research goal. It follows that the level of non-reporting by farmers proper cannot be deduced by comparing the number of farmers in the published occupational tables with the number of farmers reporting acreages in the published farm size tables. Whether the number of non-farmers reported and farmers omitted from these tables is large enough to undermine seriously the representativeness of the data as to the size and employment levels of 'farms' cannot be determined from the published data alone.

It would be possible to assess the scale of the problem by returning to the manuscript Census Enumerators' Books (henceforth CEBs). However, the scale of the primary documentation renders this a forbiddingly monumental task at a national level.[31] Fortunately, the CEBs for Buckinghamshire have been made fully machine-readable by the Buckinghamshire Family History Society.[32] For administrative convenience the county level data published in the 1851 Census data refer not to the historic counties but to newly defined 'registration counties' which covered somewhat different areas. The Society's database covers both the historic county of Buckinghamshire and the 1851 Registration county. The analysis which follows is for those areas which comprised the registration county so as to allow direct comparison with the published census tables.

Table 5 provides a summary of all those within the registration county of Buckinghamshire for whom the CEBs record acreage information. Ninety per cent of those who straightforwardly described themselves as 'farmers' returned an acreage figure and they accounted for 90 per cent of those who reported an acreage.[33] Acreage reporting was at lower but still high levels for dairymen and graziers and those who mixed farming with another occupation. Either the respondents or the enumerators differed as to whether a return was required. One quarter of bailiffs returned an acreage but the majority did not. Levels of reporting amongst other occupational groups was statistically insignificant.

Farmers reported an average of 160 acres. Farmers who followed a secondary occupation reported an average of 108 acres whilst those who reported farming as a secondary occupation averaged a more modest 81 acres.[34] These patterns suggest that, in general, respondents

[30] BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII, Farmers. This footnote, or one almost identical, appears in the first pertinent table in each division.

[31] There would be approximately 16 million nominal records for England as a whole.

[32] I am deeply grateful to the Buckinghamshire Family History Society for making the full database available to me and to Dr David Thorpe for making this possible.

[33] The rates of compliance were 91 per cent for male farmers and 88 per cent for female farmers.

[34] Though this is not of course small. This suggests that the reporting of 'farms' by those with a distinct primary occupation was restricted to those whose agricultural holdings were sufficiently large that they had no doubt that they should be considered farmers.

TABLE 5. Characteristics of those providing acreage returns in Buckinghamshire in 1851

Occupation	*Number reporting acreage*	*Percentage of occupational group reporting acreage*	*Percentage of those who reported acreage*	*Average acreage reported*	*Total acreage reported by occupational group*	*Percentage of the total acreage reported*
Farmer	1646	90	90.0	160	264,119	93.6
Farmer with secondary occupation	24	56	1.3	108	2600	0.9
Dairyman	8	38	0.4	52	417	0.2
Grazier	25	69	1.4	94	2349	0.8
Bailiff	26	25	1.4	261	6779	2.4
Farming as secondary occupation	50	56	2.7	81	4035	1.4
Agricultural Labourer	6	0	0.3	2.8	17	0.0
Others	43	0	2.4	46	1961	0.7
Total	1828	1	100.0	154	282,277	100.0

Source: computed from Buckinghamshire Family History Society, database of 1851 Census enumerators' books.

had indeed listed their occupations in order of importance as requested by the Census Office. Bailiffs reported the largest average acreages at 260 acres, as might be expected since it was presumably only on the largest farms that a professional manager would be installed. Broadly speaking, those who were farmers and listed no other occupation farmed on a somewhat larger scale (160 acres on average) than respondents as a whole (154 acres) but the difference is small owing to the sheer preponderance of farmers amongst respondents. If the patterns in Buckinghamshire were typical of those elsewhere, then the published farm size data may understate the average size of 'farms' as reported by 'farmers' but only to a very small degree.

Since 1828 individuals reporting acreages are recorded in the CEBs and 1789 acreage figures were reported in the published tables, only 39 of the CEB acreage returns were omitted from the published table. If we were to take the best possible scenario we could assume that all of the 1670 individuals who returned their principal occupation as farmer were included together with all of the dairymen and graziers and individuals who farmed as a secondary occupation. If that were so then the 39 omitted individuals were drawn from the ranks of the 26 bailiffs, 6 agricultural labourers and 43 'others.' But that would leave 36 individuals, who had not chosen to describe themselves as farmers, included in the published tables. In reality may be more than 36 such individuals in the published tables since it is possible that some farmers were omitted. At worst the omissions may have been entirely random if the census clerks simply overlooked some of the acreage returns, in which case the published table might

include approaching 100 individuals who did not describe themselves as farmers.[35] Either way the inclusion of relatively small numbers of individuals who did not regard themselves as farmers must impart a small downward bias to the acreage figures.

This still leaves the critical question as to whether those farmers who did supply acreage returns were representative of those who did not. In particular were smaller farmers under-represented amongst those farmers completing acreage returns? If so, the published tables would systematically under-represent the importance of small farmers.

The registration county of Buckinghamshire database covered a total of 329 distinct enumeration districts. Individuals who gave their occupation as 'farmer' were resident in 300 of these districts and in 223 of these all 1203 of those who described themselves as 'farmer' completed an acreage return. In the remaining 77 districts containing farmers, 393 of 567 self-described farmers made a return. Thus in three-quarters of districts 100 per cent of those describing themselves as farmers made a return compared with 69 per cent of those in the remaining quarter of districts. Thirteen enumeration districts contained half the non-returning farmers. Perhaps the worst case was at Marsh Gibbon where only one return was collected from 22 farmers. The fact that the farm size data were complete in most districts but dramatically defective in others may point towards differences in the assiduousness with which individual enumerators made sure the acreage returns had been completed. The average farm size returned in the 'complete' districts was 167 acres compared with 143 acres in the 'defective' districts. This might reflect real differences in the size of farms but it seems very unlikely that farm size genuinely varied between the two sets of districts. There is no obvious reason why would the assiduousness of enumerators have varied with the *average* size farm size of enumeration districts. If these suppositions are correct, then any differences in apparent average farm sizes arise from the practice of enumerators rather than from reality on the ground.

The relative frequency distributions for both districts are shown in Figure 2. The two distributions are not dissimilar but farms of over 200 acres appear to be under-enumerated in the defective districts. If there was any systematic bias in which farms did and did not return acreages, it was the larger farms rather than the smaller farms which were most likely not to report acreages. It may be that the less assiduous enumerators were least likely to make a fuss where men of relatively high social standing were concerned. If there are biases in the farm-size data collected the bias is modest and downward. In other words the average farm size in the county was probably somewhat higher than the CEB data suggest.

There are thus two modest sources of downward bias in farm size in the data, one introduced by relatively small numbers of non-farmers reporting and one by larger farmers being perhaps slightly less likely to supply a return than smaller farmers. Whether such a pattern was mirrored in other counties is, of course, another matter. But if it were, then the published farm

[35] An attempt to take this exercise further by reconstructing the published table from the CEBs revealed a large number of minor errors by the census clerks. Many farms were clearly placed one cell out in the table. Such errors would have been hard to avoid in the pre-computer era. Fortunately the summary statistics derived from the reconstructed table were virtually identical to those in the published table suggesting the clerks' errors were entirely random. However, these errors made it impossible to use a comparison of the published and CEB derived tables to assess who the clerks had omitted from the published tables.

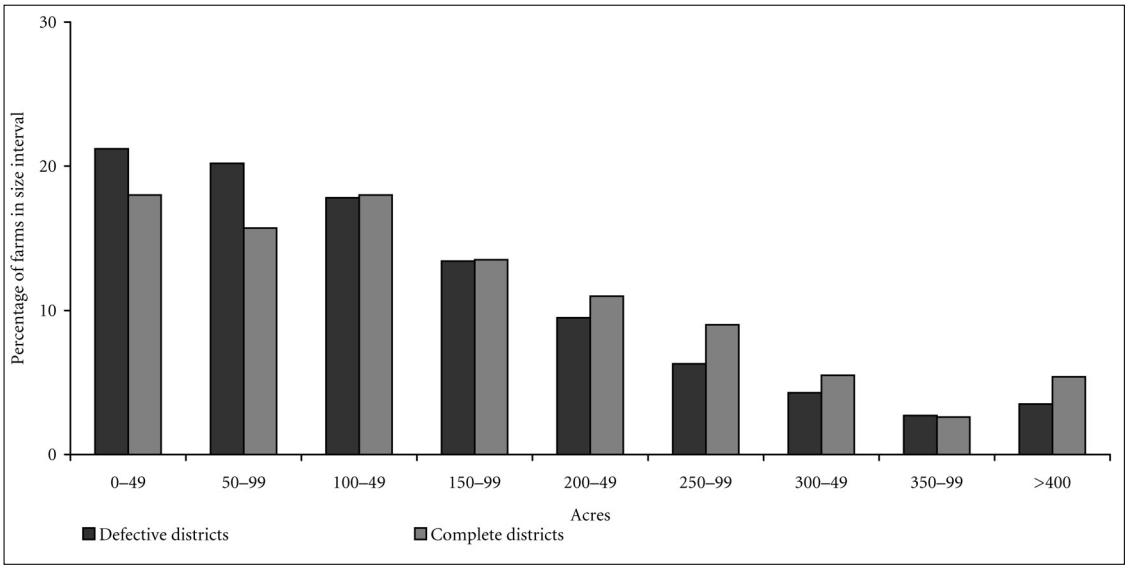


FIGURE 2: Distribution of farm sizes in Buckinghamshire in 1851

Source: Buckinghamshire Family History Society, Database of 1851 Census Enumerators' Books Database.

size tables would tend to somewhat understate rather than overstate the size of farms. The view that small farms were under-represented in the 1851 farm size tables, which is in any case based on a misunderstanding of the nature of the data in the later Agricultural Returns, finds no support here.

Before completing the discussion of who did and did not complete farm acreage returns in 1851, two further issues need to be addressed. Mills has suggested that one possible reason for farmers not returning an acreage was that they had retired.[36] Such cases clearly existed since 13 per cent of non-returning farmers were 70 or above compared with only 7 per cent of returning farmers. The proportions aged between 60 and 69 were very similar at 17 per cent and 14 per cent. However, the great majority of both returning and non-returning farmers were aged between 20 and 60. Being retired was not therefore the main reason for not completing a return. Mills also points out that farmers temporarily between tenancies may have simply described themselves as a farmer but naturally failed to return an acreage return.[37] Again, there is no doubt this happened, but it cannot have accounted for a high proportion of the ten per cent of those described as farmers in Buckinghamshire in 1851, who did not provide an acreage figure. Straightforward failure to comply must have been the reason in the great majority of cases.

Without examining the CEBs for other parts of the country, it is not possible to tell whether the rate of ten per cent failing to return an acreage figure was typical of England as a whole. However, in the only published survey of a comparably large area, Sheppard reports the same

[36] Mills, 'Farm statistics', pp. 64–5.

[37] *Ibid.*

rate for the East Riding of Yorkshire, a region with markedly different social and economic characteristics from Buckinghamshire.[38] Mills concludes his review of the secondary literature on the non-reporting of acreages by suggesting that Sheppard's figure of 10 per cent for the East Riding may be representative of the whole country.[39] Furthermore the evidence of Table 4 is consistent with the view that patterns of non-reporting (and 'unwanted' reporting by non-farmers) did not vary very greatly around the country.

IV

We can now consider the completeness of the CEBs respecting the employment of indoor and outdoor labourers on farms. By 'indoor labourers' the Census Office meant farm servants resident on the farm and by outdoor labourers it meant day labourers not living in their employers' household.[40] At the time, the Census Office expressed the view that indoor labourers had sometimes been omitted from farmers' labour returns.[41] This issue has received some attention from historians and will be returned to below. In the instructions issued to householders, farmers were asked simply to supply the number of indoor and outdoor labourers employed. Nothing was said as to whether this figure was supposed to include women and children. More detailed instructions, which stated that where women or boys were employed, their numbers should be recorded separately, were supplied to the enumerators, but not to householders.[42] Few farmers enumerated the employment of women or boys in 1851 and the manuscript returns generally refer either to men or to labourers. When the data were published, the Census Office, though expressing reservations about the under-enumeration of male farm servants, were happy to label the tables as pertaining to men without further comment.[43] There is no evidence that those reported as 'labourers' in the returns subsumed significant numbers of women, though it would be surprising if this never occurred. Although the published tables referred to the employment of men, it seems likely that some of those returned as 'labourers' would in fact have been boys, especially amongst those employed as farm servants.[44] Nevertheless, there seems no reason to depart from the Census Office view that these figures refer essentially to adult male employment.[45]

It is unfortunate that the Census Office did not ask farmers to state explicitly if they employed no labour. Only a handful of individuals in Buckinghamshire supplied such nil returns. Where a farmer, especially one who supplied an acreage return, did not report the

[38] J. A. Sheppard, 'East Yorkshire's agricultural labour force in the mid-nineteenth century', *AgHR* 9 (1961), p. 44.

[39] Mills, 'Farm statistics', p. 69.

[40] It has recently been shown that the 1851 census miscategorised many farm servants as day labourers. N. Goose, 'Farm service in Southern England in the mid-nineteenth century', *Local Population Stud.* 72 (2004), pp. 77–82. This is an important issue but not one that affects the issues under discussion in the present paper.

[41] BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII (i), *Census of Great Britain, 1851, Population Tables*, II (i), *Report*, p. lxxviii.

[42] BPP, 1851, XLIII, *Instructions*, pp. 6, 38.

[43] BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII, Farmers.

[44] The Census instructions to enumerators gave no indication as to the age which divided boys from labourers. It is possible that the distinction seemed obvious to contemporaries.

[45] It should be remembered that the Census Office was in a position to enquire of enumerators how the returns had been compiled and we are not.

employment of labour, it is not clear whether he or she employed no labour or simply failed to report employment figures. Whilst it is reasonable to assume, in the vast majority of cases, that any farmer must have had land, it does not follow that any farmer must have been employing labour on census day (31 March in 1851).[46] In consequence it is inherently more difficult to assess the extent to which farmers provided answers as to the numbers of labourers they employed than it is to assess the extent of the non-reporting of acreage.

Whether intentionally or not, the authorities covered up this problem when they came to publish the data. In each of the published tables, as in Table 1 above, the numbers of individuals filling out farm returns, who reported either zero employment or made no statement, were rolled together under the heading 'No men employed or not stated.' Having failed to collect the data in a form which distinguished clearly between the two, there was little alternative to this procedure. Fortunately, there are reasons for supposing that amongst those who supplied an acreage figure but no figure for male employment, the great majority genuinely employed no men. Consider Table 1. Two hundred and twelve individuals supplied an acreage return, but reported no men employed on census day. Whilst overall then some twelve percent of individuals supplying an acreage return reported no employment that day, the figure for reported farms under twenty acres is 69 per cent. This is, of course, entirely plausible. Fifteen per cent of farms of between 20 and 100 acres reported no employment. The figure falls to 2 per cent of farms over 100 acres. It is most unlikely that farms in this size category were run without recourse to hired labour. But it must be remembered that these are individual farms reporting the situation on a single day. It is possible that a small number of farms were effectively shut for business on census day for one reason or another.

According to the published data for Buckinghamshire, reproduced as Table 1 above, there were 21 individuals who reported employing men but reported no acreage figure. It is not plausible that such individuals had no land. These 21 individuals form about one per cent of all the farm returns for the registration county. As the questions were put to farmers, no more emphasis was placed on reporting acreage than on reporting men employed. Of those who supplied any of the requisite farm information, only one per cent supplied the labour figure without the acreage figure. It is possible that a similar proportion reported acreage but omitted to report the number of men employed. Such a low level of omissions of employed men would have very little impact on the statistical relationship between farm size and employment levels. However, it is as well to recognise that there may well be some under-reporting of employment in the tables.

More seriously, it has sometimes been suggested that while outdoor labourers were fairly fully reported, the reporting of agricultural servants varied.[47] This possibility was first mooted by the Census Office itself.[48] One historian has gone much further and suggested that where servants and day labourers were not enumerated separately, the returns refer to day labour only.[49] *A priori* this seems unlikely. The instructions to householders clearly stated that farmers

[46] Some 'farmers', of course, must have been retired or temporarily out of place.

[47] The secondary literature is reviewed in Mills, 'Farm statistics', pp. 63–4.

[48] BPP, 1852–53, LXXXVIII, *Report*, p. lxxviii.

[49] Sheppard, 'East Yorkshire's agricultural labour force', p. 45.

were to return the numbers of 'in and out-door labourers' employed on census day. Farmers, in general, were a highly literate group, and the evidence is that 90 per cent of them supplied the requested acreage information and the great majority of those either supplied employment figures or were not in fact employing anyone.[50] Why should we suppose that farmers systematically excluded farm servants when they had generally complied well with the other instructions and had been explicitly instructed to include farm servants?

Mills cites an example of a male farm servant in North Cumberland who was resident on a farm that reported employing no men.[51] No doubt many more examples could be found. But it is a far cry from finding occasional imperfections in the CEBs to attributing widespread failings to the CEBs which would have a major statistical impact on the published tables. If such problems were widespread, then one would expect to see significant numbers of farm households where the number of farm servants exceeded the numbers of men reported as being employed on that day. That the CEBs record only 27 such households in Buckinghamshire suggests that this was not a widespread problem.[52]

A key reason why some historians have suspected that the problem was widespread is because the levels of reported employment seem low compared with the total number of farm labourers and servants in the same districts reported in the occupational tables. Sheppard for instance took the rough coincidence of agricultural labourers in the occupational tables with the numbers of men reported as employed on farms in the East Riding of Yorkshire as evidence that the servants were massively under-enumerated. But this is to assume employment levels approaching 100 per cent for agricultural labourers on the 31 March. Nonetheless, it is the case that the numbers of men reported in employment in the farm returns tables fall well short of the total farm work force.[53] If one inflates the farm return employment figures to allow for ten per cent of farmers not reporting then that still leaves only around 60 per cent of male labourers, agricultural servants and shepherds accounted for on the farm size and employment tables. While this may be evidence of considerable under-reporting it may equally be evidence of considerable seasonal unemployment or of both.[54]

Table 6 summarises the extent of employment reporting in the Buckinghamshire CEBs by those who completed acreage returns. Eighty-six per cent of farmers who completed an acreage return reported employing one or more adult males on census day. Reporting of labourers was at considerably lower levels for other groups. Given that the average farm size reported by farmers with a secondary occupation was 108 acres (Table 5) it is very puzzling that only 4 per cent of such individuals reported employing an adult male on census day. This is scarcely credible.

[50] R. S. Schofield, 'The dimensions of illiteracy, 1750–1850', *Explorations in Economic History* X (1973), pp. 437–54.

[51] Mills, 'Farm statistics', pp. 61–2. However, the individual concerned was 19 years of age and may have been considered a boy rather than a man.

[52] The figure falls to twenty households if one excludes servants under twenty, who may have been considered boys rather than men.

[53] There is a discussion of these issues in P. M. Tillott, 'Sources of inaccuracy in the 1851 and 1861 censuses', in E. A. Wrigley (ed.) *Nineteenth-century society. Essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of social data* (1972), pp. 82–133.

[54] The issue is complex and cannot be explored further here. However I hope elsewhere to explore the potential of this evidence for assessing seasonal unemployment, its regional variation and its relationship to poor relief expenditure.

TABLE 6. Employment characteristics of those providing acreage returns in Buckinghamshire in 1851

Occupation	*Number reporting acreage*	*Number reporting employment of adult males*	*Percentage reporting employment of men*	*Average number of men employed (when reported)*	*Number reporting employment of boys*	*Number reporting employment of women*
Farmer	1,646	1,408	85.5	7.1	200	0
Farmer with secondary occupation	24	1	4.1	1.0	0	0
Dairyman	8	4	50.0	2.0	0	0
Grazier	25	16	64.0	3.0	1	0
Bailiff	26	16	62.0	6.9	3	0
Farming as secondary occupation	50	4	8.0	3.5	0	0
Agricultural Labourer	6	0	0	–	1	0
Others	43	13	30.2	4.4	0	0
Total	1828	1462	80.0		205	0

Source: Computed from Buckinghamshire Family History Society, database of 1851 Census enumerators' books.

The same applies to those who listed farming as their secondary occupation. Despite an average farm size of 81 acres, only 8 per cent reported the employment of an adult male. No explanation for these much lower levels of reported employment by dual-occupied farmers can be offered here.[55] If, as seems likely, this reflects defective reporting rather than reality, then this too will have led to some understatement of the levels of farm employment in the published tables.

The explicit reporting of boys and women employed on farms in the CEBs was at radically lower levels than the reporting of men, as can be seen from the last two columns of Table 6. Only 200 farmers reported the employment of boys and not one reported the employment of a woman. It seems unlikely that only 200 farmers employed boys and utterly implausible that not one employed a woman. For this the Census Office was largely to blame. In the instructions issued to householders there was no request to supply figures for the employment of women and boys. Additional instructions were issued to each enumerator 'For his guidance in completing and correcting the column headed "Rank Profession, or Occupation" '.[56] Here it was noted that 'when *boys* or women are employed, their numbers should be separately given'. Since householders were not asked to supply this information it is hardly surprising that they rarely did so. How enumerators were expected to correct information which householders had not been requested to provide in the first place is never explained. Presumably only the most

[55] However, it is not correct to state that these individuals were simply omitted from the farm size tables as Mills does, Mills, 'Farm statistics', p. 67.

[56] BPP, 1851, XLIII, *Instructions*, pp. 36, 38.

TABLE 7. Farmers employing boys in 92 Buckinghamshire enumeration districts recording any boys in 1851

Employment characteristics	*Number of farmers*	*Average acreage of farm*	*Average number of men*	*Average number of boys*
Employing men only	416	159	6.27	0
Employing men and boys	193	184	5.5	2.47
Employing boys only	7	21.6	0	1.29
Employing no-one	80	38.5	0	0
All	696	151	5.3	0.69

Source: Computed from Buckinghamshire Family History Society, database of 1851 Census enumerators' books.

assiduous of enumerators tried to extract information that had not been requested in the first place. And none of them appear to have been zealous enough to extract information on the employment of women.[57]

In Buckinghamshire the employment of boys was recorded in only 92 of the 329 enumeration districts. These may represent areas where the recording of the employment of boys was closer to reality. The basic patterns in these districts for farms where the occupier was returned as 'farmer' are shown in Table 7. Average farm size in these districts was 151 acres, marginally smaller than the 160 acres in the county as a whole (Table 5). How many of the farms in these 92 enumeration districts reporting the employment of men but not boys, nevertheless were employing boys cannot be ascertained. On those farms which reported the employment of boys there was approximately one boy to every two men. However, these farms employed fewer men, on average, than the, on average, somewhat smaller farms which did not report the employment of boys. So to some degree boys may have been substituted for men on the larger farms. Across all the farms in these districts there were 0.69 boys per farm. No doubt real employment levels were somewhere between that level and the 2.47 per farm, which was the average on farms that did report the employment of boys.

Most of the 486 boys who were reported in the CEBs disappeared somewhere in the subsequent processing of the data. The footnote to the printed table records that the employment figures in the table were exclusive of 12 women and boys, whose employment had been reported. Such exclusions were reported in the footnotes to every table, but the numbers are clearly utterly unreliable. By 1871 the Census Office had rephrased the questions put to householders.[58] Farmers were now asked to record the employment of women and children. Reporting increased around 30-fold but the details were never published.[59] Instead the overall numbers of women and boys remained confined to the footnotes to the published tables. Whereas the footnotes to the tables for the 17 'representative counties' in 1871 referred to a total of 74,686 women and boys employed on farms, the 1851 tables for the same counties had

[57] It may be possible to locate enumeration districts elsewhere in the country where female employment was well recorded. If so these could shed much light on the agricultural employment of women at this time of year.

[58] BPP, 1873, LXXI (ii), *Census of England and Wales, 1871, Population abstracts*, III, *Report, Appendix B*, p. 168.

[59] Comparing BPP, 1873, LXXI (ii), *Census of England and Wales, 1871, Population abstracts*, III, *Appendix A*, Tables 110–127 *with* BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII, Farmers.

referred to a mere 2394 women and boys.[60] The reporting of women and boys in 1871 may or may not be complete. But the absence of women and boys from the farm size and employment tables in 1851 is further evidence that these tables significantly under-estimate farm employment on census day.

V

Although far from perfect, it appears that the 1851 farm returns are a reasonable guide to both farm acreage and farm employment levels (on census day) at county level. There is probably a small downward bias in the farm acreages. The level of downward bias in the employment levels of adult males on census day may be rather larger. It needs to be remembered that at peak times male employment may have been as much as 50 per cent higher than the levels registered in the farm size and employment tables.[61] The data that are presented in the rest of the paper should be regarded as lower bound figures for both acreages and employment. With these caveats in mind we can now turn to some of the patterns revealed at county level.

Figure 3 shows average farm size for each county in 1851. Average acreages have been calculated on the assumption that all farms in a given size interval fell exactly at the mid-point of the interval and that farms above 2,000 acres averaged 2500 acres. For Buckinghamshire this generates an average farm size of 162 acres. In fact the average of those returning acreage information in the CEBs was 154 so the estimate is about five per cent higher than the CEB figure. It is rather closer to the average acreage of 160 acres reported by those whose only reported livelihood was farming, and a little below the 167 acres reported by the same group in the three-quarters of Buckinghamshire enumeration districts where acreage reporting was comprehensive. Alternative procedures of estimation could be used to generate slightly lower acreage patterns. However, I have not attempted to do so since there is almost certainly a modest though unquantifiable downward bias in the raw data.[62]

Figure 3 exhibits very strong regional variation. With the exceptions of Cornwall and Northumberland the country can be neatly divided into regions of large, medium and small average farm size. The terms 'large', 'medium' and 'small' farms are used here simply to refer to relative farm sizes in 1851. In the extensive literature on the growth of 'large' farms in England historians have differed as to the appropriate definitions of small and large farms in an absolute sense. This is too large an issue to explore here.[63]

In most of the country average farm size was above one hundred acres. Average farm sizes

[60] It is a great pity that women and boys were lumped together in this way. And what, one wonders, happened to girls? Whether or not the data collected in 1871 and alluded to in the published footnotes were of similar quality to that published for adult men remains a moot point. Investigation of CEBs from 1871 could be very instructive on female and child employment patterns.

[61] As suggested earlier, not much more than 60 per cent of the male farm workforce can be accounted for in the farm size and employment tables.

[62] Those readers who would have preferred lower estimates of average acreage could adopt the simple expedient of reducing all the acreage figures by five per cent. Any such changes would affect Figure 2 but would make no difference to Figures 3 to 8.

[63] Although this is discussed in a second article, alluded to earlier, on the decline of family farms and the development of agrarian capitalism over the period 1600 to 1851.

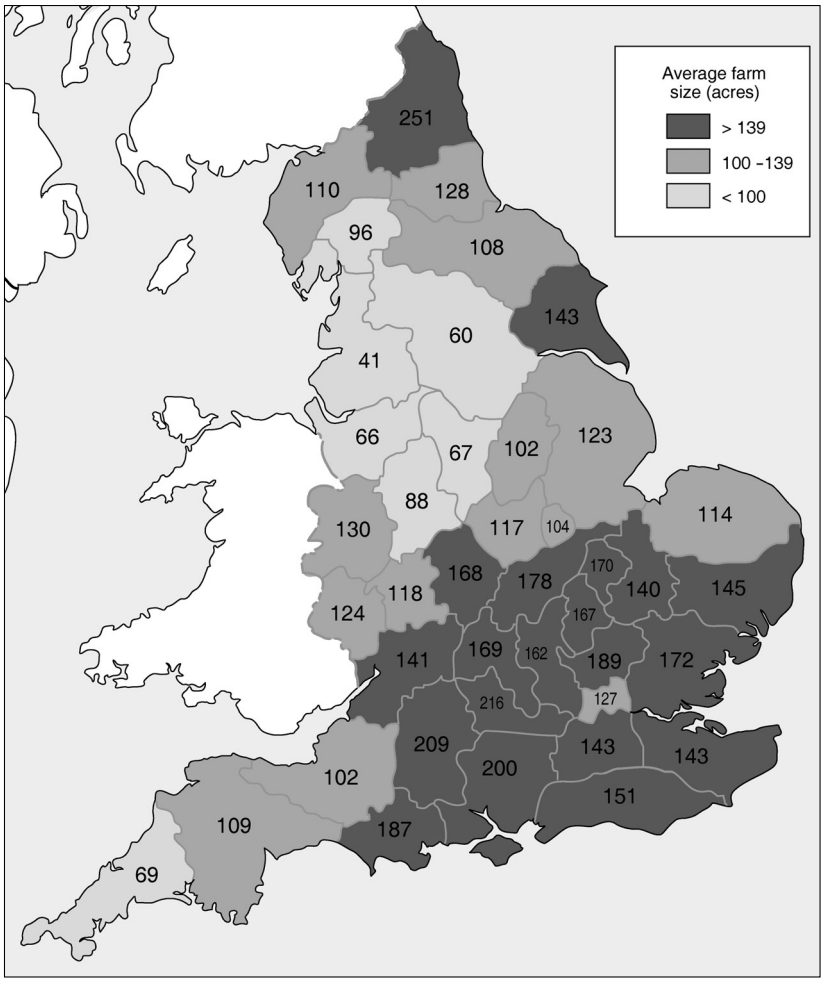


FIGURE 3. Average farm size in 1851

Source: BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII (i), *Census of Great Britain 1851, Population Tables*, II, vols 1 & 2, 'Farmers, with the numbers of labourers employed and of acres occupied, divisions I–X'.

lower than this were restricted to Cornwall and a group of six contiguous counties in the north-west strung out along the Pennines. For convenience of reference, rather than strict geographical accuracy, these will be referred to as the Pennine counties. Within this region the smallest average farm sizes were to be found in Lancashire (41 acres) and the West Riding (60 acres). It is striking that the smallest farms in the country survived in the very heartlands of capitalist industrialisation. It was precisely in areas where agriculture was relatively unimportant that small farms were most important.[64]

In general the largest average farm sizes were in the south-eastern third of the country, encompassing Warwickshire (168 acres) and everything south and east of it. Again for convenience, rather than strict geographical accuracy, this will be referred to as the south-east. Within that region, average farm sizes generally exceeded 150 acres. The largest farms, averaging over 200 acres or more, were in the contiguous counties of Wiltshire, Hampshire and Berkshire.

[64] Winstanley has made the same observation based on the 1870 returns: Winstanley, 'Industrialization and the small farm', p. 158.

Northumberland stands out as quite distinct from any other northern county. It had the largest average farm size in England at 251 acres, which was approaching twice the size of any other northern county. Returning to the CEBs for Northumberland would determine whether this was a characteristic primarily of the Cheviot hills or of the county as a whole. Investigation of the census farm size data for areas north of the border would also determine whether Northumberland was really an outlier in northern England, or the southern part of a regional block of larger farms stretching northward across the border.[65] The rest of the country falls into an area of intermediate or medium size farms. This takes the shape of a great arc from Cumberland in the north, looping right around the Pennine counties as far as Shropshire and then south and west down to Devon.[66] Within this zone, and it can hardly be called a region, average farm sizes ranged from a low of 102 acres in Somerset and Nottinghamshire to a high of 143 acres in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

The problems with the data discussed above, upon which this map is based, mean that no great precision should be attributed to the absolute numbers presented here. However, it is unlikely that the figures are adrift by more than around ten per cent, though this is, of course, no more than an educated guess. Errors of this magnitude would not undermine the basic patterns revealed by this map. If the patterns of non-reporting in Buckinghamshire were typical, then these are likely to be under-estimates of average farm size rather than over-estimates.

The size of farms has long been of interest to agrarian historians and this is the first time it has been possible to produce county by county figures for average farm acreage. However, a comparison of Figure 3 with Figure 1 makes it clear that average farm acreage does not provide a straightforward guide to the scale of employment on farms. Figure 1 shows that Norfolk's farmers, on average, employed half as many labourers again as did farmers in Northumberland and three times as many as farmers in Cumberland. But Figure 3 shows that the average size of farm in Norfolk was less than half that in Northumberland and almost the same as that in Cumberland. The reason for the mismatch, of course, is that for reasons connected with soil quality and the relative importance of pastoral and arable husbandry, farming in Norfolk was considerably more intensive than in either Northumberland or Cumberland.

VI

When Clapham urged historians studying the development of agrarian capitalism to recognise that even in 1831, the ratio of families labouring in agriculture to farming families for Britain as a whole was as low as 2.5 to 1, he went on to note that it therefore followed that 'agricultural "capitalism" has never closely resembled the industrial variety'.[67] Clapham's point was that the

[65] Mark Overton's mapping of the 1831 census material indicate that Northumberland was part of a larger area of capitalist farms stretching north across the border into Scotland: Overton, 'Agriculture', in Langton and Morris, *Atlas*, p. 45. Whether these farms were also characterised by similarly high acreages remains to be seen. This map and all those that follow could easily, and usefully, be extended to Wales and Scotland. I hope to do this in the future. However, the project of which the work underlying this paper forms a larger part is restricted to England.

[66] These counties do not quite form a contiguous area since Warwickshire has been consigned to the south-east.

[67] Clapham, 'Growth of an agrarian proletariat', pp. 92–3.

scale of agrarian capitalism was small. He was correct in this, though one may quibble with his exact figures. They are lower than those used here, and illustrated in Figure 1, which average 5.5 to 1 for England as a whole.

Following R. C. Allen, I have categorised all farms in terms of their labour use as either family farms with little dependence on wage labour, transitional farms which required some wage labour, and capitalist farms on which hired labour supplied the bulk of labour.[68] In the discussion which follows I have ignored female labour whether family labour or waged because figures for farm employment of female labour on census day are not available.

Farms which employed no one (family members aside) on 31 March 1851 had only a limited dependence on hired labour, though many of them would no doubt have hired some labour at busier times of year.[69] Such farms can fairly safely be described as family farms. But farms which employed an adult male on 31 March, a relatively quiet time of the agricultural year, must in general have had a quite significant dependence on wage labour.[70] They will not therefore be described as family farms here.

Farmers were asked to describe co-resident relatives living at home and working on the farm as 'farmers' relatives'. On average there was just under one male farm relative to every two farmers. It follows that on at least half of all farms there were no co-resident farm relatives. If we suppose for the moment that farmers' co-resident relatives were equally distributed between small and large farms, then half or more of all farms with only one employed man had only one male family member at work on census day. In such cases male family and male wage labour were balanced on census day. At busy times of year, the majority of farm labour is likely to have been supplied by wage labour. On something under fifty per cent of farms employing one farm labourer on census day there must have been twice as much male family labour as male wage labour and sometimes more. At busy times of year the balance in some cases would have moved the other way. Farms employing one man on census night were clearly dependent on the use of wage labour, but whether or not wage labour supplied a majority of labour over the year will have varied considerably. Accordingly, all such farms have therefore been categorised as transitional here.

On average, farms employing two men on census night will have had one and a half male family members available and were thus using more waged labour than family labour. At periods of peak labour demand they will have moved decisively in the direction of wage labour. Such farms could be characterised either as transitional or as small capitalist farms. Since they used more male wage labour than male family labour they have been classified here as small capitalist farms.

Farms with between three and five workers employed on census night have been categorised

[68] See the discussion in R. C. Allen, *Enclosure and the yeoman. The agricultural development of the South Midlands, 1450–1850* (1992), pp. 56–8.

[69] The census farm size and employment table data imply that perhaps one-third of the agricultural workforce was unemployed on census day. If so, employment may have been 50 per cent higher in peak periods. This unemployment figure may of course be inflated by some under-reporting of employment. If that is so then the data presented in this paper understate the level of farm employment on census day and exaggerate the extent of unemployment.

[70] On the seasonality of labour demand in pastoral and arable areas, see A. Kussmaul, *A general view of the rural economy of England, 1538–1840* (1990), pp. 14–45.

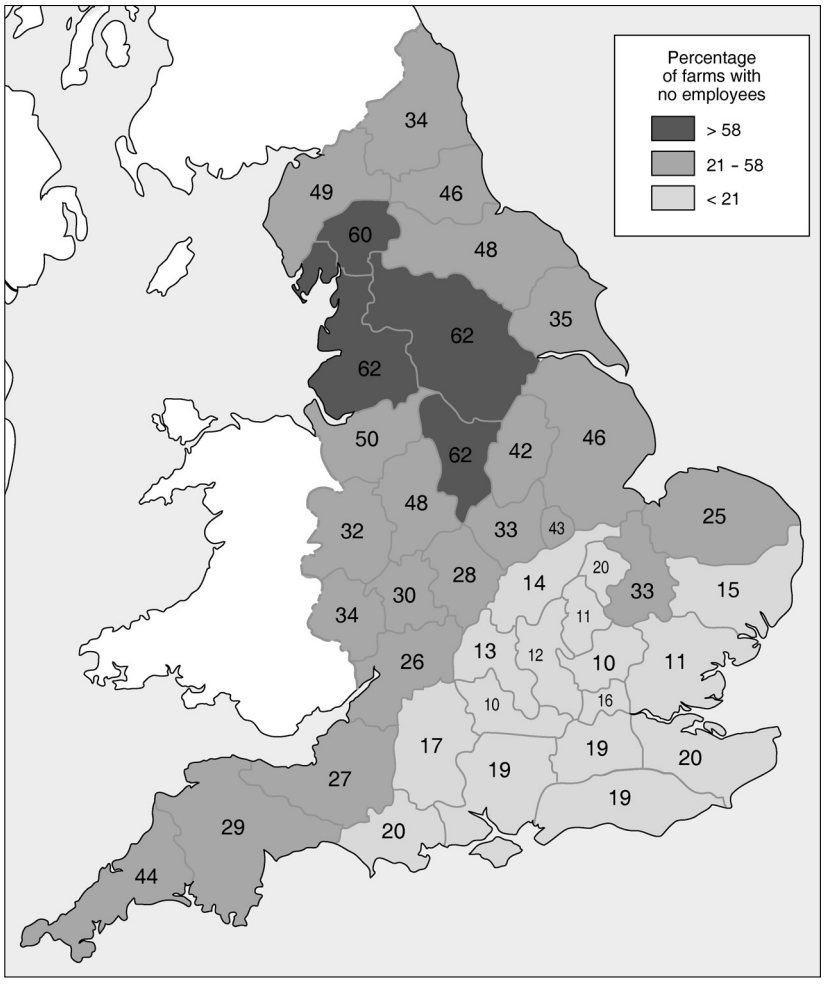


FIGURE 4. Percentage of farms employing no adult males on 31st March 1851 in 1851

Source: BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII (i), *Census of Great Britain 1851, Population Tables*, II, vols 1 & 2, 'Farmers, with the numbers of labourers employed and of acres occupied, divisions I–X'.

as medium sized capitalist farms whilst those with six or more have been categorised as large capitalist farms. Some readers may cavil at the particular thresholds chosen. In particular the allocation of farms employing one man to the transitional category and those with two to the capitalist sector may prove controversial. Ultimately this a matter of interpretational preference though altering the thresholds would not affect the general arguments made here. Readers who prefer alternative nomenclatures can mentally amend the titles of the figures as they see fit.

We can now turn to patterns of employment on census day, 31 March 1851. Figure 4 shows the proportion of farms reporting no men employed on census day. These figures are derived from the published tables and exclude farms which reported neither acreage nor men employed. This time the country can be divided much more neatly into three zones, though with somewhat different borders from Figure 3.

In a large block of contiguous south-eastern counties, somewhat smaller than the south-eastern region defined above, farms reporting no employment were in a small minority ranging from ten per cent in Hertfordshire and Berkshire up to a maximum of twenty per cent in Kent,

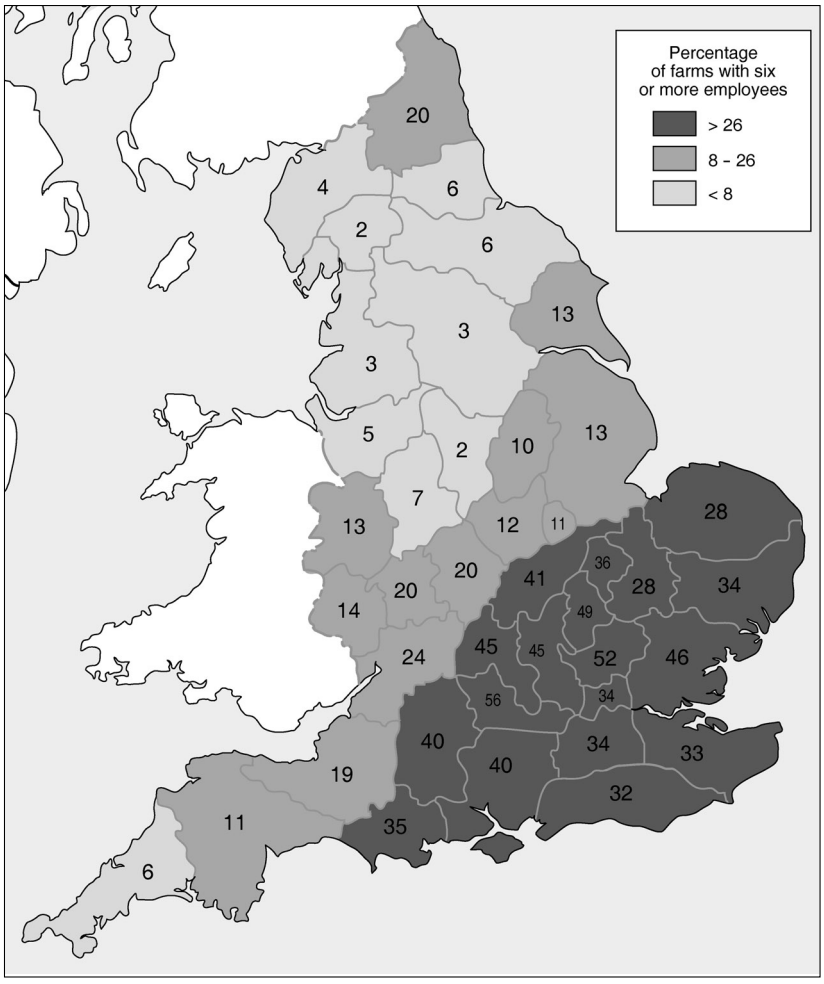


FIGURE 5. Percentage of farms employing six or more adult males on 31st March 1851 in 1851

Source: BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII (i), *Census of Great Britain 1851, Population Tables*, II, vols 1 & 2, 'Farmers, with the numbers of labourers employed and of acres occupied, divisions I–X'.

Dorset and Huntingdonshire. In this region, more than 80 per cent of farmers were employing at least one man on the 31 March. At the other end of the spectrum in a group of contiguous counties centred on the Pennines but somewhat different from the Pennine zone of Figure 3, a majority of farms reported no adult male employment on the 31 March. The rest of the country formed an intermediate zone ranging from a low of 25 per cent in Norfolk to a high of 50 per cent in Cheshire.

Farms employing no one on 31 March are clearly prime contenders for being considered family farms. Such farms were evidently a majority in the Pennine region but nowhere else and formed a fairly small minority of farms in the south-east. But what was the geographical distribution of capitalist farms? There is unlikely to be any controversy in suggesting that farms employing six or more adult males on 31 March should be considered capitalist. The relative importance of such farms is shown in Figure 5.

Such decisively capitalist farms were typically around one-third of the total in south-eastern England varying from a low of 28 in Norfolk to a high of 52 per cent in Hertfordshire. In the Pennine region farms employing on this scale were relatively unusual, varying between two per

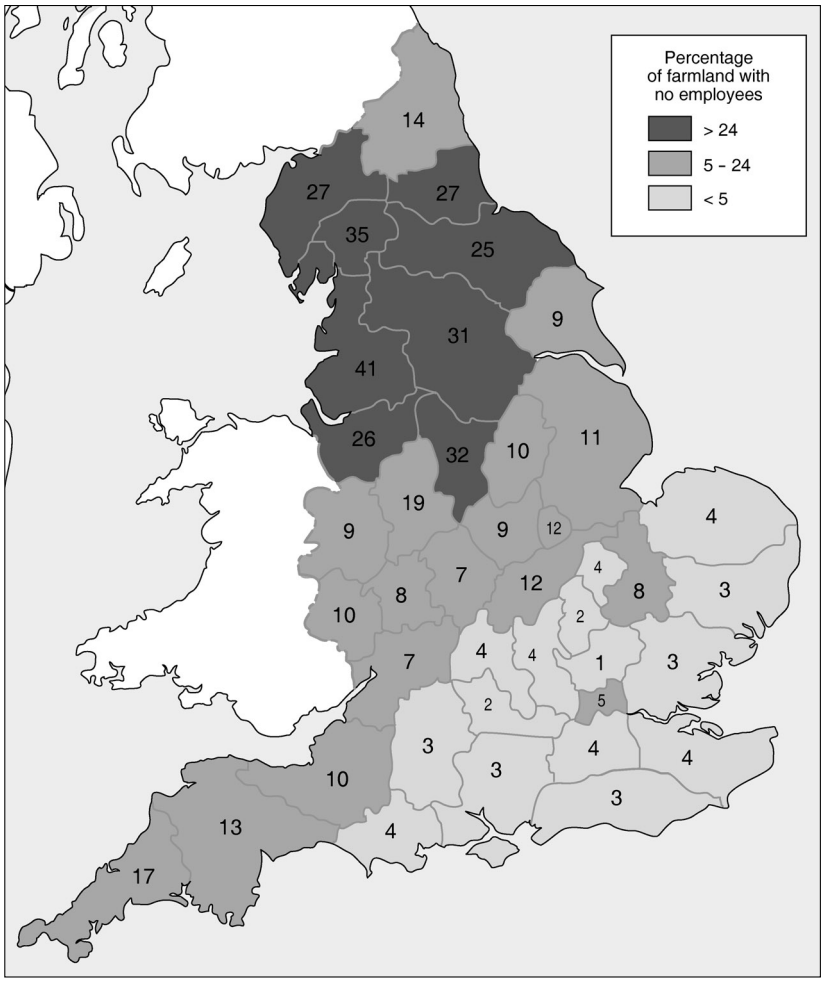


FIGURE 6. Percentage of farmland employing no adult males on 31st March 1851

Source: BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII (i), *Census of Great Britain 1851, Population Tables*, II, vols 1 & 2, 'Farmers, with the numbers of labourers employed and of acres occupied, divisions I–X'.

cent in Derbyshire and Westmorland and seven per cent in Staffordshire. The rest of the country varied from a low of six per cent in Cornwall to a high of 24 per cent in Gloucestershire.

The proportion of farm area falling in different employment categories is a more telling measure than the proportion of farms falling in particular categories. Figure 6 shows the proportion of the reported farm areas employing no men on census day. Again the Pennine zone emerges as a fastness of family farms. Across a vast swathe of northern England around one third of all farm land reported employing no wage labour on the 31 March. By contrast in a somewhat larger (and much more fertile) area of southern England, such farms accounted for less than five per cent of all reported farm acreage. In the intermediate zones such farms accounted for as little as seven per cent of farm land in Gloucestershire and Warwickshire up to as much as seventeen per cent in Cornwall.

Figures 7, 8 and 9 illustrate the proportions of farmland employing six or more men, three or more men and two or more men respectively corresponding to the definitions of large, medium and small capitalist farms. All show the by now familiar patterns, but though with differing degrees of intensity.

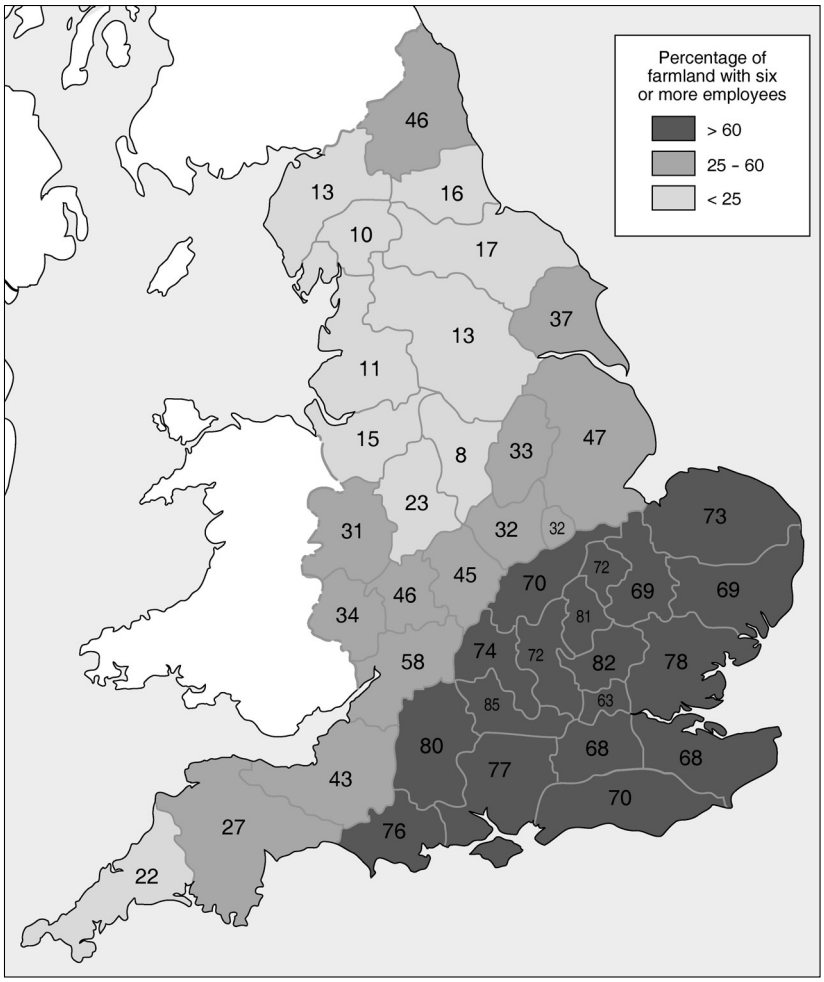


FIGURE 7. Percentage of farmland employing six or more adult males on 31st March 1851

Source: BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII (i), *Census of Great Britain 1851, Population Tables*, II, vols 1 & 2, 'Farmers, with the numbers of labourers employed and of acres occupied, divisions I–X'.

Figure 7 shows the proportion of farmland in farms employing six or more men on census day and mirrors the geography of Figure 4 exactly. But the extent of the dominance of large capitalist farms in the south-east is now fully apparent. South and east of a line from Norfolk to Dorset, over sixty per cent of all farmland lay in large capitalist farms ranging from a low of 63 per cent in Middlesex to a high of 85 per cent in Berkshire. In the Pennine region such farms were far less important, typically accounting for 10 to 15 per cent of all farmland, though in Staffordshire they reached 23 per cent of all land. Elsewhere in the country the figures ranged from a low of 22 per cent in Cornwall to a high of 58 per cent in Gloucestershire.

Figure 8 shows the proportion of farm acreage in farms employing three or more men, that is in the medium and large capitalist farms combined. South-eastern England now appears as a rather larger zone in which medium and large scale capitalist farms accounted for more than three-quarters of all farmland.

Figure 9 shows the proportion of farm acreage in all classes of capitalist farm whether small, medium or large. South and east of a line from Dorset to Norfolk, with the marginal exception of Cambridgeshire, over 90 per cent of farm land was in farms employing two or more men

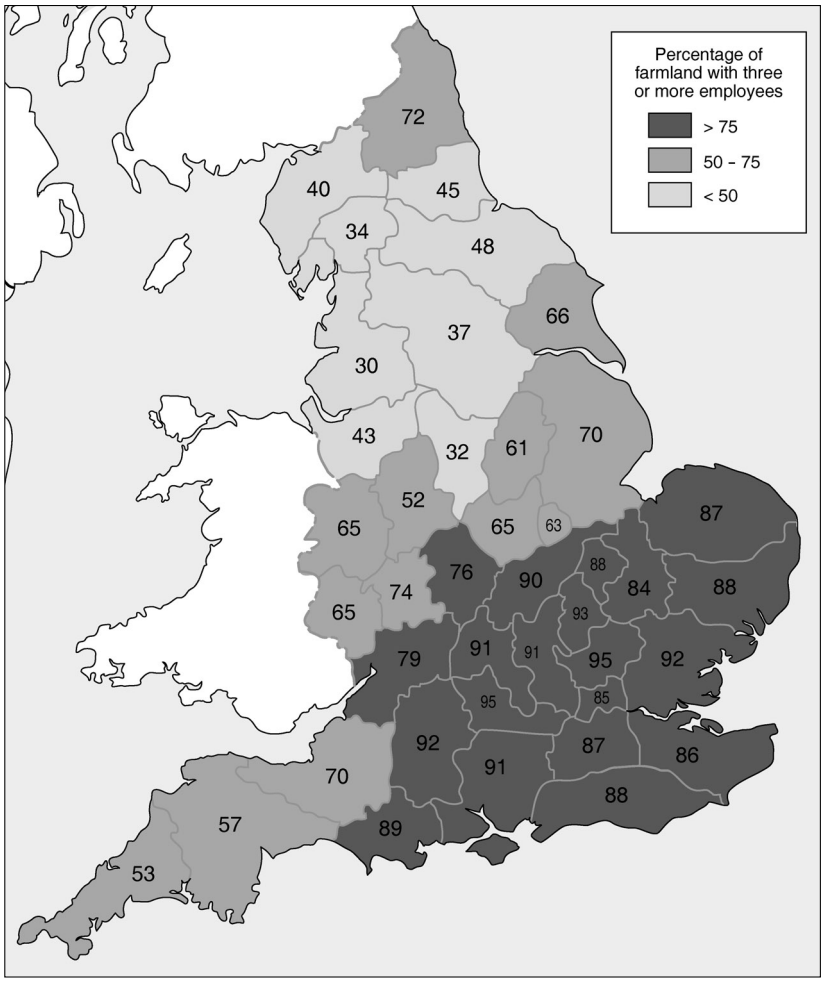


FIGURE 8. Percentage of farmland employing three or more adult males on 31st March 1851.

Source: BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII (i), *Census of Great Britain 1851, Population Tables*, II, vols 1 & 2, 'Farmers, with the numbers of labourers employed and of acres occupied, divisions I–X'.

on census day. But capitalist farms also dominated the landscape in a contiguous belt of land further north and west in which over three-quarters of farm land lay in farms employing two or more men on census day. Capitalist farms occupied a minority of the land only in the counties of Lancashire and Westmorland, though their dominance was marginal in the rest of the Pennine zone. Here perhaps the high price of agricultural labour, driven up by competition from the industrial sector, may have played a role in keeping family farms competitive.[71]

It is necessary to revisit the simplifying assumption put forward earlier that the number of farm relatives did not vary significantly with farm size. In fact the ratio of male farm relatives to farmers varied regionally from a low of 0.3 in Norfolk to a high of 0.7 in Cumbria with a general tendency to be higher in northern England and the south-west. For England as a whole the ratio was 0.46. There is thus a very rough association between areas where family farms were important and areas where the number of farmers' relatives were high. This may suggest be because there was more family labour on small farms than large ones. However, neither

[71] This argument has been advanced by Gritt in respect of Lancashire: 'The "survival" of service', p. 49.

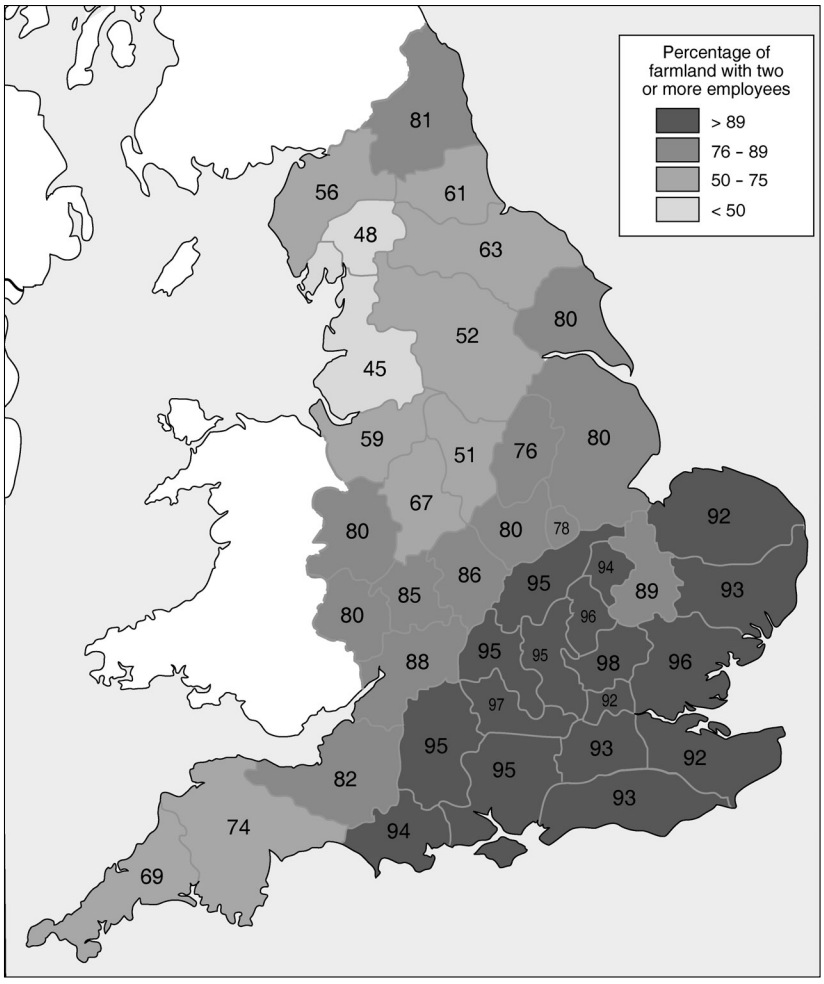


FIGURE 9. Percentage of farmland employing two or more adult males on 31st March 1851.

Source: BPP, 1852–3, LXXXVIII (i), *Census of Great Britain 1851, Population Tables*, II, vols 1 & 2, 'Farmers, with the numbers of labourers employed and of acres occupied, divisions I–X'.

extreme is far enough from the average figure to affect the logic according to which farms were allocated to one category or another.

It has already been noted that there is no straightforward relationship, at county level, between the size of farms and the levels of employment because the intensity of agriculture varied considerably from one county to another. Unsurprisingly, as a comparison of Figure 3 with Figures 4 to 9 makes clear, average farm acreage is also a poor guide to the relative importance of family farming and capitalist farming. If we again compare Norfolk with Cumbria, a comparison of Figures 3 and 7 shows that although Norfolk's farms were virtually the same average size as those in Cumbria, some 73 per cent of Norfolk's farm land lay in farms employing six or more men on census day compared with 13 per cent in Cumbria.

VII

Standing back from the mass of evidence and the associated methodological technicalities it is possible to draw some general conclusions. First and foremost the 1851 census data pertained

essentially to farms and not to agricultural holdings as whole. These data are a good guide to average farm sizes at county level. If there is a bias it is small and the figures probably understate the size of farms somewhat. But by 'farm' one must understand agricultural holdings which provided the primary source of income for the holder. The vast majority of smallholdings therefore are not covered by the 1851 census data. In contrast, the data in the later Agricultural Returns cover holdings of all kinds in excess of ¼ acre, not just farms. They thus include perhaps 170,000 part-time smallholdings as well as around 200,000 farms. It follows that the Agricultural Returns cannot provide a guide to the distribution of farm sizes. It is not that this distinction has not been recognised before but it has not been given its proper weight.[72] How complete an account of agricultural holdings of over a quarter of an acre the Agricultural Returns provide is beyond the scope of this paper.

None of this is to deny that there were very large numbers of individuals who, although not full-time farmers and a minority of the rural population, nevertheless occupied agricultural land. On this the evidence of the Agricultural Returns is irrefutable. Mick Reed is probably right to suggest that most such people were rural tradesmen.[73] But he goes further and suggests that we should not be 'too hasty in categorising some forms of income as "secondary"'.[74] However the census evidence suggests that the vast majority of such individuals farmed as a secondary not a primary occupation – that is precisely why they were not enumerated as farmers and did not generally see fit to supply an acreage return in the Census.

The employment levels recorded in the 1851 farm size and employment tables may suffer from a more significant level of under-recording. To the extent that this is so, they may significantly under-estimate farm employment levels on the 31 March 1851. Nevertheless, the regional contrasts that are illustrated so strikingly on Figures 3 to 9 are real. To paraphrase E. P. Thompson, social historians are prone to count small farms and economic historians to weigh them.[75] That is to say that social historians tend to count the actual number of small farms, as illustrated in Figures 3 and 4 while economic historians tend to focus on the amount of land in those farms as in Figures 5 to 9. In consequence social historians have placed much more emphasis on the survival of small farms into the nineteenth century. However, as it turns out the family farm was a very unimportant feature of both the social and economic landscape in south-eastern England by the mid-nineteenth century. By contrast in the Pennine region small family farms continued to outnumber capitalist farms in the mid-nineteenth century and were far from insignificant in an economic sense.

Before concluding attention may be drawn briefly to some surprising features of these maps. While the patterns in the maps produced here bear a striking, perhaps shocking, resemblance to the underlying geology, they do not relate at all straightforwardly to a number of other geographical patterns with which agricultural historians are familiar.[76] They are entirely unrelated

[72] See for instance, Mills, 'Farm statistics', p. 71, who makes this point but does not seem to take it fully on board. Both Grigg and Reed were fully aware of the distinction, Grigg, 'Farm size', p. 182; Reed, 'Peasantry', p. 57.

[73] *Ibid.*, pp. 57–8.

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 58

[75] E. P. Thompson, 'The grid of inheritance: a comment', in J. Goody, J. Thirsk and E. P. Thompson (eds), *Family and inheritance. Rural society in Western Europe, 1200–1800* (1976), p. 329.

[76] K. C. Dunham, *Geological map of the British Isles, based on the work of the Geological Survey* (fifth edn, 1969).

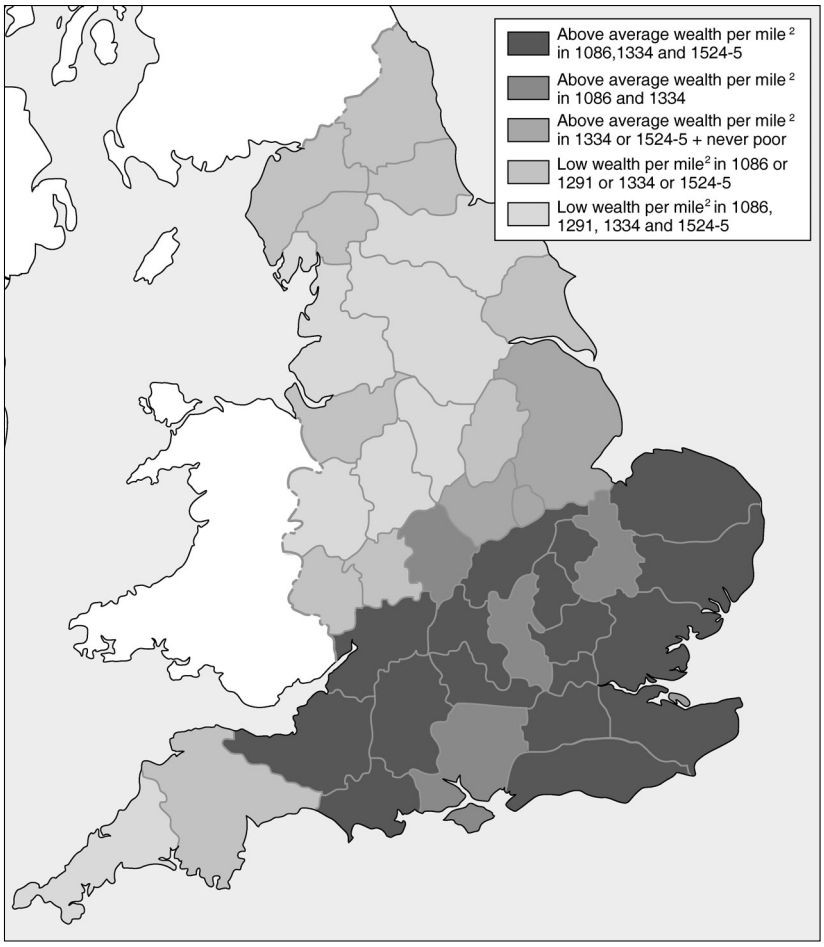


FIGURE 10. The regional distribution of wealth, 1086 to 1524–5.

Source: Derived from the maps of rich and poor areas in 1086, 1334 and 1524–6 in B. M. S. Campbell, 'North–South dichotomies, 1066–1550' in A. R. H. Baker and M. Billinge, *Geographies of England. The North–South divide, material and imagined* (2004), pp. 152, 163.

to the geography of parliamentary or indeed earlier enclosure.[77] They bear little resemblance to what we know of agricultural regions.[78] Nor do they relate in any simple way to the geography of arable and pastoral regions.[79] Although most of the south-eastern zone identified here as intensively capitalist was predominantly grain growing, there is no straightforward match between the degree of proletarianisation and the geography of grain growing and pastoral farming identified by James Caird in 1852.[80] On the one hand, Caird identified Northumberland, Durham, most of the North Riding, the East Riding and Lincolnshire as arable but these counties fall outside the large-scale capitalist zone identified here. On the other hand Caird identified Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire as primarily lying within the pastoral area but these counties appear here as intensely capitalist.

[77] For comparison see the maps in Overton, *Agricultural revolution*, pp. 152–3; and M. E. Turner, *English Parliamentary enclosure. Its historical geography and economic history* (1980), p. 35.

[78] See J. Thirsk, *England's agricultural regions and agrarian history, 1500–1750* (1987), pp. 24, 28, 31, 39.

[79] For a somewhat different view, see Overton, *Agricultural revolution*, p. 180.

[80] Caird's map is conveniently reproduced in H. C. Prince, 'The changing rural landscape', in Mingay (ed.) *Agrarian history* VI, p. 75.

However, when the maps produced here are compared with the relative distribution of wealth and poverty across the medieval and early modern periods, as shown in Figure 10, rather more straightforward similarities are apparent.[81] Those areas where family farming thrived in the mid-nineteenth century correspond closely to those which were poor between the eleventh and the sixteenth centuries. Those areas where large-scale capitalist farming predominated in the nineteenth century were the areas which were consistently the most prosperous between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries. To some degree both sets of patterns reflect the quality of the agricultural land.[82] The areas which were poor before 1600 and where family farms remained significant in the mid-nineteenth century are notable for the general absence of good soils and the general prevalence of poor and medium quality soils. The south-east, where agrarian capitalism was most intense in the mid-nineteenth century and which was consistently the most prosperous part of the country from the eleventh through to the nineteenth century, had very extensive areas of good soils but it also contained large tracts of medium quality and poor soils. Although soil quality was clearly a major determinant of regional wealth levels in the medieval and early modern periods, other factors were also important, not least the proximity to London and to European markets and the distance from border warfare.[83]

Whatever the influence of soil types, wealthy areas are likely to have been the most commercialised. It is likely that it was in the most commercialised areas that capitalist agriculture took root earliest and developed furthest.[84] Perhaps the major determinant of the mid-nineteenth century geography of agrarian capitalism was how long that process had been underway. At present this is no more than a highly speculative hypothesis. But it is one which is eminently testable if appropriate data can be acquired.

[81] See the maps of rich and poor areas in 1086, 1334 and 1524–6 in B. M. S. Campbell, 'North-South dichotomies, 1066–1550', in A. R. H. Baker and M. Billinge (eds), *Geographies of England. The North-South divide, material and imagined* (2004), pp. 152, 163.

[82] See the map of land quality in Overton, *Agricultural revolution*, p. 59.

[83] See Campbell, 'North-South dichotomies' for an incisive analysis of the regional differences and their causes between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries.

[84] On the critical causal role of commercialisation in the early development of agrarian capitalism, see R. H. Tawney, *The agrarian problem in the sixteenth century* (1912); J. Whittle, *The development of agrarian capitalism. Land and labour in Norfolk, 1440–1580* (2000).

Cattle clubs, insurance and plague in the mid-nineteenth century*

by Stephen Matthews

Abstract

This article surveys the history of cattle insurance in the middle of the nineteenth century, primarily in Cheshire, describing the mixture of generally short-lived national and local insurance companies, and the cattle associations and cow clubs, which both preceded and replaced the earliest commercial policies. All of them had to face the impact of epidemics of pleuro-pneumonia and rinderpest in the 1860s, which caused most of them to collapse. It looks in greater detail at one of the few enduring schemes whose records have survived, which operated on the estates of the Marquis of Cholmondeley.

One of the many illustrations of modern farming practice revealed by the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001 was that farmers do not normally insure their livestock against infectious disease. To an outsider it may appear that they do not do so because it would be foolish to pay for insurance when the Government or the European Community will pay compensation should disaster strike. The safety net provided by that happy position – for the farmers if not for others – was not available in the mid-nineteenth century when the greatest assistance that farmers suffering from cattle plague could expect was reluctant assistance from their urban neighbours through the county rate or rent relief from their landlord. Livestock insurance was slow to develop, which is surprising given the value of cattle herds and the potential losses that farmers might face, especially in counties, like Cheshire, where dairying was so important. Insurance cover had been written from the late seventeenth century for other assets, notably fire cover for corn and hay ricks, buildings and other property. Cover for the loss or damage to crops by hail was provided by The Farmers' and General Fire and Life Assurance and Loan and Annuity Company from 1840, with other companies following. It was not until later in the decade that cattle insurance became available.

Surprisingly little attention has been paid to cattle insurance by either historians of insurance or historians of farming. Walford's *Insurance Cyclopedia* (1871–8) devoted an authoritative four pages to the subject, much of which was spent describing early and continental experience. Dinsdale's *History of accident insurance* (1954) gave it a whole chapter, but that was no more than a dozen pages which included all forms of livestock insurance. Only one study has been made of cattle insurance in its own right and that was of a particular region and concerned

* I am grateful to Professor Hoyle for encouraging me to write this article and the guidance given by the two anonymous referees. Any mistakes that remain in spite of their advice are entirely mine.

only one sector of the market, cow clubs, of which more later.[1] For the rest, all we have are passing references and a few useful summaries largely based upon these earlier works.[2] This being so, it is best to preface what follows in this article with an outline of what was, or had been available, before the start of the twentieth century.

I

At various times, cover was available from three types of body. The first were the insurance companies, limited by share or guarantee, some national, some purely local concerns. Then there were two types of mutual body, cattle associations and cow clubs, the distinctions between which are frequently misunderstood.

Cattle insurance companies were first established in Great Britain in 1844, much later than on the continent. Initially the market was dominated by three major concerns. The Farmers' and Graziers' Cattle Insurance Co., was the first to be established, but it was not to last for long, being put into liquidation in 1853 with many claims unpaid. The Agriculturalist followed in 1845 and grew rapidly before itself failing in 1861 after several years of difficulty. In 1849 the Norfolk Farmers' Insurance Co. was founded and, according to a correspondent to *The Veterinarian*, ran successfully through the years of epidemic and met all its obligations.[3] Other companies were set up, many being detailed by Walford, but few survived for long. Many failed, others were closed down either because their Directors feared further attacks of plague (Pontefract and West Riding, closed 1873) or for the exactly opposite reason, that it was thought that the need had passed (Staffordshire Mutual Cattle Insurance Association, April to August 1866). A number were taken over by, or were merged with, faster growing concerns like the London and County Hail and Cattle Insurance Co. (1854–59), which joined the Norfolk.

The outbreak of cattle plague (rinderpest) in 1865 sharpened men's minds and several small and local joint stock companies were established. Most were fortunate in being in counties that were little affected, but one, in Cheshire, appears to have failed quickly, for there is no trace of it save its name (the Altrincham Cattle Plague Association, set up in Knutsford in 1865). Companies continued to be established to the end of the century but none achieved the national status of other insurance concerns such as fire companies. As their titles suggest, many were intended to serve only a localised area. In Norfolk for instance, there was a Norfolk Farmers' Cattle Insurance Company, founded in 1849, to which Professor Gamgee of Edinburgh referred in 1864 when giving evidence to a parliamentary select committee on the control of cattle diseases. There was also the Norfolk Cattle Plague Association, founded, according to Smith, the following year. Its funds reached about £6,000 by November of that year after donations of £100 by the Prince of Wales and the same amount in subscription (presumably shares) from Sir

[1] C. Walford, *Insurance Cyclopaedia* (5 vols, 1871–8); for insurance companies, I, p. 468–73; for cattle clubs, II, p. 144; for Farmers' and Graziers', III, p. 171. W. A. Dinsdale, *A History of Accident Insurance* (1954); Rex C. Russell, *Cottagers and Cows, 1800–1892. The cow clubs in Lincolnshire* (1987).

[2] H. A. L. Cockerell and Edwin Green, *The British Insurance Business. A guide to its history and records* (sec. edn, 1994), ch. 4; G. Clayton, *British Insurance* (1971); David R. Stead, 'Risk and Risk Management in English Agriculture, *c.* 1750–1850', *EcHR* 57 (2004), pp. 334–61.

[3] *The Veterarian* 40 (1867), pp. 558–9.

H. Stracey.[4] In Somerset there was the Stowey and Spaxton Cattle Plague Association, set up as a joint stock company in 1865.[5] This had an odd financial base, in that its capital consisted of 5,000 shares at £2 each (each share representing one animal), but there was no provision for raising further income if that ran out. Mercifully, given the scale of losses in Somerset – minuscule by comparison with Cheshire – it is likely that it had enough money. In Warwickshire the Shipston-on-Stour Cattle Plague Insurance Company was established the following year.[6]

Once the crisis of the 1860s was over, a number of new companies were founded, as well as a modest number of cattle associations. Cockerell and Green noted the London and Provincial Horse and Carriage of 1875 and the Imperial Livestock and General of 1878. To judge by their titles, they shared the risk of cattle insurance with other assets: Gamgee had pointed to the higher profit margin to be had on horses, which would provide a useful cushion if difficult times returned. After 1900 there were sufficient companies in business to allow the formation of the Live Stock Offices Association.[7]

Before leaving companies, we may return to the first big three, where our best starting point to review them is the evidence given by Professor John Gamgee, Principal of the New Veterinary College in Edinburgh, to the select committee of 1864.[8] Gamgee described how three companies dominated the market, the Farmers' and Graziers', the National, and the Agriculturalist, although there were smaller players.[9] The three biggest were substantial concerns as can be seen from the summary of his evidence, tabulated in Figure 1, whilst the Norfolk company was said in 1857 to have 10,000 animals insured.[10] His purpose was to demonstrate their profitability but for us the more important feature is the number and value of the animals insured, the cattle, incidentally at an average value of just over £11 a head. The committee members appeared startled by the apparent profitability, with a gross margin of 25 per cent, but had apparently overlooked the administrative expenses that the companies had to bear. The gross profit must have been converted into a net loss, for all of them had failed before the plague of 1865–66. In his evidence, Gamgee asserted that little cover was written for sheep because of the problems of inspection but that the companies made considerable profits on horses. They met substantial losses on cattle insurance, despite raising premiums where there was an incidence of pleuro-pneumonia and voiding policies if farmers did not take adequate precautions against infection when buying new stock.[11] This sophistication, which does not seem to have been always shared by the cattle clubs, should have ensured the companies' survival but it may be that the growing incidence of pleuro-pneumonia caused losses which could not be matched by increased premiums: common experience was that around 50 per cent of all claims arose from that disease. A further weakness implied by Gamgee's evidence was that premiums were not raised until after it was known that there was infection in the locality by which time it was probably too late. The Nottingham company produced figures for 1863 to show a loss of £1016 on a

[4] *Report from the select committee on the Sheep etc. Contagious Diseases Prevention Bill*; BPP, 1857 (Sess. 2), (129) IX, (649), Q 681; see also *The Times*, 18 Nov. 1865, p. 9 col. a.

[5] Somerset Record Office (hereafter SRO), DD/X/HEA/3.

[6] Warwickshire RO, CR 609/25.

[7] Cockerell and Green, *Insurance Business*, p. 84.

[8] BPP, 1864 (431), VII, (235), pp. 2–4.

[9] There are fifteen limited or mutual companies listed in the National Archives catalogue under the BT 31, dated between 1862 and 1869.

[10] BPP, 1857 (Sess. 2) (129), IX, (649), Q. 681.

[11] *Ibid.*, QQ. 680–7.

TABLE 1. Business of cattle insurance companies

Agriculturalists', 1849–56	
Premiums	£99,184
Lost	£74,906
Ratio % lost: premium	75.5
National, 1854–7	
Animals insured	202,485
Insured value	£1,643,944
Premiums	£53,465
% animals lost	4.5
Ratio loss: premium	75.4
Farmers' & Graziers', 1845–9	
Premiums received	£86,301
Amount of losses	£64,656
Ratio loss: premium	74.9

Source: *Report from the select committee on cattle disease prevention*, BPP, 1864 (431), VII, p. 3.
Note: The table in the Parliamentary report contains an obvious misprint. I have taken the correct figure from the text of Gamgee's evidence.

stock value of £29,802, a gross loss of 3.4 per cent before salvages, a situation which the Professor plainly regarded as normal. In the case of the Farmers' and Graziers', this simple explanation may be correct, for to judge by an advertisement in the *Darlington and Stockton Times* in 1847 it appears to have written its cover too generally, possibly in an attempt to gain market share. According to that, the company offered cover for these animals 'against all diseases and accidents', a risky policy in view of the rapid spread of pleuro-pneumonia.[12] In 1849 it may have tried to quantify its liability to claims by removing one element of uncertainty common to many of the schemes discussed below. Most of them took all or most of the value of the carcass of dead animals in what was termed 'salvage' which resulted in an uncertain financial recovery. In a notice of renewal of 13 January 1849, the company explained to Sir John Lubbock that in future it waived its right to three-quarters of the value, the carcass was his and its liability was limited to a fixed payment. This was said to 'simplify the matter' to the advantage of both parties.[13] Whether this had a marked effect upon the company's profitability is not clear but if it did, it was not enough to maintain its solvency.

The failure of the Agriculturalist in 1861 may have had a different cause. Its demise was followed by ten years of civil litigation. The various lawsuits are a study in themselves, but, in brief, the company had a peculiar constitution under which shareholders were locked in for a period of fifty years, notwithstanding their death, bankruptcy or retirement. When the

[12] Advertisement in *The Darlington and Stockton Times*, 2 Oct. 1847, cited in *The Northern Echo*, 2 Oct. 1997, p. 10.

[13] The letter is in the archives of the Royal Society, LUB F26, with a subsequent letter LUB F27.

company was wound up, the manager appointed under the winding up order used this provison to enforce a call for up to £4 per share, which was bitterly resisted. Earlier, in 1848, there had been 'dissension' between the Directors and a group of seven shareholders, headed by a Mr Spackman, who eventually managed to pay £4,000 to be released from their shares. One of the subsequent actions arose from the manager's desire to reverse that settlement as ultra vires, presumably in order to enforce the call. It is clear that early on, some shareholders suspected bad management or worse and wanted to escape before an inevitable winding-up.[14] The evidence given in court indicates that the Directors' fiscal methods were far from ideal, with transactions concealed and funds diverted to the Directors themselves instead of being applied to benefit the company. As the Lord Chancellor observed in another case, 'I do not impute to Mr Stanhope moral fraud in the course he took [redeeming his shares] – an imputation from which it is less easy to exonerate the Directors'.[15] There was clearly impropriety – if not worse – in the way that the Directors used for their own benefit the money paid for redemption of members' shares. It is worth pausing on the fate of this company because it may be that this abuse, from the largest of the operators, helped to turn the public mind against future public schemes.

There is little evidence to reveal what happened to commercial companies other than the Agriculturalist and, it seems likely that by 1865 there was no national commercial insurance to be had. Although Smith, writing to *The Veterinarian*, asserted that the Norfolk Society was 'doing business all over the United Kingdom' its activities may not have been as widespread as he thought.[16] A correspondent to the *Chester Chronicle* in 1866 indirectly confirmed that commercial insurance was not available in the county by explaining that under his proposed county scheme, farmers would have to pay in subscription no more than they 'must have paid to any public Insurance Company offering (if it had been possible) a similar guarantee'.[17] This situation appears to have continued for the remainder of the century. According to Clayton, the first commercial policies were issued by the English office of the Preferred Insurance Co. of New York in 1900, but this is almost certainly the first of what may be described as a 'second generation' of policies.[18]

Finally, one may ask why was there such reluctance on the part of the major insurance companies to provide cover, given the need which is demonstrated by the numerous mutual cattle associations. The slow rate of innovation in the British insurance industry has been explored by Pearson although he did not specifically address cattle insurance. He examined 'five factors … which may have determined the timing and rate of innovation in British insurance:

[14] The actions can be traced from a summary in Walford, *Insurance Cyclopedia*, I, pp. 44–5; from TNA, PRO, JN1/31–33, from slightly inaccurate reports in *The Times*, principally 11 July and 7 Nov. 1864, and given more fully in *Law Journal Reports*, the most illuminating being, for Spackman, Lord Chancellor Westbury's ruling on 11 Feb. 1865, 34 (i), Chancery and Bankruptcy, 1865, pp. 321–31; for Dixon, 38, Chancery and Bankruptcy, 1869, pp. 567–8 and the final decision by Lord Justice Giffard on 3 Nov. 1869, 39, Chancery and Bankrutcy, 1870, pp. 134–6. It is interesting to note that in Dixon's case the Scottish manager had paid the deposit (the only payment made) on Dixon's shares on his behalf (Dixon paid nothing). We may also note that Gamgee relied upon evidence from a later Scottish Manager (McMinn) when appearing before the Parliamentary Select Committee.

[15] *Ibid.*, 35, Chancery and Bankrupcy, 1866, p. 296.

[16] *The Veterinarian*, 40 (1867), pp. 558–9.

[17] *Chester Chronicle,* 3 Feb. 1866, printing an open letter from Edward Evans to the Marquis of Westminster.

[18] Clayton, *British Insurance*, p. 117.

technological opportunity, the conservatism of the corporate culture in leading firms, the costs associated with uncertainty, legal obstacles and market structures'.[19] The fourth of these does not seem to have been a constraint, for when the Friendly Society rules were amended in 1866 to encourage insurance, very few bodies were established to take advantage of the change, despite its merits being highlighted by the Registrar. The second and third are more relevant and are reinforced by evidence from an earlier article by Pearson. There he pointed to two important features which may well have delayed the writing of cover. The first was the localised nature of the industry, and the second was the general aversion to risk.[20] If one views Cheshire farming against that background, one sees a Manchester-based, thriving and aggressive Fire and Life insurance business that preferred not to move into the unquantifiable risks of livestock insurance, whilst the localised interest of other concerns inhibited national expansion. To those two, one can add other reasons. The first is that after the outbreak of plague in the 1740s there was no serious cattle epidemic until foot and mouth disease appeared in 1839, followed by pleuro-pneumonia and in 1865, rinderpest.[21] The reluctance of farmers to spend money unnecessarily may have been encouraged by a decision on stamp duty in 1849 which increased the price of cover. This ruling brought the lives of cattle within life insurance and imposed a stamp duty graduated according to the value of the policy, which although reduced, was not abolished until 1870 when it was replaced by a flat fee of 1*d.* per policy.[22] Second is the development in the eighteenth century of a network of self-help schemes – cattle associations – designed for and largely run by, tenant farmers. These were supplemented, in Cheshire at least, by the paternalistic attitude of the landlords, which led them to assist tenants who were in distress. We return to these below. Last, and this suggestion requires further research, we have to relate insurance to the wider debate that caused much controversy in Victorian society, of whether illness, and especially plague, had a mechanical cause, which could be addressed by man, or whether it was a manifestation of Divine displeasure, against which any human effort would be in vain. Fisher noted that disease was regarded as 'an occupational hazard' but a reluctance to insure livestock may have deeper roots, for if the sickness was the Lord's will, might it not be futile, possibly even impious, to try to counteract it?[23] The growth of livestock insurance must be seen against this background of developing thought and argument.[24]

These various reasons, some structural, some local, inhibited the growth of livestock insurance until the end of the nineteenth century, and the introduction of cover then may have been prompted by greater veterinary skills, selective breeding which made animals more susceptible to disease, and the gradual decline of the local gentry in underwriting the countryside.

[19] Robin Pearson, 'Towards an historical model of services innovation: the case of the insurance industry, 1700–1914', *EcHR* 50 (1997), pp. 235–56, at p. 240.

[20] id., 'Taking risks and containing competition: diversification and oligopoly in the fire insurance markets of the north of England during the early nineteenth century', EcHR 46 (1993), pp. 39–64, at pp. 45, 59–60.

[21] A. Woods, *A manufactured plague. The history of foot and mouth in Britain* (2004), pp. 1–3.

[22] Walford, *Cyclopaedia*, I, p. 473.

[23] J. R. Fisher, 'The economic effects of cattle disease in Britain and its containment, 1850–1900', *Agricultural Hist.* 54 (1980), p. 283.

[24] The background is best set out in Frank Miller Turner, 'Rainfall, plagues and the Prince of Wales' in id., *Contesting Cultural Authority* (1993), pp. 151–70. For a Cheshire context, S. Matthews, 'Explanations for the outbreak of the cattle plague in Cheshire, 1865–6: fear the wrath of the Lord', *Northern Hist.* (forthcoming).

II

Beside the limited availability of commercial insurance, there was a measure of protection provided by numerous local and mutual societies. These had developed during the eighteenth century, though there were few before the turn of the century, with numbers growing from about 1830.[25] They were sometimes sponsored by landowners on large estates (like Crewe or Cholmondeley) or were established as more truly mutual arrangements based upon a town or district. There were many types, which are confused in both contemporary and more recent commentaries, and the scarcity of surviving evidence makes it difficult to identify many of them as more than mere names. Some were established as companies, whilst others were registered as Friendly Societies, like the Farmers' United Cow Club, in Lancashire.[26] A number, like that on the Cholmondeley estates, were set up under Friendly Society rules but seem not to have been registered, whilst others were set up simply as mutual associations, like that on the Peckforton estate, also in Cheshire. Within that framework, there was a further division between those designed for farmers owning large numbers of cattle and those covering cottagers with smaller numbers. This is an important distinction, for the farmers' associations (which seems to have been the most common description) were a form of self-help scheme, generally run by a committee of members, even if the administration devolved upon a landlord's agent, whilst the cottagers' cow clubs were run more paternalistically for the benefit of the poor by their social superiors.

During the debates at the onset of the plague, letters and reports in the *Chester Chronicle* refer to associations in neighbouring counties, in Staffordshire, Shropshire at Wem (which failed by December 1865) and Whitchurch, in Flint and one in Lancashire, which had failed by March 1866. Further away, there was reference in the 1857 select committee minutes to one in Aylesbury, founded in or by 1843 and another provided for the Bridgwater Union in Somerset.[27] North of the border there was the Aberdeen Insurance Scheme, which was held up as a model of good management and financial prudence.[28] There were numerous societies in the cattle-rearing counties, but their total number is unknown and the lack of evidence suggests that most did not survive for long. According to a newspaper report, the Aberdeen Association's success was achieved through two features: the members were all great landowners not small farmers, and its rules enabled payment of dues to be enforced. Its protagonists may not have been fully aware of its peculiar strength but in Somerset, John Sanford argued strongly for a similar scheme to be made compulsory.[29]

Russell's work shows that the Lincolnshire clubs that he studied were akin to the Cholmondeley Cow Club, catering for cottagers dependent upon employment and a small amount of land rather than the cattle farmers who formed the membership of most of the Cheshire cattle associations. The rules of the Louth and neighbourhood cottagers cow insurance club are very similar to the Cholmondeley Cow Club in that it limited membership to 'labourers and

[25] Walford, *Cyclopaedia*, I, p. 469; Stead, 'Risk Management', p. 345.

[26] TNA, PRO, FS/15/254.

[27] BPP, 1857 (Sess. 2) (129), IX, (649), Q. 686; SRO, DD/X/HEA/3.

[28] *The Times*, 31 Jan. 1866.

[29] SRO, DD/SF/4556; a letter from John Sanford to his father, dated 3 Feb. 1865.

cottagers not having more than two cows, nor occupying more than fifteen acres of land . . .'.[30] Most of the Lincolnshire clubs seem to have had a high proportion of gentry or clergy subscribers who probably did not insure cattle but regarded their membership as an act of public duty, with the expectation that people would not call on parish assistance if they fell upon hard times. As noted above they also seem to have managed and subsidised the clubs on behalf of the cottagers, in contrast to the tenant farmers' associations. Later reluctance to subscribe may have led to the demise of some of them, and Russell offered examples of urgent appeals for new subscribers of this type. A number of these clubs survived well into the twentieth century, the last instanced by Russell closing in 1979, although by that date it seems to have been reduced to no more than a social club with no insured cattle.[31]

The relative proportions of member-run associations and managed cow clubs must have varied from county to county according to the degree of large-scale dairying. Stead's use of Russell's work on cow clubs in Lincolnshire has probably led him to over-simplify the picture.[32] Lincolnshire was not a great cattle county and the social need must have been to support cottagers and labourers with small numbers of cattle. In other counties, and not only Cheshire, there were far more member-run associations and herds were much larger. The average for the Stowey and Spaxton Association was 62 beasts per member; Shipston on Stour, 47; and the Cholmondeley Society, in 1870, just under 23. Only at Shipston was there a signification variation in numbers, with a range from 193 to 2 (out of 179 members), but of those, only four members had fewer than twenty beasts, and only one had more than a hundred. To point the difference with the cow clubs, none had subscribers without livestock. For these reasons the Lincolnshire arrangements provide a poor comparison for Cheshire, though their position in Victorian attempts to support the poor must not be overlooked. The thinking behind them provides interesting comparisons with the aims of 'improving' landlords in Cheshire, like John Tollemache of Peckforton, whose provision of suitable housing and smallholdings for farm workers was intended to promote the same level of self-reliance.[33]

With only a few exceptions, both cattle associations and smaller cow clubs suffered from the same weaknesses: most were obliged to operate under rules of honour. If calls became inconvenient or too heavy, members could withdraw or simply refuse to pay their subscriptions. For much the same reason, it was hard to set subscriptions at a realistic level. Members might desert or simply not pay their dues when the time came. In 1879, on its thirtieth anniversary, the Spilsby Cow Club reported that 'through the tardy payment of subscriptions by a portion of the members a claim or two would have to remain unsettled until the arrears were received'.[34] Finally, few of the officers of these schemes had any actuarial experience and most appear to have lacked any notion of building up (or investing) adequate reserves to meet real difficulties. The result of these failings was that when the any major disaster struck few of them could meet the calls that would be made on them. They lived from hand to mouth. If there was a surplus at the end of a year, too often it was spent, returned to members or whittled away by a

[30] Russell, *Cottagers*, p. 48.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[32] Stead, 'Risk management', p. 345.
[33] G. Ormerod, *History of Cheshire*, (sec. edn, 3 vols, 1882), II, pp. 275, 303–5, III, p. 898; Michael Stewart (ed.), *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament* (2 vols, 1976), I, p. 379.
[34] Russell, *Cottagers*, p. 32.

contribution 'holiday' the next year. The rules of the Cholmondeley Cow Club, designed for cottagers, had a provision that if the funds exceeded £200, a distribution had to be made to reduce the balance to that figure.[35]

The same casual approach had been acceptable for cattle associations, for payments had related to the loss of only a few animals each year. Most had no consistent actuarial policy. They simply asked for money from members, spent it and when it had or was about to run out, they made a call for more. Very little evidence survives to document these societies and we may accept Cockerill and Green's assertion that 'they collapsed under the financial strain of cattle epidemics'.[36] Even Treasurers of clubs that did not provide cover for the plague found that their members had no money to pay premiums, even if they had any animals to insure. Those that did provide cover might have to face the prospect of payments for the loss of whole herds, not just for isolated animals. In most cases, if not all, the money was simply not there. There was briefly in Cheshire and elsewhere, from the end of 1865 and before the full horror of what was to happen had become apparent, an attempt to found new clubs or to widen the scope of existing ones to include rinderpest, which had hitherto generally been excluded from cover. New cow clubs were formed at Beeley in Derbyshire and Hunmanby in Yorkshire, both of which were registered as Friendly Societies, a limited company was established at Congleton in Cheshire, and a new association at Kendal. The first two of these survived until respectively 1947 and 1950 but they lay in counties which were not badly affected by cattle disease, especially rinderpest, where the Kendal company closed after a year and the same fate probably overcame the Congleton company. A new society was proposed for the Stockport Borough, but enthusiasm waned. A leader in the *Stockport Advertiser* put its finger exactly on the problem when commenting upon the pointlessness of setting up a Borough Society.

> Mutual Cattle Insurance Associations sufficed in the early stages of the Pestilence; so long as an agricultural parish was called upon to pay 2/3rds of the value of ten or twenty beeves, the funds were adequate. But when the calls upon the Treasurers daily became more frequent and greater – then the treasurers became tender of their funds and farmers, finding the exchequer closed, refused to kill their cattle to prevent the spread of infection. They determined to take their chance, refused to pay additional premiums or contributions, and it may be now said that all local and mutual insurance associations are powerless to meet the terrible calamity.[37]

This cannot be bettered as an expression of the financial difficulties faced by association Treasurers and it is remarkable that so many bodies like the Bridgwater club and the Stowey and Spaxton company were formed at this time. The 'County of Stafford Mutual Association for protection against loss by the cattle plague and pleuro-pneumonia' arose from a meeting on 7 April 1866 just as the rinderpest epidemic began to wane. It must have avoided failure but on 25 August 1866 the *Chester Chronicle* carried a report that it 'was to be dissolved, owing to the decrease of the plague'.[38] The plague was less virulent in those counties than in Cheshire

[35] Chester Record Office (hereafter CRO), DCH/CC/20, rule XV.

[36] Cockerell and Green, *Insurance Business*, p. 84.

[37] *Stockport Advertiser*, 26 Jan. 1866.

[38] *Chester Chronicle*, 25 Aug. 1866.

TABLE 2. Staffordshire and Bridgwater Premiums

Staffordshire		
GROUP	*Livestock*	*Maximum rate of insurance (£)*
A	Dairy Cows and In-calf heifers	18
B	Bulls and feeding stock	18
C	Core Stock	10
D	Calves over 6 months old	5
PAYMENTS		
Death through cattle plague	¾ of the insured value of the animal	
Death through pleuro-pneumonia	¾ of the insured value of the animal + ¼ of the salvage, the rest going to the funds of the Association.	

In addition to premiums, every member had to pay 4d. per annum towards administrative costs.

Bridgwater		
	Premiums	*Payments*
Cows	1 shilling + future calls	¾ value of the beast
Calves	6 pence + future calls	¾ value of the beast

Sources: Staffordshire, *Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies*, BPP, 1866, XXXIX, 406, p. 77: Bridgwater, Somerset RO, DD/X/HEA/3.

and in Staffordshire premiums were set at a higher level than in Cheshire, as can be seen from Table 2 above.[39] In the event, despite successes in other counties with fewer losses, none of the societies existing in Cheshire in 1865 appears to have been able to been able to survive the storm on its own, though some were able to do so through the subvention of their sponsoring landowner.

There is no sure estimate of how many of these societies there were for, in general, they were not answerable to any outside regulator. Although a few Cheshire societies, like Cholmondeley, claimed to have been established as Friendly Societies, it is unlikely that any conformed strictly to the rules, and the Registrar's lists of the county's societies that had made a return to him do not contain any that are recognisably cattle clubs. That may not be conclusive for, on average, he seems to have received back only about a half of the forms issued, and many of those were incomplete. In December 1868 he issued 773 returns in Cheshire but received back only 378, of which 71 were incomplete.[40] Even after the restraints on Friendly Societies were lifted in 1866, most remained unregulated local societies answerable only to their members and have vanished from record. There were a considerable number of them. The only clue to their number is in a letter to the *Chester Chronicle* of late 1865 where T. Manock, the secretary of the Nantwich Mutual Cattle Club, proposed that rather than merge as some people had proposed, all the societies in the county should levy an additional call on their members to provide a county-wide compensation fund. He reckoned that if 100 societies raised an additional 1*s.* per

[39] *Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies*, BPP, 1866, (406), XXXIX (401), p. 77.

[40] *Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies*, BPP, 1868–9, LVI, (399), p. 153.

cow, the resulting £10,000 would be sufficient for the impending crisis.[41] That it would have been quite inadequate is irrelevant, the point is that although his figure of 100 societies was rhetorical, it cannot have been so far out as to be absurd. The figure need not surprise given that Cheshire was a county of 97 ecclesiastical parishes and nearly 500 townships in 1819.[42]

The reliance upon cattle clubs is an interesting phenomenon in rural society, for they demonstrate the continuing strength of the parish, or in Cheshire, the township, in the administration of the counties in the middle of the nineteenth century. The same local base is apparent when clubs were linked to the estates of the major landlords, as at Crewe, Cholmondeley and Peckforton. This was not only tradition, but a practicality forced upon them by the intermingled nature of tenant land holdings. The arrangements had to be for all or for nobody, a fact reflected in a veiled criticism made by one of Warburton's tenants in a letter to him, written during the plague.[43]

> ... there is no one insured on our side of the Parish. I said if I did not join your Insurance I would join no one else and my neighbours the same, but we could not control all our neighbours and we were informed we could not enter without the whole Parish, so we trusted to Providence.

Implicitly, if Warburton had given more of a lead, a club might have been created. This is a little surprising, for according to Davies, there had been one in the 1740s.[44] This localisation of sentiment is emphasised in the Cholmondeley Cattle Society ledger itself, for it was the ledger originally purchased for the Cholmondeley Felon Association in 1824. Many of the members were the same, or their family, and the secretary and factotum was certainly a relation, probably the son, of the secretary of the Felon Association.

III

The editor of the *Stockport Advertiser* was not the only person to realise that existing cattle clubs were unlikely to meet the threat of cattle plague which then loomed in late 1865. There were four possible solutions: to create new clubs; to increase subscriptions and reduce liability; to merge with other societies so as to increase the financial base and spread risk; to enlist outside help, preferably from the government. All four were considered and tried.[45] The *Advertiser's* comments were made in response to a proposal that a new fund should be formed for the Borough and, on 2 December 1865, The *Chester Chronicle* had reported that another meeting had been held at Chester Castle 'for the purpose of determining whether [the Great Boughton Union Cattle Plague Association] should commence operations forthwith, and in the extent of its being agreed upon, to appoint inspectors for each township in the district'. The directors

[41] *Chester Chronicle*, 23 Dec. 1865.

[42] D. Sylvester and G. Nulty, *The Historical Atlas of Cheshire* (1958), pp. 34–8.

[43] S. Matthews, 'Our Suffering county', *Trans. of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Soc.* 96 (2000), pp. 106–8.

[44] C. Stella Davies, *The Agricultural History of Cheshire, 1750–1850* (Chetham Society, third ser., 10, 1960), p. 104.

[45] For discussions of compensation, see S. Matthews, 'Who's to Pay? Cheshire attitudes towards paying for the Cattle plague of 1865–66', *Trans. of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 152 (2003), pp. 79–100.

were apparently intending to extend their cover to rinderpest (as indicated by the association's title) and it was reported that a neighbouring but unidentified society which had agreed to admit claims for loss by rinderpest had decided to reverse its decision so as not to impede the new proposal. Whether the association started to function has not been discovered, but if it did offer protection against rinderpest, its funds would soon have been exhausted.

Apart from attempts to start new clubs, officers of other societies saw the plague as a serious threat and tried to improve their finances. Officers of the Whitchurch Mutual Insurance Club, just over the border in Shropshire, tried to remedy some of their Club's failings. On the 23 December 1865 the *Chester Chronicle* reported that the society undertook to authorise the slaughter of all stock 'as was fit for food' – one hopes they meant uninfected cattle – and make good any losses incurred. In return, members were asked – obliged perhaps – to sign a document 'which would make payment binding on them, instead of, as at present, the affair being a matter of honour'. Finally, noting that the County (Shropshire) society had already failed, they proposed to extend their area southwards to include the Wem Union. This would have broadened the membership base, but at the same time, led to greater exposure with more cattle. At a meeting of the Great Boughton Union Mutual Cattle Insurance Association (apparently not the same body as the proposed cattle plague association), new measures were introduced to raise an extra £1,200, which, with the existing balance of with £639 6*s.* 0d. in the bank, would provide a fund of over £1,800 before claims.[46] Against this, the society was responsible for 6384 cattle. Even at liability of £7 per head, they only had to lose 250 cattle, four per cent, and they would be in serious trouble. Actual losses were to be much higher.

In Cheshire, the emphasis upon locality made some people suggest that if the greater landowners could be brought into the associations or clubs, they could provide enough of a fiscal base to make them secure. At the same meeting of the Great Boughton Union Mutual Cattle Insurance Association, the Chairman, Mr P. S. Humberston, reported the committee's thoughts in their efforts to put the society on a more permanent footing.

> They believed that it would add permanence to the society if landowners contributed some portion of the calls which their tenants might be called upon to pay. The committee thought it would contribute to the permanence of the society if such arrangement were made; and that it would be evidence of the good feeling that exists between landlords and tenants in the difficult position in which they were now placed, while it would be a considerable relief to tenants and an inducement to them to insure.[47]

In practice, this was generally what happened, for many landlords, the Westminsters, Crewes, Cholmondeleys, Leighs and Warburtons, all assisted their tenants, either directly or indirectly, through the cattle clubs.[48] Their contributions lead one to question Stead's view that landlords did not share risk with their tenant farmers.[49] Whilst it is true that they did not do so on an

[46] *Chester Chronicle*, 23 Dec. 1865.

[47] *Ibid.*

[48] For evidence of disagreement see, S. Matthews, 'The Cattle Plague in Cheshire, 1865–6', *Northern Hist.* 38 (2001), pp. 115–7 (though the inference drawn may have been too harsh) but for one landlord who was pilloried in the local press for being unreasonable, see id., 'Who's to pay?', p. 97.

[49] Stead, 'Risk management', p. 334.

annually recurring basis, many provided an insurance of last resort either at times of general disaster or when a particular tenant fell into unexpected but justified difficulties. On 9 December 1865 the *Chester Chronicle* reported that 'J. Tollemache Esq., met the farm tenantry at host Richard Stockton's, Bunbury, and made an encouraging offer to all who were insured against the Cattle Plague, promising them 25 per centum on all losses they might sustain, and more where he thought it required'. He was eventually to write off over £7,000 from the south Cheshire rent roll: almost a third.[50] In reality, the loss was such had expenditure not been drastically reduced, Tollemache's income for the plague year would have been reduced to that from his estates in the east of the county.[51] That said, landlords and their agents were not foolishly tolerant in their treatment and in normal years the Peckforton estates rarely show year end arrears or remissions of more than a few hundred pounds out of a nominal rent roll of £20,000.

Lord Crewe's estate scheme was an exception to the underfunding: it had, as Manock put it, 'a guarantee fund of some £3,000 and risks small'. It may have been unique, but even its resources proved to be inadequate.[52] Even the considerable funds available to the tenants on the Crewe estates had to be supplemented in a manner which reflected the character and determination of Lord Crewe. He had his own problems, for Crewe Hall had burnt down in March 1866. Despite that, he guaranteed support to his tenants and this was warmly appreciated by them. The compensatory provisions of the Cattle Diseases Prevention Act of February 1866 were not retrospective, so to compensate farmers who had lost stock before that date, Crewe pooled the money available in the existing cattle club with a generous contribution of his own by way first, of a rent remission and then £3 per cow lost, and then, through his agent, Edward Martin, he compensated qualifying tenants at £5 per cow for every beast lost before the Act was passed. The balance of the fund was used to buy new stock once the plague was over.[53] At Tabley, Lord de Tabley circulated a letter among his tenants setting out what subsidy he was willing to pay and ending, like Crewe, with the expectation that the money would be used to restock and to improve their farms.[54] Others contributed on a modest scale, like Egerton Leigh at High Leigh, who in a letter to Warburton at Arley detailed the £83 he had given the last rent day to four tenants to compensate them for the 107 animals that they had lost before the Act came into force and for which they would otherwise receive nothing. That was in addition to rents remitted and a promise to one tenant of another £50 the next rent day.[55]

Although some landlords did contribute directly, many must have found that their ability to assist was limited by reduced rental incomes and increased rates so that they had little cash to spare. Even those with substantial incomes might have to economise, so that the estate accounts show that for the plague year Tollemache slashed estate expenditure from £13,300 to £5,500. A few had incomes sufficient to weather all storms, like the Marquis of Westminster, who contributed £5,000 to the county relief fund in addition to the £3,000 he had directly given to his tenants by March 1866.[56]

[50] Peckforton estate accounts, CRO, DTW 2477/A/10/8–11.

[51] CRO, DTW/2477/A/10/8–10.

[52] *Chester Chronicle*, 23 Dec. 1865.

[53] R. Speake (ed.), *Bartholmey, the story of an estate village* (1995), pp. 150–1.

[54] Matthews, 'Our Suffering County', pp. 101; for Tabley, CRO, DLT 2173/137/7.

[55] Matthews, 'Our Suffering County', pp. 19–120.

[56] For Tollemache, CRO, DTW 2477/A/10/9–12; for Westminster, *Stockport Advertiser*, 16 Mar. 1866.

V

We may now turn to an example of how a society functioned: there is no reason to suppose that it differed greatly from any other and may be taken as typical. The Cholmondeley Cattle Society's records have survived in the Cholmondeley estate archive deposited in the Cheshire Record Office, written in a handsome ledger which also contains the accounts of the earlier Cholmondeley Felon Association founded in 1824.[57] It was obviously too good a volume for its blank pages to be wasted but there may be more than economy in the choice to re-use a volume which had previously served the same group of tenant farmers for another purpose. Various supplementary records have survived, notably some annual bundles of 'chitties' from 1860 to 1873 on which the numbers and values of each farmer's livestock were recorded. These retain little more than curiosity value, as the figures were copied into the main ledger.

The club was established in 1850 as a Friendly Society with an impressive initial deed, containing 55 clauses, which was lodged with the Registrar of Friendly Societies and certified as such by him. It is not clear whether it was then run as a Friendly Society or lodged its accounts with him but it does not appear in any of the Registrar's lists up to 1868–9. It is likely that the inconvenience of conforming to his regulations was a disincentive for it to remain in his care and that the preparation of its rules in accordance with the Friendly Societies' Acts was intended to give respectability and probity. At the time of its foundation, the legislation was unsuitable for cattle insurance and the maximum cover of £200 was too low.

Initially, membership was restricted to the tenants of the Marquis of Cholmondeley, although it was later extended to farmers in Eccleston in 1860 (which brought three new members) and to the tenants of Lord Henry Cholmondeley in 1862. Although 108 people originally put their names down, the initial list of subscribers contained 58 names plus the Marquis and membership fluctuated between 50 and 60 until numbers increased to 89 after the admission of Lord Henry's tenants.

The accounts set out the subscription rate, the income generated and the expenditure year by year but the record comes to a stop in 1865, jumps over 1866, and recommences in 1867 with the 1865 balance in hand. The club was then reconstituted in 1867 as a mutual society with a much simpler set of rules with only fifteen clauses, which were set out in a printed booklet. This may seem odd, as the opportunity then existed, under 1866 legislation, to operate as a Friendly Society without the restrictive financial limits that had previously applied.[58] The 1866 Act not only raised the financial limits for cover but enabled subscriptions to be recovered at law, thus overcoming what the Registrar described as a restriction 'detrimental to the advantageous operation of the statute'.[59] The following year another society was formed, 'The Cholmondeley Cow Club Friendly Society', although it was not in fact registered as one. This was open to cottage tenants and cover was limited to two cows and one calf per cottage, with an entrance fee of 1*s.* 6*d.* per cow and modest subscriptions of 1*s.* a quarter thereafter. This also had a printed set of rules and shared a treasurer with the bigger society. The cover provided by both societies was against Pleuro-pneumonia alone. In the Club, cattle plague and 'murrain'

[57] CRO, DCH/VV/1.
[58] 29 Vict. c. 34.
[59] BPP, 1866, (406), XXXIX, (401), p. 16.

(something of a catch-all term) were specifically excepted.[60] The exclusion of cover for foot and mouth was less serious that might seem, despite the outbreak in the years up to 1871, for both farmers and veterinary surgeons recognised that it was not a fatal disease and caused little loss of animals.[61]

The society was run on a hand-to-mouth basis as may be seen from the select years' accounts presented in Table 3. It was concerned with short term income and liabilities with no attempt to create a reserve fund or to introduce the members to the idea of paying a regular premium. Cover provided was low: initially £6 was paid per cow, but this rose to either £7 10*s.* or £10 in 1861, and £9 until the end. When they had money, the officers paid against valid claims: if they ran out, they levied more money. After raising an initial £92 0*s.* 1*d.*, by a subscription rate of 2*d.* in the pound insured, and another two calls for 2*d.* in 1851, it ended 1851 £42 into the red, largely as a result of the claims for 34 cows, most from one farmer who lost 21 animals. Vet's fees and the solicitor's bill for setting up the club were the other major expenses. Despite this initial loss, subscription rates were reduced to 1*d.* in 1852. Fortunately, there were few claims and the end year balance was £3. By 1854 the subscription rate was increased to 5*d.*, putting the society well in the black. There was no charge the next year and so matters continued with rates varying from ½*d.* to 3*d.* and year end balances never exceeding £100. When the crisis came in 1866 the club had reserves of £77 16*s.* 2*d.* It was noted that 1865 had been an expensive year, but even allowing for that, the balance brought forward from 1864 was only £71 3*s.* 2*d.* Although the admission of Lord Henry's tenants boosted membership, the rate was reduced to 1*d.* for 1864 and 1865 so the influx of new members had a smaller effect upon income than they might have done. The Club saw another minor crisis in 1872 when at the year end it was £16 overspent, but the Marquis stepped in with a donation of 2*d.* per cow, £13 11*s.* 0*d.* which, with a rate which raised £91 14*s.* 0*d.*, put the club back on a sound footing.[62] In fact, thereafter, it never raised a rate but in the absence of substantial claims, survived on entrance fees and, later, bank interest.

Table 4 gives for selected years the numbers of members, the numbers of cows and bulls insured and the value of the stock. There was a trickle of new members to balance departures and from 1852 they were charged varying entrance fees in a tacit recognition that there ought to be annual subscriptions. The club initially gave cover for stock valued at £11,040, rising to £12,219 in 1857, and it remained at about that level throughout its life, declining sharply towards the end when there were only twenty members, insuring 421 cows and 14 bulls. Their value was not given, but since a rate had not been levied for many years, that hardly mattered. In the society's last years there was very little activity, and its demise was probably provoked by legislative changes in the last years of the nineteenth century. These reflected greater

[60] In the 1864 Committee report we read that 'the disease known by the names of Aphtha, Aphthous fever, murrain and feet and mouth disease, be omitted from the schedule to the Cattle Diseases Prevention Bill'. BPP, 1864, (431), VII, (235), p. ix.

[61] *Report of the Veterinary Department for 1871*, BPP, 1872 (C. 619) XVIII, (619), p. 10.

[62] The Cheshire gentry seem to have been anxious to promote or preserve their cattle associations and clubs and made contributions when needed. As an example, when the Peckforton club was founded, Tollemache promised £10 'to the funds of the society for every 2*s.* 6*d.* per head, paid by members on the stock insured'. CRO, DCH/CC/21; undated but probably contemporary with the Cholmondeley society.

TABLE 3. Cholmondeley Cow Club: income and expenditure (selected years)

1851/2	Balance b/f £102 1*s.* 8*d.* 2 rates @ 2*d.* = £196 3*s.* 4*d.* Total £298 5*s.* 0*d.*	Loss of 3 cows @ £6, £210 0*s.* 0*d.* Fees for 'opening' 31 cows, £3 17*s.* 6*d.* Lanceley, expenses, 2 @ 2*s.* 6*d.* (another vet?) 5*s.* 0*d.* Setting up expenses (non recurring) £42 0*s.* 3*d.* Closing deficit c/f £42 2*s.* 5*d.* Total £298 5*s.* 2*d.*
1861/2	Balance b/f £13 19*s.* 6*d.* 3 calls @ £130 5*s.* 2*d.* = £390 15*s.* 6*d.* Total, £404 15*s.* 0*d.*	7 cows @ £7 10*s.* 0*d.* = £52 10*s.* 0*d.*, 7 cows @ £9 = £63 0*s.* 0*d.* Closing balance c/f ££289 5*s.* 0*d.* Total £404 15*s.* 0*d.*
1862/3	Balance b/f, £289.5*s.* 0*d.* Subscriptions, £283 0*s.* 2*d.* Total £572 5*s.* 2*d.*	Cattle lost £477 10*s.* 0*d.* Closing balance c/f £94 15*s.* 2*d.* Total £572 5*s.* 2*d.*
1865/6	Balance b/f £65 12*s.* 0*d.* 1*d.* rate + entrance fee new members, £26 14*s.* 4*d.*[a] Total £92 6*s.* 2*d.*	Loss of one cow, £9 0*s.* 0*d.* Mr Broom salary, stationery etc., £6 0*s.* 0*d.* Closing balance c/f £77 16*s.* 2*d.* Total £92 16*s.* 2*d.*
1867/8	Balance b/f £77 16*s.* 2*d.* [No subscription raised][b] Total £77 16s. 2*d.*	1 cow (Thomas Shone) @ £8 0*s.* 0*d.* 1 cow (Thomas Shone) @ £12 0*s.* 0*d.* Printing rules, £1 13*s.* 0*d.* 3 cows (Mr Holbrook) @ £6 = £18 0*s.* 0*d.* 2 cows (Mr Holbrook) @ £8 = £16 0*s.* 0*d.* Mr Broom, salary, use of room and stamps, £2 18*s.* 0*d.* Closing balance c/f £19 5*s.* 2*d.* Total £77 16*s.* 2*d.*
1876/7	Balance b/f £104 12*s.* 6*d.* Entrance fees £ 8*s.* 0*d.* Total £108 0*s.* 6*d.*	Vet's fees 10*s.* 6*d.* Secretary £2 15*s.* 0*d.* Closing balance c/f £104 15*s.* 0*d.*
1880/1	Balance b/f £110 13*s.* 11*d.* Interest £1 13*s.* 7*d.* Total £112 7*s.* 6*d.*	Secretary £2 15*s.* 0*d.* Dodd [?room hire?][c] 10*s.* 0*d.* Printing circulars 5*s.* 0*d.* Closing balance c/f £108 17*s.* 0*d.* Total £112 7*s.* 6*d.*
1906	Terminal balance b/f £24 10*s.* 0*d.*	

Source: CRO, Cholmondeley papers DCH/VV/1.

Notes: [a] This applied to Frodsham tenant farmers. Membership was extended to tenant farmers of the Marquis or Lord Henry, on the Frodsham estate by resolution of 25 January 1865. There was no charge for other members.
[b] The annual meeting provided for the admittance of one new member upon payment of the entrance fee of 10s. and a rate of 15s. and another at 5s. and 2s. Both appear as members but there is no record of their having paid.
[c] A notice of a meeting reveals that Dodd was formerly at the Castle Inn, where meetings of the Club had previously been held. CRO, DCH/CC/19.

intervention by central government starting with measures for control, but leading to those for compensation. In the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Pleuro-pneumonia Act of 1890, central government itself took over the responsibility for paying compensation from central funds,

TABLE 4. Cholmondeley Cow Club: membership and number of animals insured (selected years)

	Membership	*Cows*	*Bulls*	*Value (£)*
1851	58	1134	Not given	11,040
1859	57	Not given	Not given	7732
1865	77	1896	33	*c.* 11,295
1867	71	970	21	Not given
1876	82	1926	54	Not given
1880	73	1659	52	Not given
1906	20	421	14	Not given

Note: All figures exclude the Marquis of Cholmondeley and his 2000 cattle.
Source: CRO, DCH/VV/1.

and this made effectively cattle clubs redundant, even though there was still no commercial insurance.[63]

The initial rules must have needed some improvement to prevent abuse. Two amendments were passed, the first on Thursday 24 January 1861 when it 'It [was] unanimously agreed that no Farmer's bills to be paid by the Society without a certificate from one of the Directors'. The next year, it was twice resolved (on 27 January and 10 February 1862) that if Pleuro-pneumonia were found

> two inspectors to be notified; they to examine and if satisfied issue certificate entitling member to compensation; cattle then to belong to society; inspectors to sell cattle & society to keep proceeds; cattle to be sold only for slaughter; inspectors to check that they are not sold on in other markets but only in a large public market like Liverpool or Manchester; they shall not in any case be sold as human food but only as food for wild beasts or dogs.

These provisions were similar to those in other clubs, such as Rule XIII of the Peckforton club, and were intended not only to prevent a fraud upon the club but to prevent the sale of infected meat for human consumption. This was not a new issue but someone, possibly the Cholmondeley agent, or the Marquis himself, endeavoured to prevent it. It happened elsewhere during the plague, and in one early and extreme episode, at Henbury near Stockport, a farmer was caught selling putrid meat to a Manchester butcher. The sale was uncovered by an alert policeman at Broken Cross and the newspaper report makes revolting reading for the carcasses had been buried in accordance with the regulations and then later disinterred for sale.[64]

We can see that for many years before 1865–6 the club was well able to meet the needs of the farmers on the Cholmondeley estate. There was no apparent need to build up a massive reserve and even if any tenant had failed to pay his subscription, it would not greatly matter: the chances are that the Marquis' land agent would have pressured him into conformity anyway.

[63] Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, *Animal Health, A Centenary, 1865–1965* (1965), p. 160; Abigail Woods, *A manufactured plague*, p. 19. It is ironic that in 1893, when government accepted full financial responsibility, Cheshire was still paying off the thirty-year loan raised in 1866, when the government had refused direct aid.

[64] *Stockport Advertiser*, 13 Oct. 1865. See evidence given by Gamgee to the Select Committee of 1864, BPP, 1864, (431), VII, (235), QQ. 201–22.

The power of the agent as go-between for landlord and tenant must never be underestimated. The result, though, was that in 1866 the club had no reserves to face the looming disaster. It was simply not designed to face that sort of world – one in which whole herds died rather than single animals – and the absence of any records for the plague period is testimony to the disruption that it caused. But we must be clear on the cause, for the failure for that period is not due to enormous claims that had to be met, for Rinderpest was not an insured disease: it simply reflected the fact that for an eighteen-month period, Cheshire's rural economy collapsed. Despite its failure – rather its irrelevance – in that crisis, the society must have been seen to have performed a useful service for it was re-formed and continued to perform a valuable role. For the rest of the decade foot and mouth was a problem, but a society run on an amateur basis was adequate to face the comparatively small losses arising from that, ensuring the society's survival, albeit in decline, until 1907. By then, the 1890 legislation had removed its purpose, as implied by a copy of a standard letter to members, which is pinned in the final page. The substantive part read:

> In the present state of the law, the object for which the Cholmondeley Mutual Cattle Assurance Association was formed, no longer exists.
> It is proposed not to renew the Insurance at Lady Day next, and to divide the small balance remaining between the Cholmondeley Cottagers Cow Club and the Cholmondeley Nursing Association.

Objections were invited but apparently there were none.

VI

Cattle associations, in their various forms, were a logical alternative to the failed provision of commercial insurance policies, and fitted well with the Victorian ethic of self-help: the same spirit which spawned other mutual societies, such as those for the detection and arrest of felons, burial clubs and smaller friendly societies all designed to serve the needs of a localised community. One such, chosen at random, was the Timperley Free Gardeners Friendly Society, which in 1865 had capital of £290 for its 124 members: not big business, but serving a local purpose and not related to the wider world outside.[65] The cattle associations, more than most, depended upon the co-operation of the whole locality, for farming activities and particularly livestock pasturing were so much intermingled that individual independence was impossible. Their membership was limited by tenancy or region: at Cholmondeley and Peckforton by being tenants of the Marquis or Lord Henry, at Nantwich and Great Boughton by living in a defined location. Membership of the Bridgwater society was open to those who lived within the territory of the Bridgwater Union. Members of the Sowey and Spaxton company was more restricted for (with one exception) they had to hold their cattle west of the River Parrett and within ten miles of Nether Stowey church. More often than not the local landowner gave the lead, either by promoting a parish or township society, or directly by running the fund as an estate interest. It was not by chance that Henry Lord Taunton was allocated the first share in

[65] *Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies*, BPP, 1866, (406), XXXIX, (406), p. 90.

the company, although he was not the biggest shareholder. At Peckforton the Treasurer was Tollemache's agent, Mr Thomas Cawley, whilst at Crewe it was his counterpart, Mr Martin. In this, as in so much else, the localisation of county government at parish and township level meant that the local gentry had to take the lead. It was not only their right, it was their obligation and it may be that the decline of these local forces can be directly related to the growth of the county and borough as administrative units in the later nineteenth century.

For all their faults of amateur management and short-sighted fiscal policy, these societies were sufficient to fund the normal losses of cattle rearing. That they either failed or became irrelevant in 1866 is testimony to the exceptional impact and terrible character of the epidemic of rinderpest that swept most of the English counties and Cheshire far more than any other. Once that was over, they resumed their older role until the government gradually assumed responsibility, first for the elimination of virulent diseases like Pleuro-pneumonia, and later for payment of compensation. In Cheshire that role does not seem to have been filled by Insurance Friendly Societies even after the 1866 Act. This may seem surprising, for in his report of July 1866 the Registrar of Friendly Societies noted that if the mechanism of Friendly Societies had been available, much of the hardship might have been avoided especially as it extended cover to all livestock, not just cattle.[66] The evidence from Cheshire is that few if any societies took the opportunity that the legislation gave, for three years later, in 1869, the Registrar did not list any Cheshire society whose title suggests that it was concerned with livestock.[67]

Why was this so, given that Cheshire had suffered so much? In reality, existing Cheshire institutions had served the Cheshire farmer adequately. Local arrangements in which the people were known and in which risks could be easily calculated were preferred to larger ones where there could have been economies of scale and a wider spread of risk, though more unknown factors and a more distant, possibly professional, management. As it was, the increased county rate fell largely upon other shoulders. It was paid by the towns and by the landlords (since tenants could deduct it from their rents). In addition, their landlords had borne a large part of the cost, both by direct subsidy and by waiving rents for the duration, in effect providing a form of crisis insurance. The heartache and the immediate loss had to be borne by the farmers. No one looking at, for example, John Sutton's day-by-day record of the destruction of his herd can mistake his pain, but ultimately compensation was provided, for the rural economy had to survive.[68] The farmers' reluctance to try new measures was vindicated, in a way, by the absence of any similar epidemic in the following years. There was foot and mouth which affected large numbers of cattle in the years up to 1871, but livestock deaths were negligible, amounting to just under 1.5 per cent and the cost could easily be met by landlords, by traditional local schemes, or from farmers' capital.[69] That assurance, matched by a natural conservatism, was

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 16; 29 Vict., c. 34.

[67] The National Archives catalogue records three cow clubs registered after 1866: Brompton (TNA, PRO, FS 15/753), Hunmanby (FS 15/1590), Wem (FS 15/1938) and one cattle association, at Soham, Cambridgeshire (FS 15/1842).

[68] The cattle plague book of John Sutton of Moston 1866, CRO, SF/MOSS/1, cutting from the *Chester Chronicle*, 3 Sept. 1955.

[69] BPP, 1872 (C. 619), XVIII, (629), p. 10. The passage reads, 'Up to the passing of the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act 1869, up to the end of 1871, we have received information of 92,162 outbreaks of foot and mouth disease, of which 1,344,625 animals were attacked. Of these only 1.136 per cent died, 0.327 per cent were killed, and 98.537 per cent recovered'.

probably the reason why there was no rush to explore the benefits of commercial insurance. The old ways were familiar, if not better, and there was little reason to change. It may also be that the shadow of The Agriculturalist lay over the whole question of insurance. After the failure of the company, it was, as noted before, over thirty years before commercial insurance became freely available once again.[70] Resistance to change was made more sustainable by factors such as poor veterinary skills and unselective breeding. The former were so inadequate in 1865–6 that most associations relied upon the skills of the farmers themselves but veterinary skills and authority gradually increased. By the end of the century pedigree cattle breeding was becoming a concern of the wealthy and influential who brought new attitudes to bear.[71] Such developments eventually encouraged accident insurance although paradoxically, the increasing role of government in directing epidemic control, and with it the obligation to pay compensation, removed much of the incentive to insure against total disaster.

[70] Cockerell and Green, *Insurance Business*, p. 84.

[71] Woods, *A manufactured plague*, pp. 14–15.

Farmers and consumers under strain: allied meat supplies in the First World War

by Richard Perren

Abstract

The allies faced growing shortages of meat between 1914 and 1918. Consumers in Britain and overseas were affected by the decision to divert increasing amounts to feed the British, French and even the Italian army. Overseas producers in America, Australia, and New Zealand found there were limits to the extent to which they could benefit from the increased demand in Europe. Refrigerated shipping space was in short supply and was firmly controlled by the British government. This meant Argentine and Commonwealth farmers faced financial losses during the periods when they were unable to sell finished animals. Attempts by all allied governments to impose controls on their internal markets to ensure the fair distribution of meat supplies did not always work out in the ways they expected, and caused further complaints from consumers and farmers.

One well known effect of the outbreak of war in Europe in August 1914 was to place food supplies under pressure. The mobilization of troops and expansion of armies meant increased numbers of soldiers to be fed, while the recruitment and conscription of agricultural workers reduced the numbers actually producing food. This applied to all types of foodstuffs, and although the British and German governments had made some plans for foodstuffs in time of war, they immediately introduced regulations and controls to protect supplies of items that were regarded as essential. The most important of these were cereals, and governments were rightly obsessed about maintaining home production as well as protecting imported supplies. It soon became apparent that meat supplies were also under threat and in need of as much attention as cereals to maintain civilian and military consumption at acceptable levels.

The initial strategic food plans of the main combatants had eventually to be drastically modified because of the length of the war. In each case adjustment was made with varying degrees of success, as the conflict reduced the effective control they had over events, both at home and overseas. This paper examines how Britain, with the assistance of its allies, did this and, in particular, the effects of the war upon its overall meat supplies and the farmers involved in its production. It might be thought that because all were engaged in the objective of maintaining the overall level of allied supplies, policy in each of the supplying countries would be broadly similar. However, it will be shown that as the war did not have uniform effects, it elicited differing responses and they were attended with varying amounts of strain and success.

Both France and Britain had made hardly any serious preparations for maintaining food supplies in the event of a long war.[1] Both nations had planned for a very short war and mistakenly believed that stocks held by the military, together with some requisitioning of supplies, would be sufficient to carry them through. When a protracted war developed, French agriculture proved particularly ill equipped to respond to either the immediate or the long-term shock of the conflict.[2] Before the war Britain, as an import economy, relied far more heavily on imported foodstuffs and industrial raw materials than the rest of Europe, and paid for them by its exports of industrial goods and earnings from international trade and financial services. In any conflict the Royal Navy would preserve its access to overseas markets and earnings, and so ensuring food supplies whilst the French and Russian armies defeated Germany.[3] This grand strategy of 'business as usual' was tested when France and Russia proved too weak to overcome Germany, and Britain became involved in financing as well as fighting the expensive land war in Europe.[4] Events proved that in maintaining meat consumption, as well as that of all other foods, the British government was in a stronger position. But even she came under increasing strain from the pressures placed upon her by the intrinsically weak position of the allies in Europe and the poor state of their agriculture. The war also placed Britain's overseas meat suppliers under strain as well, and at times threatened the ability of South American and Commonwealth farmers to provide the imports upon which not only Britain, but a large part of Western Europe too, came to depend by the end of 1918.

I

While the wartime food situation has quite rightly been seen mainly in terms of cereal supplies, there has been no comprehensive attempt to look closely at the question of allied meat supplies.[5] This is rather surprising as animal protein was regarded at the time as an important component of the diet and shortages of meat and fats were felt acutely in Germany as its dietary situation became increasingly difficult after 1916.[6] Dewey's 1980 study of British livestock and cereal output does not go into the details of maintaining imports, although he does point out that meat imports were lower in 1916 and 1917 than in 1914.[7] This was from the immense pressure placed on meat, and all other British food supplies after 1916 by Germany's Atlantic U-boat campaign. British and allied shipping losses from surface raiders were comparatively light, but

[1] BPP, 1905, LXXIX, *Report of the Royal Commission on supply of food and raw materials in time of war*; Michel Augé-Laribé and Pierre Pinot, *Agriculture and food supply in France during the war* (1927); David French, *British economic and strategic planning, 1905–1915* (1982); Peter Dewey, *British agriculture in the First World War* (1989); Avner Offer, *The First World War: an agrarian interpretation* (1989).

[2] A. W. Pearse, *The world's meat future* (1920), pp. 2–3; Augé-Laribé and Pinot, *Agriculture and food supply*, pp. 71–5, 96–7, 194–6.

[3] Offer, *First World War*, ch. 6.

[4] French, *British economic and strategic planning.*

[5] None of the works quoted in this study fail to mention meat, but before 1914 it was the largest single source of calories after cereals. Figures in Dewey, *British agriculture*, p. 16 show that in 1909–13 cereals provided 34.4 per cent of British calorie consumption, meat 19.4 per cent, dairy products a further 15.7 per cent, refined sugar 13.2 per cent, fruit and vegetables 12.2 per cent and cottage produce 4.6 per cent.

[6] Offer, *First World War*, pp. 25, 28.

[7] Peter Dewey, 'Food Production and policy in the United Kingdom, 1914–1918', *Trans. Royal Historical Society*, fifth ser., 30 (1980), pp. 80–1.

as Kennedy argues, the U-boat was 'the commerce raider par excellence' and its use from 1916 exposed the weakness of Britain's heavy reliance on her navy to protect vital supplies of all imported foodstuffs and raw materials.[8] Alan Wilt's study of British agriculture before the Second World War sees the earlier conflict mainly in terms of attempts to stimulate cereal output by the Corn Production Act of 1917, though making the point that it was in reaction to meat shortages that rationing was finally introduced in 1918.[9]

Although Britain was far more successful in maintaining its supplies of meat and fats, the immediate pressures of the war were marked by an increase in the prices of all foodstuffs. In the case of meat, the poorer civilian consumer was worst affected because cheaper cuts rose more than those of higher quality.[10] The reason for this was that cheaper meat was in short supply from the start of the war when a significant portion was diverted to military rations. For example, the cheapest beef was imported frozen but in 1915 almost all of this was used to supply the allied armies. By September 1916 it was estimated that the civilian consumption of beef and mutton had been reduced by about one-sixth, while the large numbers recruited into such war industries as munitions manufacture increased the numbers required to do particularly arduous work and thereby pushed up the demand for high energy foods like meat. As there was no rationing and those in war work were attracted there by high wages as much as national appeals, food shortages were felt by those in less arduous work like shopworkers, clerks and teachers whose wages and salaries hardly rose at all. Meat queues inevitably became longer as the shortage of supplies caused hundreds of retailers to close their shops, while patriotic appeals were made to those not engaged in manual labour to abstain from eating butchers' meat one day a week.[11]

In these circumstances meat retailers became a steady target for public criticism. By May 1915 heavy government purchases of foreign meat and complaints by butchers of restricted supplies on the open market led to press suggestions that the National Federation of Meat Traders' Associations should encourage its local associations of meat retailers to pool their purchases and distribute supplies to their members. In 1916 there were complaints over the high price of pigs, and in 1917 the Federation, responding to accusations in the press that butchers were profiteering, unsuccessfully requested the President of the Board of Agriculture, R. E. Prothero, to set maximum prices for livestock. The decision was postponed, partly to protect farmers facing high production costs, but the public too as the government had no means of controlling supplies. As the supply situation for consumers and retailers worsened, the government introduced the Meat (Maximum Prices) Order for cattle on 29 August 1917, with sheep following later.[12] As the highest prices were fixed for fully finished animals, it encouraged farmers to hang onto their stock for longer and so probably contributed to the shortages of home-produced meat.[13] Prices were so inflexibly enforced in some areas by Sir Frederick Boys, the Director of

[8] Paul M. Kennedy, *The rise and fall of British naval mastery* (1983 ed.), pp. 244, 253.

[9] Alan F. Wilt, *Food for war. Agriculture and rearmament in Britain before the Second World War* (2001), pp. 15–16.

[10] M. Barnett, *British food policy during the First World War* (1985), p. 37; Offer, *First World War*, pp. 36–7.

[11] BPP, 1916, XIV, *Departmental Committee on increase of prices of commodities since the beginning of the war, Interim Report, meat milk and bacon*, pp. 8–9, 15: Noel Curtis-Bennett, *The food of the people: the history of industrial feeding* (1959), p. 234.

[12] William H. Beveridge, *British food control* (1928), pp. 143, 145.

[13] *Economist*, 30 Mar. 1918, p. 534; E. M. H. Lloyd, *Experiments in state control at the War Office and the Ministry of Food* (1924), pp. 437–9.

Meat Supplies, that a record number of 73 local associations joined the National Federation in a year, hoping for some assistance.[14]

Meat availability was thus not simply a problem that exhibited itself in the early stages of the war; securing adequate supplies presented a growing difficulty, particularly for the civilian consumer, that became worse in its latter stages. Fresh meat, along with sugar and butter, was one of the items of diet whose consumption fell the most over the war years. Between 1909–13 and 1918 weekly per capita consumption of fresh butchers' meat in Britain fell by 38 per cent from 2.04 lb. to 1.27 lb. Only butter consumption, with a decline of 45 per cent, fell more. It is true that over the same period weekly consumption of bacon rose from 0.34 lb. to 0.46 lb., but the weekly total calories per adult male available from both types of meat still fell from 4122 to 3136, or by 24 per cent.[15] Although different types of meat are to some extent substitutes for each other, the limits to this are determined by personal tastes and as well as the price and quality of possible alternatives. Much of the increased bacon that became available in 1918 was imported from the United States. Not only was this product unacceptable as a substitute for fresh meat, it was also unacceptable to many consumers in London and the South East as a substitute for United Kingdom bacon. The American hog industry fed its animals on maize and this gave the meat a much higher fat content than either British or European bacon. American bacon was always regarded as a cheap product before 1914 and most of it was landed at Liverpool, from whence some was re-exported to Ireland and the colonies, and the rest had a ready sale in Northern England among working class consumers engaged in heavy industrial work.[16] However, such regional preferences meant that its widespread availability in 1918 did little to relieve meat shortages among the hard-pressed, though arguably more discerning, consumers in the service economy of London and the South.

Although the 1917 ploughing up campaign was primarily aimed at increasing breadstuffs, it may possibly have helped the longer-term meat situation a little because one of its subsidiary aims was to increase the output of concentrated feeding stuffs for animals, over and above the normal home production of oats normally reserved for this purpose, by some 500,000 tons.[17] But this did nothing to reduce the immediate crisis felt in 1917, and by October weekly consumption of all meats in Great Britain was down to 1.41 lb. per head. The final response of the Food Controller was the introduction of meat rationing, which had been debated at various times throughout the war but was only resorted to in March 1918. There is also evidence that the shortages were felt more heavily in Southern England than elsewhere. The *Economist* took the view

> that had it not been for the greatly reduced consumption of meat in London the present scarcity would have developed long ago, in view of the increased demand in other parts of the country. Londoners have reduced their consumption by fully ¾ lb. per head per week since the outbreak of the war.[18]

[14] A. J. Jackson, *History of the National Federation Meat Traders' Associations* (1956), pp. 88–92.

[15] Beveridge, *British food control*, pp. 311, 313.

[16] BPP, 1897, VIII, *Select Committee on the Agricultural (Marks) Bill*, Q. 2342; W. H. Simmonds, *The Practical Grocer* (3 vols., 1906), III, p. 109.

[17] *Economist*, 1 June 1918, p. 940.

[18] *Economist*, 30 Mar. 1918, p. 534

Basically, the ration allowed everybody four meals a week, each of which could include 5*d.* in retail value of any kind of meat. Beveridge's view was that while rationing did nothing to increase the amount available, it did ensure an equitable distribution, and it needed to. Nevertheless, meat shortages continued to grow so that national weekly consumption in October 1918 was only 1.01 lb. per head.[19]

II

In all countries at war livestock production is always given a lower priority than arable. Although no one food supplies all the requirements of good nutrition, grain production is given the most assistance and encouragement, as cereals are seen as being the most efficient use of resources under wartime conditions. In terms of immediate energy requirements 100 gm. of white bread supplies 1030 kJ, while beefsteak only supplies 735 kJ and milk a mere 280 kJ.[20] In addition, the amount of land required to produce the same energy output is far less for cereals than for meat. On the other hand, it was believed that meat was an essential element of diet, and throughout 1914–18, maintaining meat supplies was given a rather higher priority than during the Second World War when dietary knowledge was greater. Throughout the war the chief constraints operating on British livestock and meat production were shortages of land, labour and livestock feed.

In the case of Britain, all of these restrictions on expanding meat production were severe. Many of the difficulties were recognised before the war when home supplies were practically stationary and imports were relied upon for more than 40 per cent of consumption.[21] Writing in 1922, Thomas Middleton argued that some of the estimates of domestic meat production in Britain made before the war were over-optimistic and that in the five years from 1909–10 to 1913–14 the production of beef and mutton in Britain was only 1 million tons per annum.[22] However, he gave no figures for pork and bacon, and never fully explained his reasons for downgrading cottage production of food in which pig keeping played a significant part.[23] Speaking before the British Association in 1912, Henry Rew estimated the domestic output of all meat in Britain at 1.45 million tons for 1911 and this made up 55 per cent of total consumption.[24]

The decision, taken in the 1840s, to concentrate on trade and industry and neglect further agricultural support was an accepted feature of British political management where in the rest of Europe agricultural protection encouraged self-reliance on domestic livestock production. For instance, in 1912 the German farmer produced 4.27 tons of all meats per 100 acres whereas the British farmer in 1908 was only producing 3.97 tons.[25] The lower level of production was of far less concern to Britain because of her heavy reliance on long distance trans-oceanic meat imports. Even here it is possible to see potential limits on future increases in output by some suppliers.

[19] Beveridge, *British food control*, pp. 321, 364.

[20] R. Mottram, *Human nutrition* (1979), p. 8.

[21] G. Leighton and L. Douglas (eds), *The meat industry and meat inspection* (5 vols, 1911), II, p. 432.

[22] Thomas Middleton, *Food production in war* (1923), pp. 37–68.

[23] Dewey, *British agriculture*, pp. 15–16.

[24] R. H. Rew, 'The nation's food supply', *J. Royal Statistical Society*, 76 (1912), p. 101.

[25] BPP, 1916, IV, Thomas Middleton, *The recent development of German agriculture*, p. 10.

In 1913 Britain drew chiefly on Argentina for beef, New Zealand for mutton and lamb, on Australia for mutton and beef, and the United States and Denmark for bacon and hams. New Zealand was a steady supplier with a large and persistent surplus and no other outlet for its meat, but it was difficult to see how it could easily increase its output. Australia, because of droughts, was always a fluctuating source of beef and sheep meat. Possibly the only serious contender for any dramatic expansion of supplies was South America.

By 1914 the most important supplier of beef to the UK was Argentina, and much of the early development of this source had been achieved with British capital by British firms. It was here that farmers had probably achieved the most impressive output growth, largely through the utilisation of alfalfa as a fodder crop. With livestock breed improvements as well, they increased the quantum of meat exports more than six-fold between 1890–94 and 1910–14.[26] In the 1890s Britain had relied heavily on the United States, then a heavy surplus producer of beef and pig meat that was disposed of largely on the British market. But its continued population growth meant that in the years just before the war this surplus declined sharply. Exports of United States beef to the United Kingdom had peaked at 160,000 tons in 1901 but they had disappeared by 1914. American bacon and ham exports had held up better, but by 1913 were less than half their highest level in the 1890s.[27] The United States meat firms, who had formerly controlled their country's meat exports to Britain, reacted to this decline by entering the South American trade to supply the chains of retail butchers' shops they had built up in Britain. By 1914 they had captured from British firms the strongest position in the Argentine and Uruguayan trade and handled 59 per cent of the country's meat exports, while the British firms had 31 per cent and Argentine firms the remaining 10 per cent.[28]

Most of Britain's trans-oceanic supplies of meat were from long distances, with the exception of the Danish pork and bacon trade. Denmark underwent impressive growth in all of its agricultural exports after Germany used the excuse of disease control to ban imports of live Danish pigs in 1887, forcing Danish farmers to look for new markets. Thereafter the Danes concentrated on supplying the British market with bacon. Exports of pigs were 279,000 and pig meat only 8000 tons in 1881–85, but by 1896–1900 the export of live animals had ceased, while bacon and ham exports had increased to 65,000 tons and 95,000 by 1906–10. Denmark was the only European country to substantially increase meat production before the First World War. Danish beef output rose by 33 per cent, and pork and bacon output by 71 per cent between 1903 and 1914.[29]

In 1911 Britain produced around 55 per cent of its own meat and imported the remaining 45 per cent. The largest supplier was Argentina with 16 per cent, followed by the United States and Canada with 13 per cent, Australia, New Zealand and Denmark each contributing over 4 per cent, and 1 per cent from other countries.[30] The bulk of the South American and Australasian beef and mutton were frozen, but small amounts of Argentine beef were chilled. As we notice

[26] Carl Solberg, *The prairies and the pampas: agrarian policy in Canada and Argentina, 1880–1930* (1987), p. 64; Carlos Alejandro, *Essays on the economic history of the Argentine republic* (1970), p. 5.

[27] Richard Perren, *The meat trade in Britain, 1840–1914* (1977), p. 10.

[28] Bill Albert, *South America and the First World War: the impact of the war on Brazil, Argentina, Peru and Chile* (1988), p. 67.

[29] Michael Tracy, *Government and agriculture in Western Europe, 1880–1988* (1989), pp. 112–13.

[30] Rew, 'Nation's food supply', p. 101.

earlier, by 1914 the United States chilled beef trade had finished, and most of Britain's imports from that country were bacon and ham. In addition, there were some smaller British imports of Canadian bacon, but its largest bacon supplier was now Denmark.

III

The most serious initial effects of the war were felt in the South American River Plate meat trade with Argentina and Uruguay. The view put forward by the Americans that 'in the early stages of the war there was no serious disturbance of the food supply' was certainly not true for meat.[31] In the first place the suspension of the gold standard and immediate breakdown of the international system of payments in the late summer of 1914 made it very difficult for British traders to make payments abroad. Producers themselves, particularly those in South America, were also immediately affected by the rise in freight rates and the breakdown of the multilateral system of trade payments. The insulated meat ships carrying frozen and chilled meat from the River Plate were run under contracts between the ship owners and the meat companies which had a 'war clause'. Immediately after its outbreak, the war clauses were invoked to raise freight rates up to four times their peacetime level to cover the increased risk. The meat companies refused to pay these rates, as they were uncertain what meat prices would prevail in London. Only after the British government persuaded the (largely British) shipping companies to reduce the rates to a more moderate level did the meat companies agree to resume the trade. In addition, the confusion over the financial arrangements with Argentina made it impossible to remit money there and the South American meat firms were unable to pay wages or buy cattle. This situation impacted on farmers with finished animals ready for slaughter and export, which they could not sell to free up the land to bring in the next season's stock. Nor had they any money coming in to meet current expenses.[32]

Faced with these circumstances, the British War Office, urgently requiring beef to feed its troops, decided the best solution was to make its own contracts with the meat companies. To secure supplies the Board of Trade signed an agreement with the mostly British and American owned firms on 28 August 1914 to supply the British army with 15,000 tons of meat a month. The uncertainty about price was resolved by the British government guaranteeing payment to the exporters of the average price during the week the contract meat arrived. In addition, the companies would continue to use the rest of their capacity to supply the British civilian market as far as circumstances allowed. Uncertainties over payment were removed by paying them 75 per cent of the value of each cargo in Argentina the week it left.[33] In this way the trade was resumed and *estancieros*' cash flows were restored. The system remained in force throughout the war, and although the allied purchasing commission acted as a monopolistic buyer, the increase in demand meant that prices continued to rise to the benefit of farmers.

The greatest effects of the increase were felt in Uruguay. There the introduction of the *frigorificos* had been rather later than in Argentina, and, as the war itself saw a significant increase

[31] Benjamin Hibbard, *Effects of the Great War upon agriculture in the United States and Great Britain* (1919), pp. 171–2.

[32] H. W. Macrosty, 'Army meat supplies', *J. Board of Trade*, 109 (1922), p. 603.

[33] *Ibid.*

TABLE 1. Sources of British chilled and frozen meat imports, 1908–1918 ('000 tons)

	1908–13	*1914*	*1915*	*1916*	*1917*	*1918*
Beef						
USA	25	5	50	46	47	129
Argentina	271	300	255	202	134	99
Australasia	38	101	99	82	98	47
Total Beef	334	406	404	330	279	275
Mutton						
Argentina	73	57	39	38	24	35
Australasia	160	185	184	128	87	63
Total Mutton	233	242	223	166	111	98

Source: BPP, *Annual statement of trade of the United Kingdom.*

in Uruguayan freezing capacity, this brought benefits to the *estancieros*. Over the six years 1914–1920 exports more than doubled and the price of cattle rose two and a half times. In Argentina the increases were not so pronounced, but were still significant. Average cattle prices there rose 44 per cent between 1913 and 1919, though reversing temporarily in 1917. The reason for the fall in 1917 was the decision by the meat companies to reduce their purchases because of rising freight and insurance rates as war risks increased. The decline in River Plate exports can be seen in Table 1. Farmers expressed indignation at their lower prices, as those in London were still rising, and accused the allied purchasing commissions and the meat exporters of manipulating the market. Regularly rising cattle prices had created strong expectations and this temporary fall led Uruguayan and Argentine cattle farmers' organisations to make representations to their governments.[34]

Their discontent was fuelled further by wartime conditions that demanded frozen beef which could be stockpiled and stored for months before it was issued to the troops, rather than chilled beef which needed to be consumed within a couple of weeks of its arrival in Europe. Frozen beef was less palatable and commanded a lower price. Up to 1914 Argentine farmers engaged in breed improvement, investing heavily in superior bloodstock lines, urged on by the American companies after they entered the industry. When shipments of chilled meat declined and those of frozen meat increased during the war, their superior animals commanded a very low premium over inferior cattle. The meat firms also preferred thin or traditional cattle for canning, and the relative prices of these animals rose. The packers were not responsible for allied demand, but because they earned very high profits from 1915 to 1917, discontented cattle producers argued they were earned partly at their expense and put forward a plan for the expropriation of the meat packing plants, financed through government bonds subscribed by cattle farmers. Similarly, in Uruguay lower cattle prices in 1916 caused discontent among

[34] R. C. Gebhardt, 'The River Plate meat industry since c. 1900: technology, ownership, international trade regimes and domestic policy' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London School of Economics, 2000), pp. 162–3, 368.

cattlemen and led to the denunciation of the meat firms by the pro-rural Blanco party. In the event, cattle prices recovered in 1919 and demands for government intervention faded as producers, driven by rising expectations, continued to expand their output and increase their landholdings.[35]

IV

Although the pressures on Britain's meat imports were immediately felt in the South Atlantic trade, the initial effects of the war were entirely beneficial for Australian and New Zealand farmers. Throughout the last months of 1914 large amounts of all farm produce, including frozen meat, were exported at enhanced prices. Meat was sent on optional bills of lading, not only to England but also to France to help meet the requirements of the French army. The *New Zealand Herald* believed that war removed any possibility of depression, and also expected meat shipments to France to become a permanent feature when peace was resumed. Not all Australian farmers were able to benefit to the same extent as production there was held back by drought.[36] The benefits of this sellers' market were felt not only by sheep farmers, but by cattle fatteners as well and the early weeks of the war saw a 50 per cent rise in the London price of frozen North Island beef.[37]

The first real problems did not appear until the early weeks of 1915 when shortage of shipping space began to affect New Zealand farmers. By February the matter had become a full blown political row with the Prime Minister, William Ferguson Massey, and his coalition government, facing accusations from farmers' representatives, the freezing companies and the opposition that they had taken insufficient action to secure shipping space for all the meat the country was prepared to send to England.[38] Although the government argued this was the first time it had had to secure shipping space for the industry and the shortage was being exaggerated, there certainly appear to have been problems in getting all the meat away.[39] As in South America, the familiar allegations that farmers were unable to sell fully fattened animals and were forced to continue feeding them at a loss and watch as their 'over-ripe' stock spoiled and fell in value were made by the leader of the Auckland graziers.[40] In February the main New Zealand farming newspaper, the *Farmers' Union Advocate*, reported that the problem of the dearth of insulated steamers had still not been solved, and the accumulation of carcasses meant the freezing works were about to refuse further deliveries of animals. In anticipation of this, by mid-February the sale price of fat sheep on the South Island had fallen by 2*s.* a head at East Addington, and from 5*s.* to 4*s.* a head at the Ashburton weekly stock market.[41] But there was no short-term solution to the problem of shortage of refrigerated ships, partly because of delayed turn around times caused by dock labour shortages in Britain, and also when the Imperial government re-directed

[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 163–4; Albert, *South America*, pp. 69–70.

[36] *New Zealand Herald* (Auckland, hereafter *NZH*), 1 Jan. 1915, pp. 3b, 4a-b.

[37] *Weekly Press* (Christchurch, hereafter *WP*), 20 Jan. 1915, p. 14d.

[38] *Hawkes Bay Herald* (Napier, hereafter *HBH*), 5 Jan. 1915, p. 3c; 6 Jan. 1915, p. 3d; 8 Jan. 1915, p. 3c.

[39] *HBH*, 9 Jan. 1915, p. 3e.

[40] *HBH*, 7 Jan. 1915, p. 3b.

[41] *Farmers' Union Advocate* (Wellington, hereafter *FUA*), 20 Feb. 1915, pp. 4a, 23c.

ships to other routes once they had discharged their meat and were under its control in British waters.[42]

From the farmers' point of view the difficulties over shipping, which appeared first in 1915 and returned intermittently throughout the war, were overtaken in March 1915 by the New Zealand government's decision to accede to the request of the British government to purchase all New Zealand meat exports on its behalf. Animals were not bought direct from the farmers, but from the freezing companies, who were only paid once the frozen meat was placed on board steamers for Britain and Europe. The weakness of this arrangement was that the freezing companies only paid farmers when the government reimbursed them. From the companies' point of view any delay in shipping the meat was not a problem, as the British government also paid them a daily rate to store the meat. The construction of more cold stores from 1915 meant some increase in storage capacity, but it was still limited, and farmers complained it did nothing to reduce the length of time they had to wait for payment.[43] They also felt sidelined as all arrangements were made between the government and the freezing firms, and they resented the fact that the Farmer's Union was never officially recognized in any of the arrangements for commandeering meat supplies.[44] Resentment grew, and by May 1915 there were complaints that feed was so scarce that many were resigning themselves to heavy losses, and those who found it impossible to carry their stock over to the next season were either preparing to sell at any price or send them to the boiling-down works.[45]

Shortage of shipping space placed similar pressures on Australian farmers, but drought was much more of a problem, and war exacerbated the difficulties it caused in normal times. In anticipation of feed scarcities, farmers adopted the practice of exporting immature animals, but by 1915 this was reported to be adding to the shortage of shipping space. A correspondent in North Queensland reckoned that the good prices offered by exporters had been responsible for the fact that 25 per cent of the cattle killed there in 1914 were immature steers as well as a significant number of breeding cows.[46] To prevent the sacrifice of future fattening animals, as well as curb profiteering at times when shipping space was in short supply, both governments periodically banned the slaughter of immature stock. In January 1916 the North Canterbury branch of the New Zealand Farmers' Union unanimously recommended the government remove its ban on the slaughter of young stock in drought-stricken districts.[47] When this measure was considered again in January 1918, it provoked opposition from farmers who complained it compounded their losses by forcing them to allow animals to starve without any compensation, or buy in feed at prices which would deny them a reasonable profit.[48] In these situations governments resorted to patriotic appeals to farmers, reminding them that some sacrifice might be necessary to maintain supplies of frozen meat.[49]

Farmers were never wholly convinced by this argument and they continued to complain, albeit intermittently. Faced with a monopoly purchaser who had also taken control of shipping

[42] *FUA*, 29 May 1915, p. 3b-c; Sidney Pollard, *The Development of the British Economy, 1914–1980* (1983), p. 22.

[43] *FUA*, 13 Mar. 1915, p. 4a.

[44] *FUA*, 3 Apr. 1915, p. 3a.

[45] *FUA*, 29 May 1915, p. 7b.

[46] *Pastoral Review* (Melbourne, hereafter *PR*), 16 Jan. 1915, pp 71–3; *WP*, 20 Jan. 1915, p. 15b.

[47] *FUA*, 1 Jan. 1916, p. 1d.

[48] *WP*, 2 Jan. 1918, p. 9b-c.

[49] *FUA*, 3 Feb. 1917, p. 6a.

space with the United Kingdom government, they naturally sought reassurance about their own position. This was certainly necessary. As Table 1 above shows, there was a marked reduction in British imports from both countries from 1916. In 1915 Australia sent over 3.5 million carcasses of mutton and lamb to Britain, and New Zealand 6.5 million: from 1916 to 1918 Australia averaged only 636,000 and New Zealand 3.7 million.[50]

By 1916 farmers were facing further pressure on two other counts, driven this time by public opinion. The rise in domestic meat and other farm prices provoked accusations from urban consumer groups, chambers of commerce, and in the popular press that farmers were profiting from the war crisis.[51] Speaking in their defence at a meeting in Winton, South Island farmer J. R. Hamilton replied that they had endured runs of bad years in the past when no sympathy was shown for them, and they were now doing as much as they could to sustain an essential part of the economy. 'Every section of the community ought to be glad the farmers were doing well because the farmer was the fountain-head of production.'[52] The other accusation made against them was that not enough young men were enlisting, and it was suggested that rural communities subscribed less than others to war funds.[53] The introduction of conscription in New Zealand in August 1915, unlike in Australia where it was rejected in two referendums, added shortages of skilled workers to farmers' woes. As in Britain, not always successful applications for exemptions were made to local selection boards, and female workers were recruited to help out.[54]

These sentiments were part of the usual prejudice and rivalry between town and country that always surfaces during times of economic upheaval, especially in wartime when increased food prices have the greatest effect on the urban consumer. In both countries the purchase of large numbers of carcasses for export by the government at prices determined in Britain, together with government efforts to hold down domestic wages, led to complaints from urban butchers that their customers were unwilling to pay the enhanced domestic prices. In Auckland in 1917 the government's attempts to prohibit butchers from raising prices led to some of them giving up their businesses and the New Zealand Board of Trade commandeered two empty butchers' shops from which to sell meat at lower prices than the remaining ones in private ownership.[55] In Queensland in 1917, and all of New Zealand in 1918, high meat prices led governments to order exporters to deliver meat to local butchers at lower prices than could be earned by exporting it to Britain, in order to provide some measure of protection for the urban consumer. However, this caused some graziers, now doing very well from the high export prices, to voice the fear that the exporters would then shift any price reduction onto them.[56]

V

In contrast to the rest of Europe, the United Kingdom's meat industry handled the changeover to wartime conditions comparatively smoothly. Britain, as the largest market for internationally traded meat, had one of the smallest domestic meat industries. Nevertheless, it still produced 57 per cent of its meat at home, so in spite of the importance of its international meat trade, the

[50] Pearse, *The world's meat future*, p. 17.
[51] *FUA*, 10 June 1916, p. 9a-b.
[52] *FUA*, 26 Feb. 1916, p. 24d.
[53] *FUA*, 1 Jan. 1916, p. 1b-d.
[54] *FUA*, 3 Feb. 1917, p. 22d; 10 Feb. 1917, p. 22c; 26 Jan. 1918, p. 24d.
[55] *NZH*, 13 Jan. 1917, p. 6h.
[56] *PR*, 16 Feb. 1917, p. 168; *FUA*, 5 Jan. 1918, p. 8c.

provision of adequate supplies for the population was determined as much by the performance of the British farmer as it was by the ability to maintain imports.[57]

In his survey of livestock numbers and meat production, J. B. Guild concluded that overall cattle numbers were maintained from 1914 to 1918, but that sheep and pigs (excluding pigs kept by cottagers) declined by 3 and 29 per cent respectively. The ploughing up campaign from 1917 had no great impact on overall cattle and sheep numbers, and the most serious decline in pig numbers was in Ireland from 1917 onwards. Reductions in imported and home grown fodder crops from 1917 had an immediate impact on pig numbers. As can be seen from Table 2, the fall in the quantity of pig meat produced was on a larger scale than any of the other of Britain's major meats. Although most of Britain's trans-oceanic supplies were from long distances, they were kept open with the exception of the Danish pork and bacon trade.

The most serious strain on all meat supplies came from the growing allied armies in Europe, who were absorbing an increasing proportion of imports of refrigerated meat, which as we have seen were also reduced by the shipping shortage.[58] The arrangement made in early 1915, when Britain agreed with colonial governments to purchase the major part of all their supplies for its own use, made little difference to the situation before 1914 when Britain was the largest market for all internationally traded meat. At the same time, Britain agreed to purchase 20,000 tons a month for the French army to prevent them from driving up prices by bidding separately, and, shortly after, it guaranteed the Italians 5,000 tons for its troops. By 1916 the monthly quantities rose to 30,000 tons for the British army, in addition to the 25,000 tons of leaner and cheaper 'continental quality' for French and Italian troops.[59] As can be seen from Table 1 above, these demands helped divert the imports of frozen and chilled meat on which Britain had come to rely so heavily by 1914, so that by 1917 beef imports had declined by 31 per cent and mutton by 54 per cent. In that same year, French imports of frozen meat were 180,000 tons.[60]

These losses left only 375,000 tons of refrigerated meat, or around half the pre-war supply, available for the civilian population and troops stationed in the United Kingdom 1917. In addition, the shortage of feeding stuffs meant a reduction in the slaughter weights of domestic cattle.[61] The general picture to emerge from Guild's analysis can be seen in Table 2. From the second half of 1917 the effects of the war on the meat producing operations of British farmers severely reduced output. In addition, their situation was further affected by the decision to impose price controls from August 1917.

The pressures on government were immediate ones, of supplying the meat requirements of the military, and then those of the civilian population. But in doing this it had to ensure farmers retained sufficient livestock to rebuild herd and flock levels after the war. Besides being an essential contribution to the first, meat imports can be seen as the chief way of maintaining enough farm livestock for an orderly return to peace. But serious shipping difficulties in 1917 were also responsible for a significant rise in the number of animals slaughtered in the last

[57] J. B. Guild, 'Variations in the numbers of live stock and in the production of meat in the United Kingdom during the war', *J. Royal Statistical Society* 83 (1920) p. 533.

[58] *Ibid.*, pp. 534–45; Smith, *The world's food*, p. 224.

[59] Macrosty, 'Army meat supplies', pp. 603–04.

[60] Augé-Laribé and Pinot, *Agriculture and food supply*, p. 75.

[61] Guild, 'Variations', pp. 534, 551–2.

TABLE 2. United Kingdom Meat Production, 1909–1918 ('000 tons)

Years	*Beef and veal*	*Mutton and lamb*	*Pig meat*	*Offal*	*All meat*
1909–13	749	320	385	65	1519
1914	837	283	405	69	1594
1915	749	282	395	64	1490
1916	823	304	350	66	1543
1917	721	281	205	54	1261
1918	620	209	175	45	1049

Source: J. B. Guild, 'Variations in the numbers of live stock and in the production of meat in the United Kingdom during the war', *J. Royal Statistical Society*, 83 (1920), p. 548.

quarter.[62] This was made worse by the government setting a target of 250,000 cattle for army needs. To prevent an excessive price increase, it tried to fix prices for all cattle slaughtered, whether for Army or civilian consumption. It did this on a monthly descending scale for first grade cattle, fixed at 74*s.* in August, falling to 60*s.* in January 1918. Besides fierce protests from farmers facing falling prices when costs were rising, it caused excessive numbers of animals to be rushed to market in September and October, including many that were underweight, to take advantage of the higher price. Attempts to revise prices and modify the scheme led to further uncertainty, so that in late December and the following January there were few cattle coming to market, butchers had to shut their shops and queues formed whenever there were rumours they had meat.[63]

In normal seasons prices rose from September to January, but the government had done the reverse, as well as setting the September price significantly higher than its equivalent in previous years. In February 1918 Lord Milner admitted the mistake. Speaking in the House of Lords he perhaps unnecessarily took the full blame, and admitting that 'Instead of spreading a certain scarcity over four months, there was an abundance over two months, and a scarcity during another two months'.[64] To reassure farmers that meat production would be remunerative, the War Cabinet had to announce that the December price of 67*s.* would continue to July 1918, and the maximum of 60*s.* would only come into force for the rest of the year.[65]

VI

The United States has been represented as the great saviour of the allied food supply in all histories of the war, and it supplied 80 per cent of Britain's meat and fats in 1917 and 1918.[66] However, its position in the early years of the war, when it was officially neutral, was more ambiguous. In the case of meat it probably added to Britain's difficulties. Four large packing firms, Armour, Morris, Swift, and Hammond dominated the United States meat industry and controlled all American meat exports. Because they often cooperated with each other they were

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 548.
[63] Beveridge, *British food control*, pp. 140–5.
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 148.
[65] Hibbard, *Effects of the Great War*, p. 213.
[66] Offer, *First World War*, p. 376.

regarded by farmers, politicians, and a large section of the public as a cartel and collectively known as the 'Meat Trust'.[67] After 1900 as the American meat export surplus started to decline, the trust firms showed an increasing interest in Argentina and in 1906–7 Swift set up a plant there and the other firms soon followed.[68] The final disappearance of American beef exports and the fear that domestic supplies of meat alone would not satisfy the American market had made the United States 'an open customer for meat'. The Underwood Act, passed in 1913, removed the duties on meat shipped to the United States and raised fears that Australian, New Zealand and Argentine meat would be diverted from Europe. Considerable amounts were shipped from these countries to the United States from mid-1913 to the outbreak of war and continued into the early part of the war.[69] In January 1915 the Australian *Pastoral Review* carried comments from its correspondent, sent from London in November 1914, that 'Argentine supplies of chilled beef are being diverted to the States in growing quantities, and will increase when the existing shipping facilities are augmented'.[70] The same thing was also noted in the 1915 *Report* on the Australian meat export trade.[71]

The reasons for this were the slow realisation of the seriousness of the situation, the American meat firms' preoccupation with profit and supplying the United States market, and the time taken by the British government to implement a comprehensive system of control. In the early stages of the war South American meat was imported by the United States, but not all of it was ultimately destined for that market, and it was alleged that some was being stored there rather than in the United Kingdom to avoid being commandeered by the British authorities.[72] American firms also attempted to make purchases for the American market in Australia and New Zealand. As far as Commonwealth and South American farmers were concerned it made little difference to the price they received, as the overall level of demand was the same. But the ability of the American firms to hold back supplies out of the immediate control of British military requisitioning officers did increase prices for the United Kingdom and helped fuel the rapid rise in consumer prices in the early part of the war. It was also claimed that the use of extra ships to take Argentine meat to cold stores in New York, hold it there and then re-ship it to England when the firms had negotiated a sufficiently high price with the British authorities, tied up shipping space and added further to freight charges, which were then passed back to the New Zealand, Australian and South American farmers.[73]

The shortages in Europe and increased prices did eventually have a positive effect on United States farmers, stimulating them to increase meat output as well. The gradual fall in cattle numbers for some years before the war was reversed after 1914, numbers rising from 56.6 million in 1914 to 66.8 million in 1918 and the prices of all meat animals rose steadily, the greatest increase

[67] Rudolf A. Clemen, *The American livestock and meat industry* (1923), pp. 745–67.

[68] M. Yeager, *Competition and regulation: the development of oligopoly in the meat packing industry* (1981), p. 206.

[69] *Meat Trades J.*, 1 Jan. 1914, p. 12; 15 Jan. 1914, p. 68; R. Ramsay, 'The world's frozen and chilled meat trade', in Gresham Publishing Co. Ltd, *The meat trade* (3 vols, 1935), III, p. 16; R. Perren, 'Big business and its customers: the European market for American meat from 1840 to 1939', *J. European Economic History* 32 (2003), p. 602.

[70] *PR*, 16 Jan. 1915, p. 71.

[71] BPP, 1914–1916, XLVI, *Report of the Royal Commission on the meat export trade of Australia*, pp. 24–5, 27, 40.

[72] W. D. Lysnar, *Meat and shipping problems* (1917), pp. 10–12.

[73] *Ibid.*, pp. 14–16.

being for hogs whose price almost doubled.[74] In the early stages of the war the government took no measures to impose any form of control over meat prices or measures to encourage farmers to raise production. Indeed, most of the wartime increases in United States livestock numbers were simply the normal responses of farmers to rising prices. Even with the establishment of the Federal Food Administration after America entered the war in 1917, there was initially no attempt to manage meat supplies in the same manner as wheat.

The Food Administration, under Herbert Hoover, started by concentrating meat buying for the allies, the Red Cross, and Belgian relief into a single agency with its headquarters in Chicago. From November 1917 attempts were made to stabilise pork prices and stimulate pig meat production by maintaining the price per hundredweight of finished hogs at thirteen times the price of a bushel of corn during their growth. (It was estimated that an equivalent of twelve bushels of corn was required to produce a hundredweight of hog, so the price equivalent of thirteen bushels was set to stimulate an increase in production.) Much less was done for beef. It was only in January 1918 that Hoover agreed with Britain to increase export orders for frozen meat to clear part of the American cold stores. The packers were advised that the prices of cattle (except poorer animals for canning) should not be allowed to fall substantially below current levels. Hoover defended this approach by saying 'we all know that an attempt to fix standard, or minimum cattle prices is almost an impossibility, and that during most periods, the demand takes care of the supply'.[75]

The truth of this statement, and the weakness of the Food Administration's rules, became apparent in August 1918. In normal times it had a fair degree of control over prices as it bought such large numbers of cattle that it could prevent the market from becoming congested and prices falling. It was its policy of buying almost no lightweight animals (those weighing 1000 to 1800 pounds), which it left to find their own prices with the canners, that caused problems when the pastures in Oklahoma and Texas suddenly failed at the end of July. Large numbers of this class of animal came onto the markets, and for a time they sold for eight or nine cents a pound while heavy beeves sold at 15 to 18 cents. This meant a direct and unnecessary loss for farmers. At times they were selling cows for little more than the cost of the hides and the market was flooded with meat bought from the farmer at a ridiculously low price, while the meatless days introduced to limit domestic consumption still continued, and the consumer was forced to pay higher prices. Eventually, after receiving many urgent telegrams from farmers, the Food Administration suspended the meatless days as far as beef was concerned and agreed to purchase some of the lighter weight beef carcasses.[76]

VII

Looking at the fortunes of livestock farmers over the war as a whole, certain conclusions can be drawn. Those producing for an export market experienced a steady increase in demand as a result of rising purchases by their own governments or other agencies on behalf of the British Government. This, though, became a highly centralized business. The precise forms of control

[74] Hibbard, *Effects of the Great War*, pp. 56–7.
[75] *Ibid.*, pp. 129–32.
[76] *Ibid.*, pp. 132–3.

varied from country to country, depending on the closeness of their wartime alliance with Britain. Although normal market mechanisms were suspended in every case, in an attempt to impose some control over prices and supplies, there were limits to the effectiveness of these measures. The restrictions that accompanied them were a frequent source of friction between farmers and governments, or the meat-exporting firms acting on governments' behalf.

At times, as in the United States in the summer of 1918, there were instances where government controls in the meat exporting countries broke down completely, but they were very rare. The usual situation was an undercurrent of discontent and anxiety among farmers at the closer controls being exercised over their operations. In 1915 New Zealand farmers partly blamed the difficulties caused by the shortage of shipping space on their own government's failure to protect their interests in its dealings with London. As the River Plate countries were neutral throughout the war there was no need for the Argentine or Uruguayan governments to exercise any direct market control over the market. Here farmers' discontent at low prices in 1917 was not directed against their government but against the meat packers. For Britain's wartime allies, the conflict involved cost and this made them aware of the need to restrain the rise in farm prices as far as was possible without undermining farmers' incentive to produce. However, for all these countries the total allied control over refrigerated shipping meant that livestock farmers were unable, as the United States consul in Argentina observed in 1914, 'to secure any extraordinary benefits from the situation caused by the European war'.[77]

The meat problems facing the British consumer were the result of a number of causes. In the first place there was an absolute shortage from reduced home output and a fall in imports. The reduction in domestic production was probably not so much because pasture was converted to arable, but more likely to have been caused by a reduction in the availability of animal feed. This was particularly apparent in the case of pig meat as pig producers were in direct competition with humans for food. While the ploughing up campaign of 1917 certainly reduced sheep and cattle pasture, the concentration on bread corn and the increase in flour milling ratios were important factors in reducing the availability of livestock feed from domestic sources. There were also serious reductions on the imports of cheap animal feed, on which much of the pre-1914 livestock industry was based. Dewey estimates that by 1918 there was an overall reduction in imported and domestic feedstuffs of something like 60 per cent.[78] But the meat question was not only one of availability: it was one of choice, along with palatability and variety. Offer quotes an American physiologist living in Germany in 1916, when meat and fat shortages then were far more severe than they ever became in Britain, who said: 'Had the Germans been vegetarians, there would have been no problem'.[79] The problem, though, for all war economies is that once the initial patriotic appeals have died away, consumers soon become demoralized by food queues and restricted choice. In Britain this was acutely noticeable for meat, where reduced domestic output and a heavy reliance on canned and frozen imports, along with substitutes of unpalatable United States bacon, represented for many a noticeable deterioration of dietary standards. There are very real limits to the extent which a nation can suffer a reduction in its level of consumption and also avoid a serious deterioration in morale.

[77] Quoted in Albert, *South America*, p. 70.
[78] Dewey, *British agriculture*, pp. 167–169, 252.
[79] Offer, *First World War*, p. 25.

One result of the war was that in all countries the interests of the civilian consumer came last. Although governments did not completely neglect them, the decision to feed the allied armies in Europe to a higher standard than in peacetime meant that the supplies available to the civilian market had to be reduced. One result was retail prices increased more than farm gate prices, but here there were a number of other factors at work in addition to reduced supply. It is incontrovertible that war risks, as well as shipping and labour shortages, inevitably added to production and distribution costs. The meat companies, who effectively operated the export trade before 1914, now did so on behalf of the British government. Although subject to government pressure over prices and supplies, there were limits to how far the British government could manage them, even though it ultimately controlled the available shipping space. In return for their co-operation, it had to allow the firms to make handsome profits. It was also in the interests of both parties to shift the burden of as much of the extra costs involved, either back to the farmer or forward onto the civilian consumer. Civilians complained about high food prices, but they also reacted to them by blaming farmers and traders for seeking to profit from the war. Farmers' organizations interpreted civilian complaints as a wilful refusal to understand their difficulties, and government controls and exporting firms' high profits as an attempt to place an unfair share of war costs on their shoulders. In return, they expected a higher level of support from government when artificially inflated wartime demand collapsed on the resumption of peace.

Technological innovation in Dutch cattle breeding and dairy farming, 1850–2000

by Jan Bieleman

Abstract

This article attempts to present the broad outlines of technological change in Dutch cattle breeding and dairy farming over the last 150 years. After 1850, Dutch dairy farmers and cattle breeders profited from the rapidly increasing opportunities offered by expanding foreign markets. Herd book organisations were established to meet the demand for breeding cattle from abroad. In 1904, the Dutch Herd Book Organisation was reorganised, aiming its breeding policy at three well-defined types of cattle according the pure-line breeding principle. After 1950 aims in cattle breeding were changed, as it appeared likely that in the near future the production of cheese would become more important than that of butter. At the same time it became clear that the one sided concentration on exterior appearance had led cattle breeding into a cul-de-sac. Consequently breeding programmes had to be developed which used new technologies in breeding, centralised milk recording and artificial insemination. At the same time, the need for a higher labour productivity encouraged the rapid spread of milking machines. To cope with the increasing number of cattle per farm, new types of stall and foddering systems were introduced and the transportation of milk from farm to factory changed fundamentally with the introduction of bulk milk tankers.

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, Dutch agriculture entered a completely new phase in its development. Developments in transport fundamentally reshaped geographical relations inside and outside Europe. Another decisive element was the liberalisation of international trading which began to spread across Western Europe, and the new regime of free trade encouraged a fast growing supply of all kinds of agricultural products to the early industrialising countries, especially Britain.[1] G. J. Hengeveld, a Dutch authority on cattle and the author of the standard work *Het Rundvee* (*Cattle*) published in 1865, called the British export market '*een bodemlooze*

[*] This article is a modified version of a paper presented to the BAHS Spring Conference at Edinburgh on the 5–7 April 2004. It is based mainly on material previously presented in two chapters in J. Bieleman, 'Landbouw' in J. W. Schot *et al* (eds), *Techniek in Nederland in de Twintigste Eeuw*, III, *Landbouw en Voeding* (2000): J. Bieleman, 'Dieren en gewassen in een veranderende landbouw. De georganiseerde rundveeverbetering', pp. 130–153 and P. R. Priester, 'Boeren met machines. Het melkveehouderijbedrijf ', pp. 99–125.

[1] J. Bieleman, 'Dutch agriculture 1850–1925 – Responding to changing markets', *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte, 1996* (1996), pp. 11–25; J. Bieleman, *Geschiedenis van de landbouw in Nederland. Verscheidenheid en veranderingen* (1992), pp. 207–358; D. Pilat, *Dutch agricultural export performances (1846–1926)* (Historia Agriculturae, XIX, Groningen, 1989).

put die nooit gevuld kan worden' ('a bottomless pit that never can be filled').[2] Without doubt, horticulture and livestock farming were the sectors that benefited most from these new opportunities, particularly as the demand for higher value agricultural products increased. Between 1838 and 1865 – a peak year – exports of cheese and butter cheese increased by 130 per cent and 175 per cent, respectively, most of it being sent across the North Sea. However, it was not only the quantities of butter and cheese sent for export that increased. There was also an enormous increase in the sales of different kinds of livestock. The number of cattle exported increased from less than 8000 in 1838 to more than 50,000 in 1850 and 153,000 in 1864; the numbers of exported calves increased from 2000 to 78,500. By the mid-1870s, even sheep exports had increased by more than 3000 per cent! In Noord-Holland, a province with a long-standing reputation in livestock farming, dairy prices rose by more than 100 per cent, while cattle prices increased by more than 150 per cent.[3] However, it was not only the traditional dairying regions like Noord-Holland and Friesland that benefited from the increasing demand from abroad, but also the sandy districts of the interior which, from 1850 onwards, began to produce pigs and butter for export. Traditionally, dairy products had dominated agricultural exports from the Netherlands, but now exports of cattle and meat were beginning to take a comparable place. And among the exported cattle were the ancestors of the animals that about a hundred years later were to become the most popular breed of dairy cattle in the world, the Holsteins.

I

Around the middle of the nineteenth century, the Dutch cattle stock was still far from being uniform. Each region had its own breeds, adapted to the circumstances under which they were kept, although, nowadays, experts believe that most of these breeds belonged to the group of West-European Lowland breeds.[4] However, as new, expanding overseas markets beckoned and horizons widened, livestock farmers began to wonder if the improvement of their own, traditional breeds would offer them new opportunities. So, for instance, after the 1840s, cattle breeders in the provinces of Noord-Holland and Groningen were busy experimenting with cross breeding between their own cattle and British shorthorn cattle (at that time the most fashionable breed in Europe).[5]

In the early 1870s, various groups began to discuss the desirability of establishing a Dutch herd book organisation to serve the ever-growing demand for breeding cattle from abroad. The Bohemian Herd Book, established shortly before in Prague and the Holstein Herd Book published in Massachusetts after 1872 served as exemplars. It was argued that a Dutch herd book would develop the position of Dutch cattle breeders on the international market and, at the same time, act as an incentive for the livestock-farming sector to improve its orientation

[2] G. J. Hengeveld, *Het rundvee, zijne verschillende soorten, rassen en veredeling* (2 vols, 1865), II, p. 114. This book offers an exhaustive overview of mid-nineteenth century cattle breeding.

[3] J. L. van Zanden, *De economische ontwikkeling van de Nederlandse landbouw in de negentiende eeuw, 1800–1914* (A.A.G.Bijdragen, 25, 1985), p.221.

[4] As well as the book by Hengeveld, see also M. Felius, *Cattle breeds: an encyclopedia* (1995); Anno Fokkinga and Marleen Felius, *Een land vol vee. Landbouwhuisdieren van Nederland* (1995).

[5] Felius, *Cattle breeds*, p. 129; H. M. Kroon, *De tegenwoordige richtingen in de fokkerij der landbouwhuisdieren in Nederland* (1913), pp. 122–6.

towards the international market. In 1874 the Dutch Herd Book Society, or *NRS* (*Nederlandsch Rundvee Stamboek*) was established. Shortly afterwards, in 1879, cattle breeders in the province of Friesland decided to established their own Friesian Herd Book Organisation, the *FRS*. The founders took the view that a separate Friesian herd book was the most effective way of improving Friesian cattle, which they considered to be a separate breed. As well as these two organisations, other separate, smaller herd book societies functioned for a shorter or longer time in some regions.[6]

By the end of the century it had become clear that the changing situation in cattle breeding called for better breeding strategies and therefore for new, better-defined breeding goals. To meet these needs the Dutch Herd Book Society decided to reorganise itself. In doing so, new breeding goals were to be based on easily recognisable characteristics. Three breeding goals were accepted, and after elaborate discussion, defined and named as (i), the Black and white Friesian-Holland breed (*FH*-breed or, officially, *H*-breed); (ii), the White-faced Black Groningen breed (*G*-breed); and (iii), the Red and white Meuse-Rhine-Yssel breed (*MRIJ*-breed).[7]

Of course, these three breeds did not just appear out of the blue. The Black and white Friesian-Holland breed had grazed the pastures of the coastal provinces for centuries. It was the result of well-considered breeding strategies by local farmers, in which the typical black-and-white pattern had dominated since the eighteenth century, possibly because of the breed's high milk yields. In 1763 the Friesian publicist J. H. Knoop wrote explicitly that livestock farmers bred their cattle selectively. Cows that did not produce enough milk were slaughtered or carried off the farm as soon as possible.[8] From late sixteenth and early seventeenth century publications, it appears that dairy cows in the province of Noord-Holland annually produced at least as much as 2000 litres annually.[9]

The Red Pied Meuse-Rhine-Yssel breed originated amongst the old, regional breeds of the easternmost parts of the country, where the soils are predominantly sandy in character. During the eighteenth century this breed had been mixed with others coming from adjacent parts of Germany. The white-faced black Groningen breed (known as *Blaarkop*) was bred not only in the province of Groningen,[10] but also in parts of the province of South Holland. Their numbers were small, and in the early twentieth century this breed formed only about five per cent of the Dutch dairy cattle stock.

Implicitly connected with these newly defined goals for breeding was the fact the *NRS* had accepted the principle of pure-line breeding; that is to say breeding within three well-defined breeds. Its aim was to breed a stock of cattle that was as uniform as possible, as this should lead to the desired production qualities. This principle of using these three breeds – 'the

[6] H. W. J. Dekker and K. P. Stapel, *100 jaar Koninklijke Vereniging Het Nederlandse Rundvee-Stamboek, 1874–1974* (1976); R. Strikwerda, *Een eeuw Fries stamboekvee* (1979); D. H. van Adrichem Boogaert, *De ontwikkeling van de Nederlandse rundveehouderij in deze eeuw. Een historisch overzicht over de periode tot 1970* ([1971]); R. Strikwerda, *Melkweg 2000* (1998).

[7] K. P. Stapel, *Rundveefokkerij* (1988); Felius, *Cattle breeds*.

[8] Quoted by J. M. G. van der Poel, 'Landbouw in de Noordelijke Nederlanden, 1770–1840', in *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederland*, X, (1981), pp. 159–82.

[9] In the nineteenth century, statistics on milk production were usually presented in litres (one litre of milk is about 1.03 kg). Bieleman, *Geschiedenis van de landbouw*, p. 65.

[10] From 1930 red Blaarkoppen were also noticed officially in the herd book.

TABLE 1. Composition of the Dutch cattle stock according to breeds in 1975

	Number of cattle		*Average milk yield (litres)*
	'000 head	*%*	
Black and white Friesian-Holland (FH)	2954	70	4910
Red and white Meuse-Rhine-Yssel (MRIJ)	1195	28	4898
White-faced Black Groningen (G)	77	2	4664
Others	10	0	–
TOTAL	4236	100	

Source: LEI/CBS, *Landbouwcijfers*.

national three' – was maintained up to the late 1970s. Table 1 shows the balance of animals in the national herd in 1975 and reveals the continued preponderance of the Black and white Friesian-Holland breed.

II

Apart from developments in the organisational field, other important improvements also took place in Dutch livestock farming during the second half of the nineteenth century. In the first place, the cattle stock itself profited from better feeding and more care. An important part was played by the increasing use of concentrates, which has to be considered as one of the most important innovations of the time. Between 1850 and 1890 their use doubled, and after 1890 it increased further to reach a peak just before World War I.[11]

Hardly less important were the qualitative and quantitative improvements in hay production. These were the result of an important improvement in water management in the livestock areas after steam-powered pumping stations were introduced. Consequently, better manuring of meadow land paid off, and more care was given to manure production itself. Many farms were equipped with liquid manure pits, so nutrients were no longer lost and hay yields increased.[12]

All this led to a significant improvement in milk yields. Although it is hard to obtain precise data, it is generally accepted that around the middle of the nineteenth century, milk yields from good cows in the livestock areas were as high as 2700 to 3000 litres. Of course, there were less productive cows, but at the same time there were those that gave even more, and yields of 4000 to 5000 litres were not exceptional. Five decades later, around 1900, on farms with skilful livestock keepers in the pasturing districts of the province of South-Holland, an average production of 4000 litres per cow had become quite normal. Yet, ten years earlier this had been less than 3000 litres. Dairy cows registered in the Friesian herd Book yielded as many as 4130 litres per year in the period 1896/1905 (see Figure 6). However, the last figure was the yield of

[11] Van Zanden, *De economische ontwikkeling,* p. 226 (Table 9.9). M. Knibbe, *Agriculture in the Netherlands, 1851–1950* (1993), pp. 154–5.

[12] Bieleman, *Geschiedenis van de landbouw,* p. 293.

a special category of highly productive cows and should not be taken as the norm for the whole Friesian stock.[13]

Subsequently, there were other, infrastructural developments which led to important improvements in dairy farming. One was the establishment of an adequate agricultural policy by the national government at the instigation of the joint regional agricultural societies. On the initiative of this agricultural lobby, and as a part of a much more comprehensive, active agricultural policy, state agricultural advisors were appointed – one for every province – after 1890. Soon they were followed by a number of specialised dairy consultants and cattle-breeding consultants.[14] In the sandy regions especially, the advisors did much to improve cattle housing, as in these areas cowsheds were mostly primitive. This was one element in a more general pursuit of better hygiene and quality, aimed at an improvement in the position of Dutch agricultural products on markets abroad. What was eventually to become an extensive administrative machinery was, in fact, part of an ambitious and comprehensive governmental programme begun in 1890 which tried to find a way to support and facilitate the dairy sector, without using tariff protection. Tariff protection was simply not an option. The Dutch (agricultural) economy was heavily dependant on exports and the government did not want to fan the fire of protection that was already smouldering in Europe.

A crucial factor in the fast changing livestock farming sector was the emergence of factory dairying – often based on co-operative enterprises. The first, steam-powered dairy factory in the Netherlands was established in the village of Warga, in the province of Friesland, in 1886. Other co-operatives were soon established. In the sandy districts (covering about 40 per cent of the country), where farms were usually much smaller and farmers had less capital at their disposal, a breakthrough was brought about by the introduction of a small-scale, cheap, hand-powered creamery. The first of these was established in 1892 and soon almost every village, no matter how small, had its own. However, as the economy boomed after 1900, they disappeared as quickly as they had arrived, as production came to be concentrated in bigger, steam-powered factories.[15] Although in most cases farmers were the founders and driving force behind the establishment of these co-operatives (often assisted by local notables), the recently appointed state agricultural extension officers in the region played an important role as advisers.[16]

Other infrastructural innovations were taking place in livestock farming more or less simultaneously. Important innovations at the local level included the establishment of local milk-recording societies, bull societies and breeding societies. And although these organisations were begun at village level, the state agricultural advisers again played an important role in helping farmers getting them started. The first milk-recording societies were established in

[13] J. M. G. van der Poel, 'Het Noordhollandse weidebedrijf in de 19e eeuw', *Holland, Regionaal Historisch Tijdschrift* 8 (1986), pp. 148–57. Bieleman, *Geschiedenis van de landbouw*, p. 293.

[14] W. H. Vermeulen, *Den Haag en de landbouw. Keerpunten in het negentiende-eeuwse landbouwbeleid* (1966); P. J. P. Zuurbier, *De besturing en organisatie van de landbouwvoorlichtingsdienst* (1984).

[15] Bieleman, *Geschiedenis van de landbouw*, pp. 294–9 and 309–12.

[16] Jan Bieleman, 'The birth of factory dairying in the Northern Netherlands – in particular in the provinces of Drenthe and Friesland' (paper delivered to the CORN-Conference, 'Food production and food processing in Western Europe, 1850–1990' at Leuven on 13–16 November 2003).

Friesland, after 1894.[17] They became important not only for paying farmers for the milk they delivered and as a guarantee of milk quality, but they also helped them select the best of their stock for breeding.

III

In 1906, when the Herd Book Society was reorganised by defining its three new, well-specified breeding goals, it chose a pure line breeding system in which only animals of the same variety or breed were mated. This systematic selection on the basis of an animal's exterior was strongly oriented towards model types.[18] Characteristic of this approach was the way the herd book organisations introduced prefixes for individual animals with excellent breeding capacities. The Friesian Herd Book was the first to do so, when it introduced the prefix 'Preferent Sire' in 1910. The *NRS* followed six years later. In time, other prefixes followed.

However, the effect of the system of exterior inspections connected with the method of pure line breeding meant that the appearance of the cows changed quite radically over time. This was especially true in Friesland where breeders had focussed on a somewhat broader, 'deeper' and more muscular (meaty) type of beast. In doing so, they transformed the Friesian cow from a purely dairy type to a milk-meat type of cow, or a dual-purpose type. The effect was that the bigger, less muscular cow, which was still widely found in this province in the first decades of the twentieth century, gradually disappeared. However, the one-sided attention of breeders to the exterior of the animal, combined with the – still unknown – high heritability for height, led in time to smaller cows. Initially, between 1900 and 1910, the height of the shoulders of FRS cows had increased to almost 139 cm. This was maintained until 1925, but by 1960 it decreased by about 10 cm to only 129 cm. A similar trend was visible in the Red Pied *MRIJ*-cows, in the sandy districts. At about the same time it was found that many of the Black Pied *FH*-breed population had not shown any increase in productivity after World War II. Only milk fat content had increased slightly.[19]

Before the war, some experts had already been warning against too formal an attitude in the matter of exterior breeding and too great a concentration on milk fat content which occurred after milk recording had become widely accepted and the resulting data used to inform selection and breeding. Certainly the change from a purely dairy type of cow to a milk-meat type had, at first, been generally applauded, but it became clear that the mark had been overshot. However, as long as the official cattle inspection policy remained and Dutch breeding cattle brought high prices on export markets, no change in attitudes could be expected. Yet, by the early 1960s, it was clear that cattle breeding in the Netherlands had reached an impasse. At the same time, dairy farming was stagnating economically, and many livestock farmers turned their back on not only milk recording and artificial insemination (which was just about to spread)

[17] Earlier, between 1860 and 1870 a Friesian dairy farmer had experimented with a type of cream meter, and had concluded that there were hereditary differences between cows in the quality of their milk, i.e. fat content, Van Adrichem Boogaert, *De ontwikkeling*, p. 106.

[18] Dekker and Stapel, *100 jaar*, p. 102. R. D. Politiek, *Doel en streven in de rundveefokkerij* (1962), pp. 14–15.

[19] J. M. Dijkstra, 'De ontwikkeling van de hoogtematen van stamboekvee in Nederland', *Veeteelt- en zuivelberichten* 7 (1964), pp. 84–92.

but the herd book organisations too. In the early 1960s, the *NRS* and *FRS* had 54,200 and 7000 members respectively (together about one third of all dairy farmers); by the mid-1970s both organisations had fewer than 33,000 members in total.[20] It was apparent that Dutch cattle breeding had to change direction.

In other respects too, changing circumstances made it necessary to adapt the aims of cattle breeding. Before the war, fat content had been a major selection criterion. However, in the 1950s it became clear that milk fat would be of less importance in the future whilst the importance of protein (being the raw material for cheese) would increase. It was recognised that in the coming decades butter would diminish in economic importance while cheese would become a major product as its consumption and sales increased. Indeed, whilst butter production increased until the mid-1980s, on balance it rose by 'only' 70 per cent between the 1950s and the 1990s. Over the same period, cheese production increased by more than 310 per cent, from 158,000 to 652,000 tons.[21] The Friesian Herd Book Organisation and the joint dairy co-operatives initiated research for selecting on the protein content of milk from the 1950s.[22]

As well as satisfying quantitative production characteristics, a well-bred cow was also expected to have good functional traits. One which rapidly gained in importance in the 1960s was ease of machine milking. The State Institute for Animal Husbandry Research began to research this and from 1962 onwards, ease of milking was officially a criterion for selection in cattle breeding in the Netherlands.[23]

IV

Most of the breeding societies that had been established during the early twentieth century kept breeding bulls for their members' use in the same way that bull societies did elsewhere. A major problem, however, was the increasing number of instances of bovine venereal disease, which made cows infertile after having been served by one of these bulls. From around 1934, several veterinary surgeons began small-scale experiments in artificially inseminating cows. The same year saw the establishment of the first local Artificial Insemination (AI) society by a group of farmers in the Westerkwartier district, in the province of Groningen. Others quickly followed, especially in the sandy districts, where trichomoniasis was causing much damage. By 1956, the number of cases of cows with venereal disease in the whole country had been reduced to virtually nil.[24]

The original stimulus behind the use of AI was disease control. Soon, however, it became clear that AI also had advantages for breeding, as it gave more dairy farmers access to high quality sires. This was particularly advantageous to small farmers. However, the small circle of top breeders who controlled the Dutch livestock sector were at first opposed to the use of AI. They feared that it would be a serious threat to their commercial interests. The two herd book

[20] Dekker and Stapel, *100 jaar,* p. 735; Strikwerda, *Een eeuw,* pp. 242–3.

[21] LEI/CBS, *Landbouwcijfers.*

[22] Bieleman, 'De georganiseerde rundveeverbetering', p. 138.

[23] Van Adrichem Bogaert, *De ontwikkeling,* pp. 228–33.

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 127 and 186.

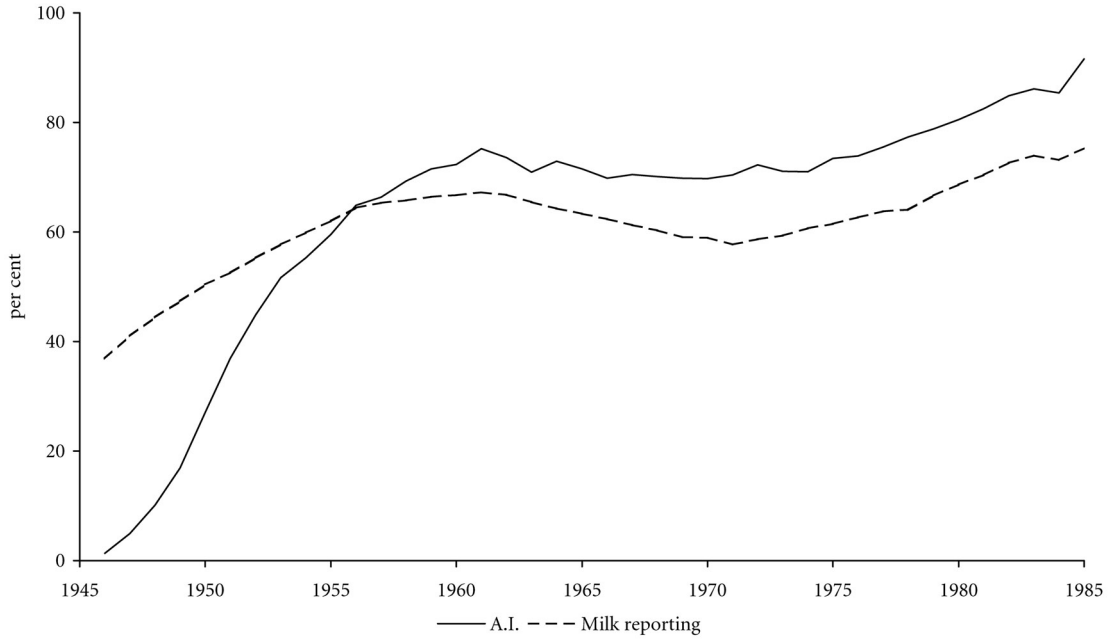


FIGURE 1. Participation in AI and milk reporting

The number of (first) inseminations and the number of dairy cows being reported upon as a percentage of the total number of dairy cows, 1946-85.
Source: LEI/CBS, *Landbouwcijfers*; Annual reports of various organisations in the field of artificial insemination and cattle breeding.

organisations were also opposed its use.[25] The effect was that AI was initially taken up much more by the medium strata of Dutch livestock farming than it was amongst large farmers.

Technically, the most important step in the development of AI came with the development of techniques to freeze the semen. The first use of frozen sperm in the Netherlands was in 1955, when a local AI society in the province of Noord-Brabant used liquid air to bring the temperature down to –196°C, a method that has been used ever since. From the early 1960s the use of frozen (diluted) semen spread rapidly. By 1970 about one quarter of semen was frozen and the practice was universally employed by the end of the 1980s.[26]

In 1946 there were roughly 40 local AI societies in the Netherlands with a membership of about 3600 dairy farmers out of a total number of about 200,000. Ten years later, in 1956, there were 146 societies and about half of all Dutch dairy farmers were members of a society. In the same year, about 61 per cent of all cows were in calf after a first insemination. After a period

[25] Stapel, *Rundveefokkerij*, pp. 14–15. Dekker and Stapel, *100 jaar*, pp. 252–3.

[26] This became possible after the British researchers Polge and Smith discovered how to freeze semen with the help of glycerine in 1955. R. Strikwerda, 'De kunstmatige inseminatie; een onmisbaar hulpmiddel in de moderne rundveeteelt', in A. H. Nubé and R. Strikwerda (eds), *De veefokkerij in Friesland* (1961), pp. 75–81; S. W. J. van Dieten, 'Ontwikkeling in KI bij rundvee; KI technisch bezien', *Bedrijfsontwikkeling* 3 (1972), pp. 137–42.

of stagnation or even decline in the 1960s and the early 1970s, the number of (first) inseminations increased again (Figure 1). Around 1985 more than 2.1 million cows were inseminated annually, which means that AI was being used for 80 per cent of all matings.[27]

V

The economic changes that took place after the second half of the 1950s showed clearly that far-reaching changes in breeding strategies and methods were inevitable. The response to changed conditions was the introduction of new selection methods, based on ideas then current in the field of population genetics. Eventually this led to the introduction of the *Proef-wacht-fokstieren systeem* (known in the United Kingdom as the 'contemporary comparison system') in the 1970s. In general terms, the crucial breakthrough was the realisation that in selecting on the basis of hereditary properties, to use female animals only was rather limiting. This was simply because most cows were retained in order to keep up stock numbers, and therefore only a limited number of heifer calves were slaughtered. A much more efficient approach would have been to select via the bulls. To do so, however, it was necessary to know in detail how the desired qualities (based on the newly formulated breeding aims) of the individual bull could be passed on.[28] The revolutionary thing about the whole idea was the fact that the genetic value of a breeding bull was no longer determined on the basis of the qualities of its dam and its ancestors in general, but on the basis of the qualities of its female descendants. To make this practicable, a fully computerised register of the performances of all dairy cows was established. Cows were normally reported on every three or four weeks. By the mid-1980s, about three-quarters of all Dutch cows were incorporated in a reporting scheme as appears from Figure 1 which shows the growing participation in reporting schemes after the war.[29]

As the contemporary comparison system was implemented, the centre of gravity in dairy cattle breeding shifted from the top breeders to the regional AI centres. Again this was something the leading, established breeders found very hard to accept. Finally, the AI centres began to co-operate closely and, being internationally orientated, no longer limited themselves to the Dutch indigenous stock, but sourced sperm worldwide. This aspect of AI took on completely new dimensions as embryo-transplantation technology developed in the Anglo-Saxon countries during the 1970s. The use of this technology meant that one highly-graded cow could produce dozens of calves, instead of just one. After it became possible to freeze embryos, the first 60 frozen embryos of American Holstein-Friesian cattle arrived at Amsterdam Airport in 1983.[30]

[27] Van Adrichem Bogaert, *De ontwikkeling*, pp. 128–9. LEI/CBS, *Landbouwcijfers* (1954–) and annual reports of various organisations involved with AI.

[28] J. de Jong, *Veehouderij* (1979), p. 211. N. J. M. van den Berg, A. T. P. Jansen and D. IJ. Kramer, *Veehouderij* (1986), pp. 155; A. F. Groen, K. de Groot, J. D. van der Ploeg and D. Roep, *Stijlvol fokken. Een orienterende studie naar de relatie tussen sociaal-economische verscheidenheid en bedrijfsspecifieke fokdoeldefinitie* (Bedrijfsstijlenstudie 9, Wageningen, 1993), p. 8.

[29] Van Adrichem Bogaert, *De ontwikkeling*, p. 113.

[30] Bieleman, 'De georganiseerde rundveeverbetering', pp. 145–6.

VI

At the end of the 1970s, Dutch livestock farming pitched into turmoil as it was invaded by a new type of dairy cow: the Holstein-Friesian. At the time, Dutch livestock was dominated by the traditional Black Pied Friesian-Holland breed, which made up 70 per cent of the national herd.

The origin of the Holstein goes back to the imports of Dutch cattle by American breeders, just after the middle of the nineteenth century.[31] In contrast to cattle breeders in the Netherlands, who had dedicated themselves to breeding dual-purpose cattle, these American breeders concentrated on breeding purely dairy cattle, even excluding fat content as a criterion for selection (for the simple reason that it did not pay). In the 1960s, cattle breeders in some European countries began to import these Holstein breeds, and Dutch cattle breeders realised that their future market for cattle might be endangered. They soon began to wonder if the Holstein-Friesian breeds might possibly be better than their own Dutch breeds. In the autumn of 1971, a group of cattle breeders and leading figures in the cattle breeding sector went to the United States and Canada to gather information about dairy farming. They were interested to see whether if it would be possible to improve the milking properties of their own breeds by using Holsteins. The idea was to improve not only the milk yield as such, but also qualities like ease of milking and fertility, as well as exterior qualities like a 'milking-machine udder'. It was concluded in 1974 that active advocacy of the American breed was not desirable. The hesitation of the leading cattle breeders was, of course, partly caused by their fear that the Holsteins would compete with their own traditional breeds and threaten their economic interests. As a result, when, compared to neighbouring countries, the rise of the Holstein in the Netherlands began relatively late, at the end of the 1970s, when, Dutch breeders and cattle experts finally became convinced of their efficacy. 'Holstein fever' broke out after 1980, and this year marks the turning point in the role of Holstein cattle in Dutch cattle breeding. Afterwards the percentage of cows with HF-blood increased rapidly.[32]

All over the Netherlands the familiar Friesian-Holland breed was transformed from a dual-purpose cow to a purely dairy cow. Friesian-Holland x Holstein crossbreds were called Holstein-Friesian (HF) or Holstein Black Pieds, and in the early 1990s, they formed the majority of the Dutch livestock (Table 2). In 1990 most of the herd book yearlings were genetically 70–75 per cent Holstein.

Breeders of Red Pieds and the white-faced black or red Groningen breed could not escape the genetic influence of the Holsteins either. Until then, these breeds had been developed as

[31] The reason for the name 'Holstein' for a breed with an undoubted pure Holland-Friesian origin is a story in itself. Around 1860 some American cattle breeders imported a number of cows from the Netherlands. One of them, Winthrop W. Chenery, who had bought the animals in the area of the town of Purmerend and in the Beemster-polder (in the province of Noord-Holland) called them 'Dutch' when he wrote an article to be published in the annual report of the American ministry of agriculture. However, when this was published, the editor had replaced the naming 'Dutch' in the title of the article by 'Holstein' for some reason – probably out of pure ignorance. Chenery accepted the authority of the ministry as being bigger than his own and from then on he too used the name 'Holstein' for his (Dutch) breeding cattle. Harry Hiram Wing, 'In the Beginning' in M. S. Prescott *et al* (eds), *Holstein-Friesian History. Diamond Jubilee Edition 1960* (1960), pp. 1–21.

TABLE 2. The 'Holsteining' of the Dutch Black Pied cattle stock. The share of Friesian-Holland and Holstein-Friesian genes in the registered cattle stock, participating in the milk recording system

	Friesian-Holland (FH)	*Holstein-Friesian (HF)*
1972	100.0	0.0
1977	96.6	3.3
1982	68.8	31.0
1987	34.3	65.6
1992	15.5	84.5
1997	5.4	94.6

Source: CR-Delta, Arnhem.

meat-milk types of cows. The *G*-breed in particular had been bred to favour meat more than milk in a ratio of 60:40.[33] Soon, these breeds lost both their dual-purpose character and their typical colour pattern. It is true that Dutch cattle remained black and white or red and white, but in other respects their appearance changed radically. Their shoulder height, for instance, increased from less than 129 cm to 145–155 cm. In the daily practice of dairy farming, it was found that the Holstein crossbreds had indeed higher milk yields with improved utility values. The problem was, however, that their milk fat and protein contents inclined to be somewhat lower than that of the former FH-breed. There were also problems in maintaining animal fertility. When considered in retrospect, the introduction of the Holsteins into Dutch dairy farming can be seen to be a reversion to the type of dairy cow that Friesian breeders had abandoned after 1900 in favour of a dual-purpose animal. Yet, quite a number of Dutch dairy farmers, found it hard to give up their own traditional breeds, and a number of breeders of the Friesian-Holland Black Pieds established their own herd book in 1983, which was officially recognised in 1993.

Another side effect of the process of 'Holsteining' was that it was no longer necessary to have two different herd book organisations. At the same time, technical developments in breeding forced the adoption of a more efficient organisational structure. Therefore, and as part of a broad process of rationalisation, the Dutch Herd Book Society merged with the Central Milk Recording Service and four other organisations concerned with cattle improvement. Together with the Friesian Herd Book Organisation, they formed *Het Nederlands Rundvee Syndicaat* (the Dutch Cattle Syndicate – named so the acronym '*NRS*' could be kept alive) in 1984.[34] The regional AI organisations retained their independence a little longer. However, in 1998, the large AI co-operatives merged with the NRS to form a new organisation named the *Coöperatieve Rundveeverbetering Delta* (Co-operative Cattle Improvement Delta) or CR-Delta for short.[35]

[32] Stapel, *Rundveefokkerij*, p. 53; P. Grothe, *Holstein-Friesian, een wereldras* (1993).

[33] Fokkinga and Felius, *Een land vol vee*, p. 38.

[34] Th. Zwart, 'Het Nederlands Rundvee Syndicaat opgericht', *Bedrijfsontwikkeling* 15 (1984), pp. 122–4.

[35] Strikwerda, *Melkweg 2000*.



FIGURE 2. Index of the price of labour (in agriculture), wheat and milk in the Netherlands, 1945–92 (1950 = 100), logarithmic scale

Source: LEI/CBS, *Landbouwcijfers*.

VII

The revolutionary developments in the field of cattle breeding took place simultaneously with major changes in the technical realm of dairy farming itself. A process of mechanisation and rationalisation brought in milking machines, milk tanks, herringbone milking parlours, cubicle cow houses and new foddering systems.[36] The driving force behind this process was the inevitable need to boost labour productivity in dairy farming, as during the 1950s – and especially after 1963 – the labour costs increased at a much faster rate than the price of the farmers' products (Figure 2). By the late 1980s the cost of labour had risen more than 25 times compared with the level of 1950, while the price of milk had increased 3.6 times (and that of wheat had not quite doubled).[37]

The technological regime that followed aimed at replacing inputs of labour with capital investment. The government explicitly supported such developments with a policy that became known as *structuurpolitiek* ('structural policy'[38]), which aimed at a more efficient combination of inputs. Its guiding paradigm was that an efficient agriculture should form the basis for a

[36] This paragraph is based mainly on Priester, 'Het melkveehouderijbedrijf'.

[37] LEI/CBS, *Landbouwcijfers*.

[38] The term was chosen to emphasise the difference between it and a simultaneously pursued economic price policy.

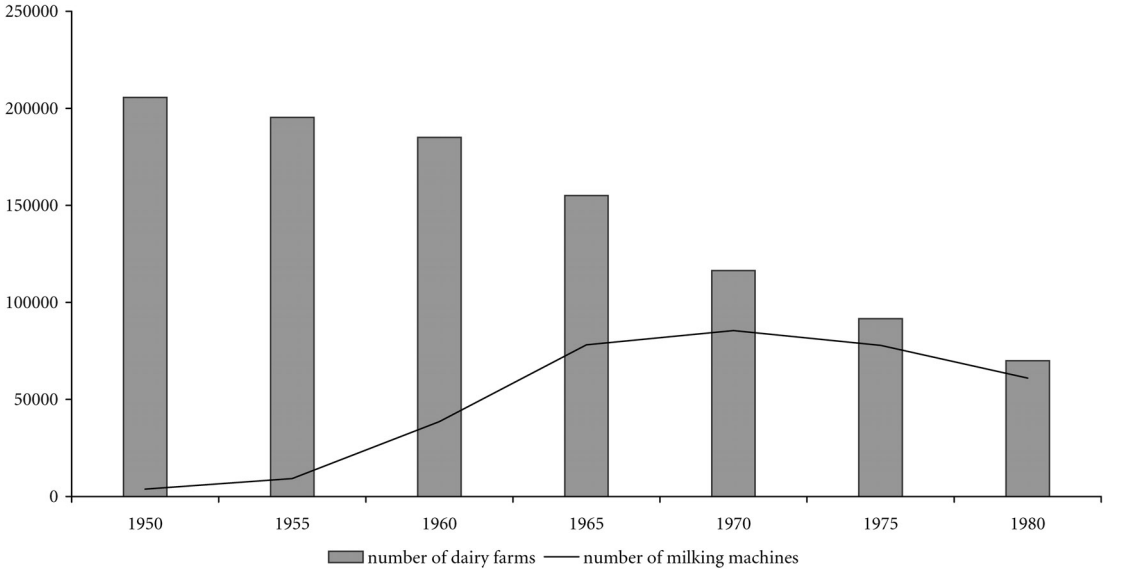


FIGURE 3. The number of dairy farms and milking machines, 1950–80

Source: LEI/CBS, *Landbouwcijfers*.

sound farming class which, in turn, was seen as the prerequisite for a sound agriculture-based rural society, and an important stabilising factor in Dutch society as a whole.

The most important innovation in dairy farming in the twentieth century was, without doubt, the milking machine. The earliest models had already been imported into the Netherlands before the First World War. In the 1920s a small growth in numbers occurred, as improved models like the Swedish-American Alfa Laval machine became available.[39] The quality of the machines that appeared on the market during the inter-war years was good, but they were slow to be accepted. On the one hand labour was still plentiful and on the other, there was a great deal of prejudice against machine milking which was held to be unnatural and unlikely ever to replace milking by hand. Between 1950 and 1960 the number of milking machines grew tenfold from 4000 to 39,000. During the following decade the growth slowed down somewhat, but was still phenomenal, reaching 85,000 in 1970 (Figure 3). The proportion of the national herd being milked mechanically increased from five per cent in 1950 to 90 per cent in 1970.[40]

In the early 1960s it was discovered that most dairy farmers with milking machines were using them incorrectly, either inefficiently or in ways which were likely to damage the cow's udder. Moreover, the quality of the milk fell short. And because of reliance on the one man-one machine system (the so-called P1A1-system), labour efficiency was still relatively low. It appeared that the key to a higher labour performance lay in abandoning the then usual practice of 'hand stripping'. At that time, most Dutch experts were convinced that the method of mechanical stripping used in countries like New Zealand was too risky, believing it could

[39] J. M. G. van der Poel, *Honderd jaar landbouwmechanisatie in Nederland* (1983), pp. 228–34.

[40] LEI/CBS, *Landbouwcijfers*.

damage the udder too easily. New Zealand farmers were readier to get rid of any of their cattle which were not able to cope with being milked mechanically. Dutch farmers had great difficulty accepting such an approach, especially those who had a stock of thoroughbred cattle. During these years, however, experiments had proved that mechanical stripping could be done without harming the cow, and thereafter attitudes changed. Although mechanical stripping required a slightly longer milking time per cow, it enabled the milker to milk more cows concurrently. Consequently, this method enabled increased labour productivity. At first, not all milking machines were able to strip cows quickly and hygienically. However, around 1970 several good machines became available and soon the technique of milking two (or more) cows simultaneously without hand stripping was accepted and spread quickly.

At about the same time it was discovered that the ability of cows to let their milk down easily was determined genetically, and that it was not difficult to select and breed according to this criterion. One could say that, from now on, milking methods were no longer adapted to the cow, but the cow was more or less adapted to the new method of milking. Moreover it was discovered that dairy cows let their milk down more easily if they were given a small ration of concentrates just before milking. Soon machines that switched off without human intervention became available, and in the early 1970s tests were carried out on milking machines that took the teat cups off automatically. This new technology was the springboard to what eventually was to lead to the introduction of the herringbone milking-parlour. On modern dairy farms equipped with these milking parlours, one man could now milk 50 to 60 cows in an hour. Twenty years earlier a hand milker in a traditional tie-up stall would have milked no more than 10 cows in the same time.

The milking machine made substantial savings on labour possible and allowed the farmer to reduce the number of cowmen he employed or to work less himself. However, he might choose to increase the size of his milk herd as this would enable him to earn back at least some of the money he had invested in the purchase of a milking machine installation and the connected equipment like milk lines and milking parlours. So, the introduction and spread of these innovations clearly had a scale-increasing effect of its own.[41]

One of the factors that contributed to the rapid acceptance of the milking machine in the 1950s and 1960s was that it could be used in existing farm buildings, usually equipped with the traditional tie-up stalls. Most of these buildings dated back to before the First World War. Yet, it was obvious that these stalls were very inefficient at a time when greater efficiency was being sought. For some time, state extension officers, researchers and leading farmers had been looking for new ways for replacing the traditional stalls. The first concepts that were tried in 1948–50 were not satisfactory. Milking and foddering indeed took less time than in the traditional stalls, but the daily mucking out and strawing required a lot of time and labour, and the large quantities of straw that were needed made the loose house not very attractive for the pasturing districts.

Eventually, the nearest to the ideal of a house that needed little bedding, in which the animals could walk around freely whilst staying reasonably clean was found in a British model, the cubicle stall.[42] As in the old tie-up cow house, in the cubicle stall every cow had its own box with

[41] Priester, 'Het melkveehouderijbedrijf', pp. 101–08. [42] *Ibid.*, pp. 108–12.

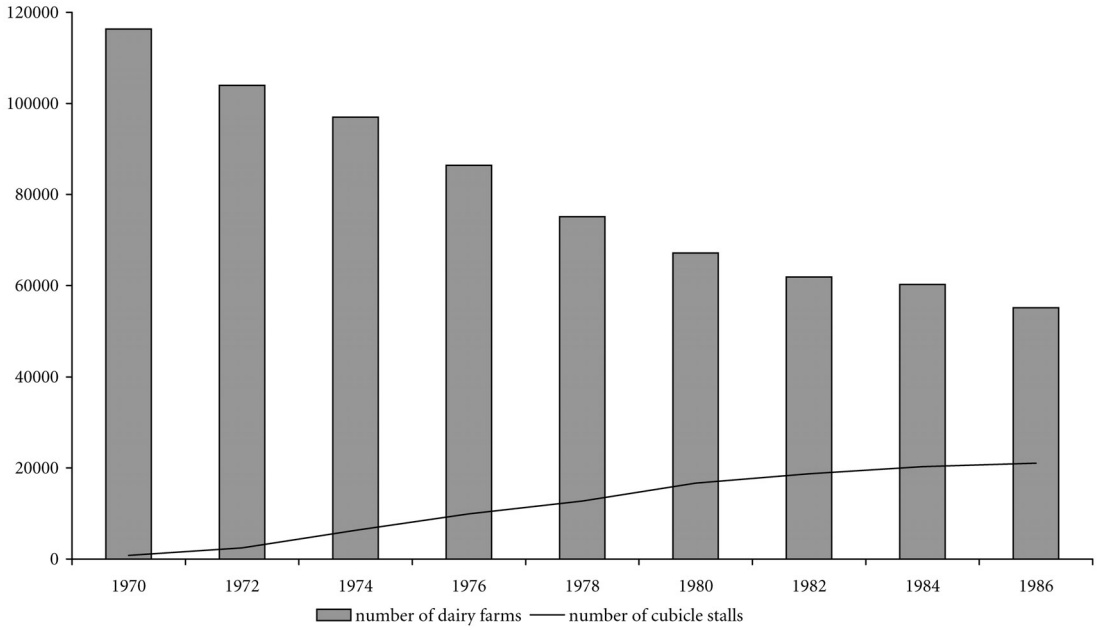


FIGURE 4. Numbers of dairy farms and cubicle stalls, 1970–86

Source: LEI/CBS, *Landbouwcijfers*.

a limited quantity of bedding. The difference was, however, that cows were not tied up, but could walk around. At first, the experts were more enthusiastic than the farmers. Even in 1970 only a few hundred dairy farmers had changed to the cubicle stall. Many were convinced that milk production, milk quality and feed consumption were not as good as in the traditional type of stall. Another factor which delayed acceptance of the cubicle stall problem was the concern that aggressive cows could quite easily injure others. The solution to this – dehorning – was not accepted in the early 1960s.

A very important stimulus to the spread of these new cubicle stalls was the subsidies that became available, especially after 1972 when the new EU directives and regulations came into effect. In that year, an interest subsidy regulation became effective in the Netherlands. It enabled livestock farmers to receive an interest subsidy on investment in cattle, machinery and cubicle stalls. Of all the new stalls built between 1972 and 1985, more than 80 per cent were built with the aid of such a subsidy. Of course, the ongoing process of specialisation also played a role in the process of accepting of the cubicle stall, particularly in the sandy regions, as former mixed farms were converted into specialised dairy farms. Anyway, the result was a spectacular increase in the number of cubicle stalls, from 800 in 1970 to 16,700 in 1980. Afterwards the growth slowed down somewhat, but by 1987 there were 23,100 (Figure 4).

As the use of cubicle cow houses spread, the use of the milk cooling tank also became more general, especially with the introduction of bulk collection. Between 1959 and 1982, a cooling tank was installed on virtually all dairy farms in the Netherlands. It replaced the traditional milk churn that had been used since the late nineteenth century for storing milk on the farm and

for transporting it to the factories. The cubicle cowhouse was not a Dutch invention, nor was the milk tank. The first milk tank, modelled on American and Swedish examples, was introduced into the Netherlands in 1959. They grew rapidly in numbers, especially after 1965: in 1970 there were 3000 and by 1980 as many as 43,000. On most of the farms, the purchase of a milk cooling tank went along with the installation of milk lines and the construction of a special milk room, the *melklokaal*, which met all kinds of high hygienic standards.

Tank milk was of a better bacteriological quality than churn milk, and it could be brought to the dairy factories more regularly, which made the processing of the milk in the factories more efficient. Transport costs were also lower and the mobile milk tanker, with its greater collecting area, allowed an increase in scale in the milk processing industry. In the 1970s many small creameries closed and milk processing became concentrated in a small number of larger ones. So, the process of scaling up not only took place on the farms, but also in the processing industry. The introduction of the bulk milk tanker led to a changing appearance of the farmyards as well. The arrival of the heavy lorries made it necessary to provide the yards with metalled surfaces.

Nevertheless, the introduction of the milk cooling tank did not take place without debate. In fact it provoked even more argument than the introduction of the milking machine and the cubicle stalls because the government used the introduction of the milk tank as an instrument in its readjustment policy which aimed at improving the overall structure of Dutch agriculture. By making the purchase of a cooling tank compulsory, farmers were forced to decide whether to abandon their farming business or to invest in it. Investment usually required them to plunge deeply into debt. The whole policy was strongly opposed and sometimes led to a furious atmosphere between milk factories (most of them co-operative!) and farmers, in what truly became a 'tank war'. Yet, their grievance against the innovation was not merely a matter of money. The simple fact that they had no choice between whether to stop or to switch hurt a lot.

The 1970s and 1980s were not only typified by the introduction of the cubicle stalls and the milk cooling tank, but also by the introduction of the earliest forms of computerisation. Process computers took over a number of the farmer's tasks, like distributing concentrates and the registration of milk yields. In the 1990s, this development culminated in the introduction of the milking robot. In 1985 about 3500 Dutch dairy farmers had such a device; five years later, in the early 1990s, there were 9000–10,000 in use.

There were also changes in the management of Dutch dairy farms, particularly in methods of fodder production as the process of scaling up occurring in Dutch dairy farming was accompanied by a much more intensive use of land. The numbers of cattle grew whilst good pasture land remained relatively scarce. Farmers therefore felt the need to increase the use of fertiliser. At the same time, traditional fodder crops quickly disappeared. The area under these crops fell from 83,000 ha. in about 1950 to only 4000 ha. in 1980. They were replaced – after some delay – by fodder maize. In 1970 only 6400 ha was under this new crop, but by 1990 this had increased to 202,000 ha, and was still expanding. Fodder maize had become the most important crop after grass.[43] Almost all of it was to be found in the five 'sand-provinces'. In these sandy regions,

[43] LEI/CBS, *Landbouwcijfers*.

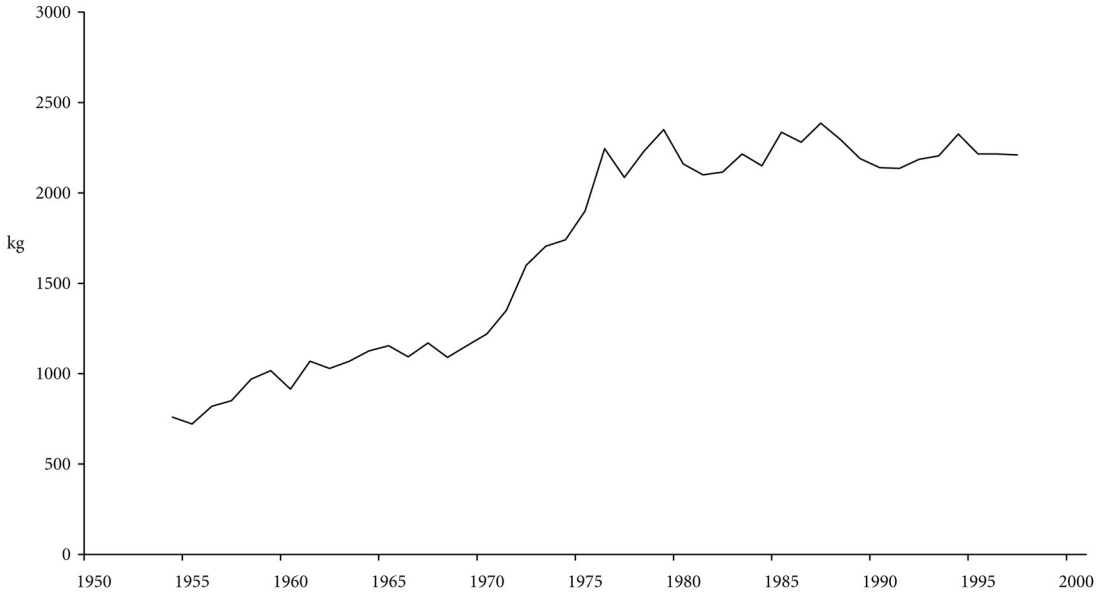


FIGURE 5. Use of concentrated feeds per dairy cow, in the sandy districts of the Netherlands, 1954–1997 (kg)

Source: LEI/CBS, *Landbouwcijfers*.

as more land was put under fodder maize, the cultivation of rye, the crop *par excellence* in these regions for about ten centuries, disappeared.

Much more fundamental, however, was the enormous increase in the use of concentrates as they became cheaper. The quantity of concentrates used in cattle farming increased from about 1 million tonnes (about same level as just before the war), to 5.1 million tonnes in the mid-1980s (Figure 5).

In roughage production, silaging, introduced before 1900, was a technique that eventually completely replaced the traditional method of hay making, after the 1950s.[44] Crucial to its success was the application of PVC sheeting to cover the silos, introduced in 1956. Another stimulus came in the shape of the self-loader. This piece of machinery was demonstrated for the first time in 1960 at the agricultural show in Cologne. It was tested for silo making in Friesland in 1964–5, a new method that was later to conquer the whole Dutch dairy farming sector. In ten years the number of self-loaders had increased to more than 18,500 and the production of silage grew as well. In the mid-1960s, most of the harvested grass was still turned into hay, only about a quarter being made into silage. By 1975, however, the proportion had reached half and by 1985 three-quarters. Meanwhile, unwalled clamps (or a walled horizontal silo if it had a concrete floor and concrete walls) covered with black plastic had became a familiar feature in

[44] Priester, ' Het melkveehouderijbedrijf ', pp. 117–24. [45] *Ibid.*, pp. 123–4.

the yards of Dutch dairy farms. Its success was assured by its low cost, the low input of labour and the quality of the product.

More or less parallel to the shift from hay to silage was the replacement of the classic cutter bar by the rotary mower for harvesting grass. The Dutch machinery designer Zweegers succeeded in constructing a rotary mower suitable for mowing grass which came onto the market in 1965. The machine had a high capacity and could not become clogged. Grass that was too young and short or too old and lodged to be effectively cut with the cutter bar could now easily been mown. Ten years after its introduction, 44,000 had already been sold in the Netherlands as other companies developed their own versions. As grassland management became more and more intensive, the rotary mower proved its capability and was shown to be especially suitable for farmers who chose to use their grassland as intensively as possible. In this way it contributed very much to the increase in yields.[45] The result of these innovations in grassland management and fodder production was that stocking densities increased by about 75 per cent between 1950 and 1984. Some of the specialist 'sand-provinces' showed even greater advances as appears in Table 3. By 1990, after the shock of the introduction of quotas had been accommodated, stocking levels had returned to those of the 1970s.

VIII

As the result of these interlocking improvements, performances in dairy production increased enormously after the early 1960s. In the first decade of the century, the average Dutch dairy cow gave 2633 kg of milk per year. During the 1950s the annual average milk yield was as high as 3944 kg, with a fat content of 3.72 per cent. The annual average in the 1990s was as much as 6485 kg containing 4.42 per cent of fat (Figure 6). These figures imply that between the beginning of the twentieth century and the mid-1950s, milk yields of a typical Dutch cow had grown at an average rate of 26 kg per year. However, in the following four decades, a period in which innovation in dairy farming and cattle breeding was driven by the need to secure higher labour productivity, the average annual increase in milk yields amounted to 63 kg.

The striking increase in fat content that occurred after 1985 should be seen mainly as a result of the introduction of the milk quota in the preceding year. After their introduction, breeding aimed at producing cows whose milk had a higher fat content, which fetched a higher price, and thereby mitigated some of the negative effects which controls on production had had on farmers' incomes since the mid-1980s. Although protein content had been nationally and centrally registered ever since 1959, efforts to increase it were not very successful at first and not until 1970 was any real progress made. In the period 1961–5, the average protein content of Dutch milk was as high as 3.34 per cent. Thirty years later, in 1994–8, it had reached 3.47 per cent.[46]

One characteristic of the rapid growth in milk yields after the 1960s was the increase in the number of so-called '100,000 kg champions', cows that produced 100,000 or more kg of milk over their productive lives. The first official production champion that managed to achieve this, was a cow called Clazina 48; she reached this milestone in August 1959. After her, the number

[46] LEI/CBS, *Landbouwcijfers*.

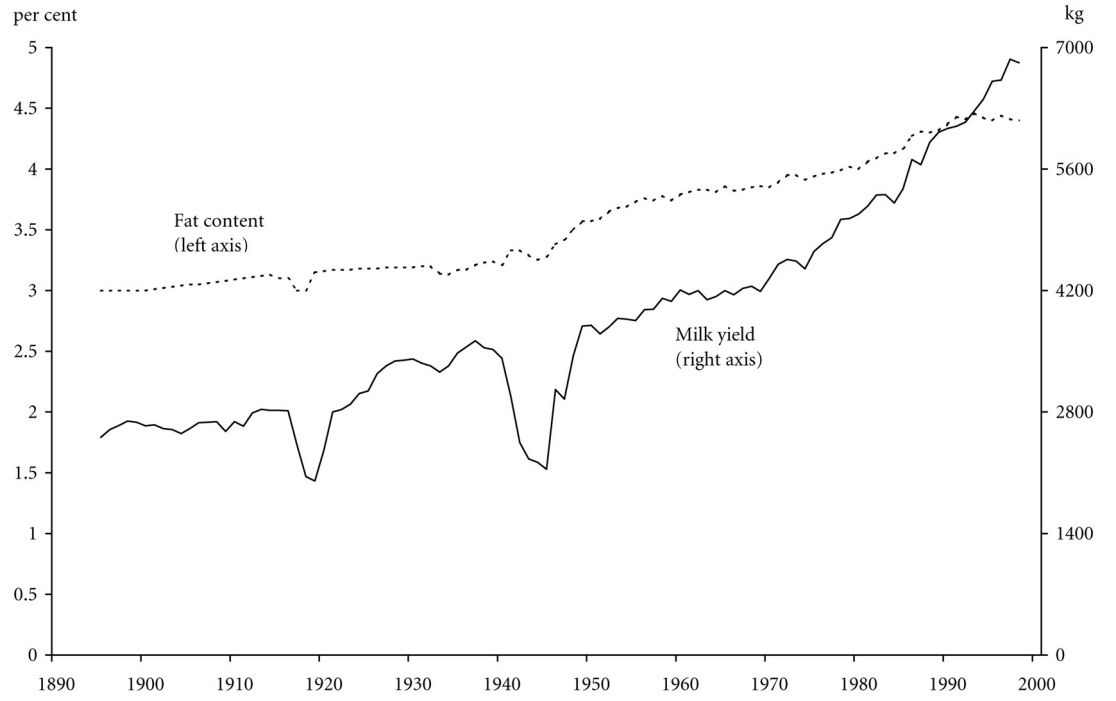


FIGURE 6. Average milk yield (in kg) from Dutch cattle, and its fat content (in %), 1895–1988

Source: *Verslag (over) van de(n) landbouw*; LEI/CBS, *Landbouwcijfers*.

of cows achieving this prize increased rapidly, especially after 1980, and by the end of 1992, the thousandth '100,000 kg champion' was honoured.[47]

Productivity figures like these become even more significant if we consider how the labour requirements of dairy farming diminished drastically after 1950 as the result of a comprehensive process of mechanisation and rationalisation. The (yearly) amount of labour needed to 'manage' one dairy cow decreased from 330 man hours to about 40 man hours.[48]

For a long time it had not been difficult to dispose of this rapidly growing stream of milk and dairy products. The Dutch dairy sector succeeded in increasing their exports to the Common Market countries, managing to keep ahead of its most important competitor, the Danes, who for some time were outside this market. However, rapidly increasing production led to over-production and low prices. This problem, however, was not confined to the Netherlands. On a European scale, it soon led to a milk lake – *een zee van melk* – and unsaleable quantities of butter. Therefore, in 1979, the European Commission put forward a proposal to regulate the production of milk by establishing a levy on milk in excess of a certain threshold. The

[47] R. Strikwerda, 'De onafzienbare stoet van 100,000 kg-koeien', *Veeteelt* 11 (1994), pp. 624–6.

[48] Om u te dienen, *Het landbouwtechnisch onderzoek in Nederland in zijn ontwikkeling* (1982), p. 88. Priester, 'Het melkveehouderijbedrijf', p. 101. Bieleman, 'De georganiseerde rundveeverbetering', p. 153.

TABLE 3. Number of dairy cows per 100 ha grassland and fodder crops in the five 'sand-provinces', 1950–1990

	1950	*1960*	*1970*	*1980*	*1984*	*1990*
Drenthe	109	117	134	164	168	128
Overijssel	108	121	139	190	203	154
Gelderland	111	115	132	168	183	140
Noord-Brabant	117	129	138	175	201	155
Limburg	123	123	125	138	150	120
Netherlands	115	123	137	176	189	144

Source: LEI/CBS, *Landbouwcijfers*.
Note: In 1950 and 1960 still only grassland. Figures for 1984 are given as the year in which milk quotas came into effect.

regulations came into force in 1984 and for Dutch dairy farmers the threshold – the 'quota' – after which penalties were paid, was tied to their production level in the years 1981–3.

Once quotas came into effect, they did indeed lead to a striking decrease in production. In practice, the quantity of milk a farmer was allowed to deliver was now fixed, and for him to reduce his costs and maintain his income meant he had to achieve his quota with as few cows as possible. As fodder costs made up a large part of the total operating expenses, fodder conversion became an important topic. Efficiency in milk production had to be improved in this sense, which meant that breeding strategies were now concentrating on higher production, in relation to a lower weight of the cow and so a lower consumption of feed.[49]

IX

The far-reaching technical changes in dairy farming we have described did not take place in isolation. They were part of a much more comprehensive process of mechanisation, intensification, scaling up, rationalisation and specialisation. The latter was especially true in the sandy regions in the southern, eastern and north-eastern parts of the country, where dairy farming had been a part of a mixed farming system producing milk alongside pork and eggs, all three products more or less equally contributing to a farmer's income. After 1965, however, dairy farming was separated from this traditional type of mixed farming, and most farms were transformed into either specialist dairy farms, or specialist poultry and pig-fattening farms. Until 1960 the centre of gravity of the Dutch livestock was still to be found in the traditional pasturing areas, but with specialisation it shifted to the east and south-eastern sandy districts. In the provinces of Noord-Brabant and Overijssel the concentration of dairy cattle increased much faster than the national average.[50] However, as the number of cattle grew and the quantities of

[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 151–2; J. K. Oldenbroek, 'De mogelijkheden van de Nederlandse rundveefokkerij', *Veeteelt* 1 (1984), pp. 366–9.

[50] J. H. M. Maas, C. J. M. Wijnen and C. J. M. Spierings, *Landbouw. Atlas van Nederland,* X (1989).

concentrates increased, the volume of manure produced also increased, although this was not seen as a problem for some time.[51] It was not until the mid-1980s that the manure surplus became widely recognised as an environmental problem of the first degree. New legislation, implemented in the autumn of 1988, brought in a ban on the store of manure in the open, as a part of a complex nutrients accounting system, and forced farmers to hold it in large manure silos until the moment when it was allowed to be spread. The manure injector was now became generally adopted although it had been introduced in the mid-1970s.[52]

It must be added, however, that since the mid-1980s, and as a direct effect of the milk quota regulations of 1984, the number of dairy cattle has decreased significantly, and in the sandy regions in particular. At this moment the number of dairy cattle in the sandy districts of the eastern and southern parts of the country has returned to its pre-1965 level.

X

These complex technological changes which were implemented from the late 1950s, also had far reaching consequences for the structure of the dairying sector and consequently for rural society as a whole. Of course, the so-called structure policy element in the government's agricultural policy was an important factor in this, as after 1963 it explicitly encouraged a reduction in the number of farms, and the growth in size of those which remained. As the number of cattle increased from around 1.5 million in the 1950s to as many as 2.5 million around the mid-1980s, the number of dairy farmers decreased. In 1910 there had been more than 190,000 farms in the Netherlands with dairy cattle, and by 1953 this number had increased to almost 203,000. Afterwards, however, numbers fell rapidly and in 1995 there were only about 37,000 dairy farms left, 18 per cent of their former number. In 1953 the average Dutch livestock farmer had about seven or eight head of dairy cattle. In 1995 this number had risen to more than 45. After World War II, the number of dairy farmers who had 50 or more dairy cows could still be counted on the fingers of one hand, but by 1995 they accounted for about 40 per cent of all dairy farms (Figure 7). It is not obvious that there is an end to this trend in sight.[53]

XI

The history of dairy farming and cattle breeding in the Netherlands after 1850 was marked by a continuing process of technical innovation aimed at increasing the productivity of cattle and the quality and value of their products. This process never took on such dramatic dimensions as it did after the early 1960s. The rapidly increasing price of labour when compared to the much smaller increases in farm gate prices for milk was the motor driving the complex and comprehensive technological transformation that profoundly changed the face of the sector.

[51] Jan Bieleman, 'Landbouw en milieu – een eeuwig spanningsveld?', in Geert Castryck and Michiel Decaluwe (eds), *De relatie tussen economie en ecologie, gisteren, vandaag en morgen, Jaarboek voor Ecologische Geschiedenis* (1998), pp. 25–35.

[52] Jaap Frouws, *Mest en macht. Een politiek-sociologische studie naar belangenbehartiging en beleidsvorming inzake de mestproblematiek in Nederland vanaf 1970* (1993).

[53] In 2000 there were 29,467 farms with dairy cattle. Bieleman, 'De georganiseerde rundveeverbetering', p. 150; LEI/CBS, *Landbouwcijfers.*

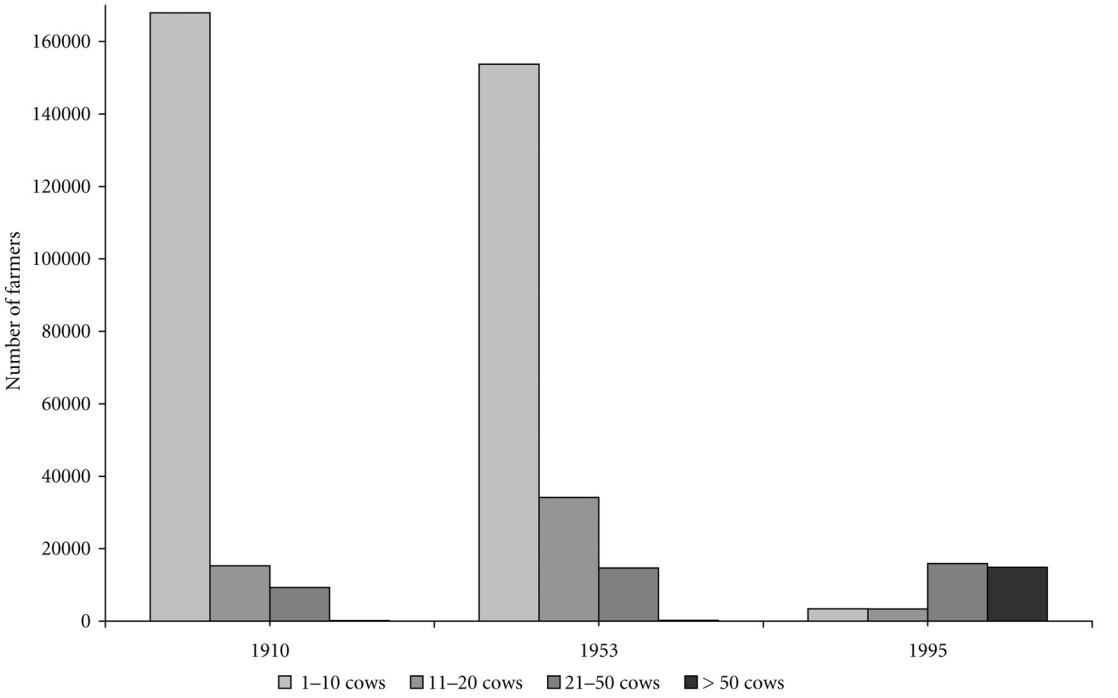


FIGURE 7. Numbers of dairy farmers according to the size of their dairy herds, in 1910, 1953 and 1995

Note: The total number of farms with dairy cows in 1910 was 192,600; 1952, 202,800; 1995, 37,500.
Source: Data bank, Rural History Group, Wageningen University and LEI/CBS, *Landbouwcijfers*.

The ruling technological regime aimed at reducing labour inputs through capital investment in labour-saving equipment. The government policy that stimulated all this was based on the assumption that a prosperous agricultural sector was necessary for the well-being of Dutch society as a whole. However, by the early 1980s, it was clear that things had gone too far, both in terms of production, and in its environmental cost. And at the end of the century it was clearer than ever that in the hunt for higher yields, a situation had arisen in dairy farming in which the cost-effectiveness of the dairy buildings and their equipment had been placed before the well-being of the cows themselves. At a time when farmers were servicing heavy debts, even the stall room given animals, which had been identified as a major cost, was under pressure. Amongst these complicated and intermeshed changes, the individual animals seemed to matter less and less.

Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

DAVID HARRISON, *The bridges of medieval England. Transport and society, 400–1800* (OUP, 2004). xx + 249 pp. 7 tables; 27 illus; 2 maps. £45.

David Harrison has produced a very useful book on a very important topic. As he argues, bridges provide a window for assessing the performance of economies over long periods of time, and he presents a very persuasive case for this in examining the English transport system, and especially its bridges, over the period 400–1800. Arguably, only markets and/or urban development could give an equally illuminating portal into the functioning of the English economy and society over such a long time span.

As a result, one must applaud from the start Harrison's courage in taking on an intimidatingly wide-ranging examination. Although I shall be outlining some of the flaws in his treatment below, these should not detract from the worthiness of the project or the book's importance in the historiography of the economy and society of the middle ages (and indeed for preceding and following periods). A particularly attractive feature of the book is that he lays out its main thesis so clearly. Put baldly, Harrison claims that the number of bridges, and the general bridge infrastructure, reached a level in 1300 that it would hold for the next four or five centuries. Certainly this dispels the popular view of a backward middle ages. Indeed, the development of the transport system as a whole to 1300 not only provided the template for the pre-industrial period but also carried on into the modern era. England's current road system, for example, still bears a medieval imprint. If for no other reason, this book will be remembered for this bold statement, which will undoubtedly spur a closer examination of the subject.

There is, however, danger in accepting Harrison's thesis too readily. There are three areas in particular that have given me pause. The first is that much of his argument, by his own admission, depends upon being able to provide close examination of the number of bridges existing in the period 400–1800 and certainly, given their prominent position in the English landscape, they seem a natural object for the sort of counting exercises that have been so popular in medieval historiography since the Second World War. Yet there is surprisingly little of this sort of quantification in the book, and certainly those familiar with Harrison's influential 1992 *Economic History Review* article might have expected more in this direction. But, as in 1992, the numerical information he provides for the number of bridges in the medieval period only relates to the early sixteenth century and that arguably only for a small selection of river systems. Although this exercise of comparing the number of bridges in the early sixteenth century with that later in the eighteenth century is clearly worthwhile, it is of questionable value in trying to relate it to the number of bridges at earlier times. Indeed, Harrison's argument that the number of bridges *c.* 1300 was about the same as that in the early sixteenth century (pp. 21–3) is little more than supposition. The same applies to his contention that the building of bridges in stone stretched well back into the middle ages (pp. 110–14). None of these statements about the number and quality of bridges at various stages in the middle ages is inherently implausible, but the scattered, somewhat cherry-picked evidence he produces does *not* prove the case incontrovertibly. Finally, there is also a certain stinginess in presenting his evidence to the reader. For example, in an otherwise very interesting discussion of tolls and pontage grants for bridges, he refers to 'several hundred pontage grants [being] enrolled on the patent rolls' (p. 209). At the very least, it would have been very useful for the benefit of future researchers to have these cases recorded in an appendix; the handful of cases he provides in the text seems very inadequate.

My second major reservation is that there is a tendency to look at medieval economy and society too narrowly through the prism of bridges. Other aspects of the economy clearly impinged upon the development of the transport system, and indeed Harrison's speculation on the reasons why bridges were built at specific places seems decidedly thin. The issue of inland water transport, which had a certain complementarity to bridge building, is scarcely mentioned. Equally ignored are other important structures on rivers such as mills,

where bridges were often found, sometimes specifically erected to replace a ford washed out by the construction of a mill-weir or millpond (which Harrison only mentions briefly on p. 224). In short, bridges were only one element of a series of changes being enacted around rivers during the middle ages and, in a way, all have to be considered in order to arrive at a sufficiently textured view of the development of medieval transport. Harrison does some of this in considering, say, the establishment of fortified *burhs* in the Anglo-Saxon period and its impact upon bridge building, but his analysis to my mind is still incomplete in its consideration of all the possible variables.

The third problem with the book, and to my mind the most serious, is the tendency to overlook what can be done in future on medieval bridges. Harrison's work as a whole is based almost solely upon printed sources and overlooks the vast amount of material still available only in manuscript. One of these key sources are manorial accounts, which number in the tens of thousands for the medieval period, a relatively small fraction of which is currently in print. These accounts often mention bridge building, sometimes as a single line about repairs to a bridge or as a long section outlining the complete construction of a bridge. At the very least, this account material gives plenty of indication that landlord responsibility for bridge construction and repair was very prevalent throughout medieval England and might well modify Harrison's statement about the funding of most medieval bridges coming from donations (see especially pp. 193–5). A similarly vast amount of manorial and central government court material from the early thirteenth century onwards, again available for the most part only in manuscript, should throw more light on the legal position of bridges. In short, we have a lot more evidence to consider before the depth of understanding currently available for, say, medieval markets or mills can also be replicated for bridges at the time, but at least Harrison's book gives us a good start.

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RALPH EVANS (ed.), *Lordship and learning. Studies in memory of Trevor Aston* (Boydell Press, 2004). viii + 270 pp. 7 plates; 5 figs. £50.

Trevor Aston, editor of *Past and Present* from 1960 to 1985, had his own research interests, which are discussed in a memoir by the editor at the outset of this volume. Two of his favourite topics are represented here by hitherto unpublished papers from his own hand. The first examines tenures and military obligation before and after the Norman Conquest, arguing that though dependent tenure was widespread before 1066, especially on ecclesiastical estates, it was not generally associated with military obligation, though Anglo-Saxon lords might be responsible for providing armed men if they were lords of hundreds. Aston's second paper, on the custody of muniments, displays a remarkable knowledge of medieval specifications of satisfactory muniment rooms, and the varying uses of chests, cupboards and chests of drawers for storing different types of record.

All the papers contributed to this collection are studies in social and cultural history of the medieval and early modern periods, and about half are studies in rural social history of direct relevance to readers of the *Agricultural History Review*. Rosamund Faith combines the evidence of a charter of 847 with that of Domesday Book to assess development in a district of south Devon in the intervening period, demonstrating the potential both for accumulating property and for establishing new family farms. Her comments contain cautionary observations on the Domesday evidence; the growth of sheep farming after 847 made the hidation of the area a misleading guide to wealth, and the Domesday commissioners' distinction between manors and other farms was a poor indicator of relative status. P. D. A. Harvey's paper on the manorial reeve in twelfth-century England examines the recorded occurrence of reeves, their relationship to township and lordship respectively, and the nature of their services. In the light of this evidence, and other recent research, he suggests that in the twelfth century a reeve, rather than a formal leaseholder, was commonly responsible for ensuring that tenants supplied their lord with the annual payments of produce or cash due from his manorial inland. Paul Brand examines the contribution of local lawyers to the early development of the English legal system and estate management, citing especially the career of Hugh Tyrel of Mannington in Norfolk, who flourished between 1286 and 1312. Though lacking formal credentials, and sometimes operating by force and fraud, such men built up considerable legal practices as advisors, attorneys, agents and senior estate officers. Peter Coss explains why he is reluctant to attribute gentry status to landowners from as early as the Anglo-Saxon period, arguing that this downplays important features of later development in codes of conduct and in legal and political institutions. He also warns that too great an emphasis on the continuity of gentry status through the middle ages risks contamination with essentialist notions of England's national peculiarities. N. E. Stacy's paper on the twelfth-century estates of Glastonbury Abbey returns to the battle against Sir Michael Postan's interpretation of the evidence. He suggests that leasehold was a satisfactory method of estate management and, as for twelfth-century 'recession', the most he will allow is that civil war under Stephen caused

a temporary weakening of the abbot's control and inflicted some damage to property. Ralph Evans uses the records of Merton College to illustrate both how the college used manor courts to exploit tenants, and also how tenants themselves were able to use the courts for their own purposes, sometimes in their own defence against seigniorial innovation. I. M. W. Harvey analyzes the different objectives and social origins of poachers in the late middle ages, and explores some connections and analogies between poaching and popular politics, particularly after 1390 when hunting was made illegal for householders with lands under the value of £2. She argues that the bold operations of some illegal hunters implied widespread connivance by their friends and neighbours.

The remaining papers in the volume, however excellent, have less to offer rural historians. T. M. Charles-Edwards suggests that the Anglo-Saxon concept of Englishness was not wholly of ecclesiastical origin, and that secular relationships of patronage, culture and conflict are needed to account for it, as well as for the separate national consciousness of the Britons, Scots and Irish. James Howard-Johnston describes and emphasizes discontinuities in the social institutions of the Byzantine empire under the pressure of invasion and depopulation during the seventh and eighth centuries. Eric John argues that the compiler of the annals of St Neots wrote in the late tenth or early eleventh centuries with ample access to information about events in continental Europe, and that his work is evidence against the idea that English culture was insular in this period. Margaret Aston examines the varied and changing justification for using paintings and sculptures to further education and devotion from the time of Gregory the Great to the Reformation, but also illustrates the misunderstandings that arose when independent teaching was absent or faulty. Jeremy Catto qualifies the view that colleges were competing against halls in later medieval Oxford, showing that some halls were taken over by colleges as units of undergraduate education, and that some larger establishments were achieved by the coming together of halls under a single principal, either by federation or by takeover. Malcolm Underwood complements Aston's paper on the custody of archives by an examination of practices at St. John's College, Cambridge, especially under the mastership of John Taylor (1538–47).

The volume has a detailed index.

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HEATHER FALVEY and STEVE HINDLE (eds), *'This little commonwealth': Layston parish memorandum book, 1607-c. 1650 & 1704-c. 1747* (Hertfordshire Record Publications 19, 2003). lxxiv + 296 pp. Illus. £24 incl. p&p from Mrs G. Grimwood, Honorary Treasurer, Hertfordshire Record Society, 190 Lonsdale Road, Stevenage, SG1 5EX.

Parish books, vestry minutes and overseers' accounts, like the men whose activities they record, represent the bricks from which that rather roughcast edifice, the early modern state, was constructed. Part of their attraction to historians is that they are as diverse in form and content as they are common in county archives. It is impossible to predict what one will find in such sources, and sometimes they do contain historical gems. Layston, in Hertfordshire, which incorporated much of the small town of Buntingford within its boundaries, contains just such a gem in its parish memorandum book, namely the (rather unprepossessing) 'advice' drafted by the vicar, Alexander Strange, to his 'good neighbours & lovinge parishioners' on 15 February 1636.

In it, Strange sought a solution to the problem of the in-migration to Buntingford of numbers of poor families, attracted (he thought) by the town's accessible charities, and the efforts of its neighbours to unload their dependent poor onto the town. He suggested that his loving parishioners shun newcomers as tenants, club together to buy and demolish cottages 'like to receyve more' additional poor incomers, and negotiate with non-resident house owners to prevent the accommodation of further undesirable paupers in the future. He wanted to ensure that (the quite extensive) parish charities were restricted to 'your antient poore & such as have byne … a good tyme dwellers among you'.

Strange's advice is notable for its breathtaking candour, so much at odds with the routine, laconic records of parish pensions and memoranda on charitable gifts that fill the first half of the volume. As Hindle remarks, 'the "advice" represents a full-blown exegesis of the micro-politics of settlement and belonging, touching almost every aspect of the social and economic life of the parish'. It also presents two historical problems. Firstly, apart from the occasional incautious statement in equity depositions, few other sources broach its frank, even brutal, remedies. Secondly, it is clearly a draft (albeit in a volume presumably open to the wider vestry), and we do not know how, or even whether, it was ever delivered. However, it is similar to the 'ratepaying' hostility to 'inmates', paupers and vagrants expressed throughout the country in the early seventeenth century, and encapsulates these feelings in stark terms.

After Strange's vehemence, the rest of the material in

this volume impresses more by its sheer heterogeneity than by its capacity to surprise – although his 1607 Assize sermon comes close. Agricultural historians foraging for tithing customs or commodity prices will have short commons here, and will have to content themselves with the perambulations of 1591 and 1708, and Thomas Heton's eighteenth-century notes on parish lands and income. However, the volume contains detailed records of disbursements to paupers during Strange's incumbency, a characteristic early seventeenth century 'scheme to set the poor on work', and shows the difficulty parishioners had in acclimatizing to the financial burdens of the Elizabethan poor law. Hertfordshire horologists will apparently be gratified to learn that Henry Kennex repaired the parish clock in 1621, while Heton's conjectures on the clockwork of the heavens as well as his antiquarian endeavours are symptomatic of clerical learning a century later.

While the memoranda tend to dissolve into a miscellany after Strange's death in 1650, both sections of the book benefit from detailed historical introductions by Hindle (on Strange) and Falvey (on Heton). These place both subjects, and the social history of the parish, in the appropriate historical and historiographical contexts. Similarly, the earlier ecclesiastical history of the parish is dealt with comprehensively in an additional introductory contribution by Philip Plumb, who explains the early medieval origins of the complicated parish structure of Buntingford. For those interested specifically in Layston, or in Hertfordshire more generally, this volume will be an essential resource. For those concerned with the wider social and economic history of the poor law and poverty, parochial government, and the byways of eighteenth-century intellectual endeavours, this volume provides a series of suggestive and apposite examples. While these memoranda are likely to raise the historical profile of the parish of Layston, they will definitely launch Alexander Strange into the fabric of early modern social history.

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SIMON TOWNLEY (ed.), *The Victoria history of the counties of England. A history of the county of Oxford,* XIV, *Witney and its townships, Bampton hundred part two* (Boydell and Brewer for the Institute of Historical Research, 2004). xiv + 287 pp. 76 figs. £90.

The history of Witney is in part the history of some remarkable continuities. Until the late nineteenth century the town and its rural hinterland formed a single parish, whose boundaries were those of an Anglo-Saxon estate granted by King Edgar to one of his thegns in 969. From 1044 until 1862, with only a seven-year break in the 1550s, the whole estate was in the hands of the bishops of Winchester, though it was leased out from the sixteenth century onwards. The basis of the town's prosperity was the manufacture of woollen cloth, especially, from the early seventeenth century, blankets. First evident in the late twelfth century, cloth manufacturing was finally abandoned only in 2002, by which time the rise of the duvet had brought about the irreversible decline of the blanket. For a period of more than eight hundred years there was almost certainly no single year in which cloth was not made in Witney, its makers drawing initially on Cotswold wool and latterly on supplies from as far afield as Australia and India. Even the outlying rural settlements at Hailey and Crawley were partly populated with weavers and spinners, fullers and tuckers. For much of the modern period this manufacturing emphasis made for dissenting churchmanship and liberal politics. Yet the local economy, and with it the springs of Witney's growth, was by no means monocultural. The town was situated on a boundary. Divided in two by the River Windrush, the estate's northern half was (and is) largely one of mixed agriculture on assarted land reclaimed piecemeal from Wychwood Forest; while to the south of the river lay both the town, a market centre for its region, and the great demesne of the bishops of Winchester. Champion country, with proportions of arable and pasture varying over the centuries, this remained largely farmland until the second half of the twentieth century, when it was cut through by the dual-carriageway Witney by-pass and eaten up by housing in a still continuing phase of rapid and relentless urban expansion. In the last fifty years the landscape south of the river has changed more than in the previous five hundred.

One parish, less than a single hundred, some 7000 acres: some might complain that to give a whole volume to Witney is to deal in particulars minute even by VCH standards. They would be wrong to do so, for this is microhistory at its best. The level of detail is probably unparalleled in other VCH volumes: for the rural areas, almost every farm seems to receive attention. But the borough of Witney naturally dominates the picture, and a full account is given of its descent, economic life, church history, schools and social institutions, following the usual VCH pattern. There is throughout, however, a very great deal to interest the historian of England as well as of Oxfordshire. The six double-columned pages given to the medieval exploitation of the bishop's demesne are in themselves a substantial contribution to the history of the Winchester estates and to agrarian history in general. Demographic historians will note the exceptionally high mortality brought by the Black Death, when as many as two-thirds of the population may have

died. Particularly valuable too are the descriptions of buildings, not one of the traditional strengths of the VCH. Fuller and more comprehensive than those in 'Pevsner', they are especially useful in a county unsurveyed by the RCHM. If the treatment at all points is predictably factual and prosaic, it supplies the material for the imaginative historian to work on. Witney itself, with its prosperous elite of master weavers and clothiers, many of them dissenters, its small professional class of lawyers and doctors, its civic pride finding expression through charitable giving and public institutions, its working men's clubs and benefit societies, and its contrasting slums, has something of the air of an Oxfordshire Middlemarch or Casterbridge. The maps and illustrations, here helpfully integrated with the text, are a notably strong feature of the volume. One could no doubt cavil. In a perfect world VCH history would be less self-contained, more comparative and more sensitive to the national picture; and even in an imperfect one it is strange to find that J. Z. Titow's famous article published in this *Review* in 1962, and contrasting the 'colonizing' Winchester manor of Witney with 'non-colonizing' Taunton, receives no mention. Nor – to move some centuries forward – does the name 'Waitrose' appear in the index, although for the population of west Oxfordshire Witney has for the past twenty years meant supermarket shopping. But in general this is a history of which, like the whole VCH enterprise, not just any county but any country should feel proud.

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JOHN and PAMELA MCCANN, *The dovecotes of historical Somerset* (Somerset Vernacular Building Research Group, 2003). 198 illus. No price given.

Dovecotes were introduced to Britain after the Norman conquest, along with other manifestations of manorial privilege such as fishponds, deer parks and rabbit warrens. During the middle ages they were restricted to the demesne holdings of manorial lords and to parsonages, but after 1619 freeholders acquired legal rights to build dovecotes on their own land, and numbers increased. Their economic viability was effectively terminated by the French revolutionary wars of 1793–1815, when wheat prices soared. Many Board of Agriculture county reports then condemned the keeping of pigeons, claiming that the value of the corn they consumed exceeded that of the meat and manure they yielded.

By the time that dovecotes began to attract the interest of antiquarians in the 1880s most of them had long been out of use, and practical knowledge of how they worked was almost entirely forgotten. Myths about their purpose and function became perpetuated, as hypotheses formulated by early investigators were relayed uncritically by later writers.

John McCann has re-examined the evidence in several important publications since 1991, and has single-handedly demolished many of our inherited assumptions. The traditional idea that dovecotes produced fresh meat in winter when otherwise only salt meat was available is shown to be a double fallacy: fresh meat was, in fact, readily available throughout the year for those who could afford it, whereas squabs (birds up to four weeks old which were unable to fly) were not normally available between the end of November and the end of March. The picture of crops constantly being ravaged by flocks of manorial pigeons is hardly tenable in view of the inability of the pigeon to alight on standing corn. Although pigeons had to be deterred during sowing and would consume grain spilled during harvest, they were no more of a nuisance than many other birds. The view that circular dovecotes with revolving ladders represent the earliest type, while square or rectangular shapes came later, is debunked; indeed, there now seems no evidence for the use of potences before the eighteenth century.

The McCanns also recognize the significance of features overlooked by earlier writers. The blocking-up of the lower courses of nestholes is linked with the appearance of the brown rat in the later eighteenth century. Unlike the black rat, an earlier invader, which mainly consumed grain and fruit, brown rats ate eggs and attacked squabs, and, moreover, were able to enter dovecotes by burrowing and by gnawing through the edge of doors. However, they were unable to climb smooth vertical surfaces, and could be foiled by eliminating all nestholes less than a couple of feet from internal ground level. Further changes in practice were a consequence of the high wheat prices in 1793–1815, and of a change in the law in 1827 which gave any farmer the right to shoot pigeons damaging his crops. Attempts to reduce the size of pigeon flocks resulted in the blocking of even more nestholes, the lower stage of dovecotes often being converted to other uses, while open nestholes were retained only above an inserted floor. The need to keep pigeons from foraging over neighbouring fields during sowing and harvest times occasionally resulted in the installation of new internal feeding platforms.

This survey provides exemplary descriptions of all 49 dovecotes and pigeon-lofts still standing within the historic county of Somerset, plus notes on demolished examples, and on other structures which resemble dovecotes but which actually had some other purpose. Plans and elevations of ten examples are included, along with numerous excellent photographs. There is also a brief review of documentary and archaeological evidence. The

gazetteer is arranged in approximate chronological order, an odd decision, given the imprecise dating of so many examples. The consequent difficulty in locating entries for individual sites is exacerbated by the lack of an index, the only significant flaw in the book.

The Somerset Vernacular Building Research Group continues to add to its impressive list of publications. This beautifully-produced volume is another valuable contribution, not just of local significance, but of relevance to anyone with an interest in manorial and agricultural buildings.

JAMES BOND
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CHRISTINE VIALLS and KAY COLLINS (eds), *A Georgian country parson. The Rev. John Mastin of Naseby (with a note on the Battle of Naseby by Glenn Foard)* (Northamptonshire Record Society, 2004). xiv + 193 pp. £9.50 to non-members.

This volume represents a continuation of the tradition of scholarly publishing long-established by the Northamptonshire Record Society and stands as the first of a series commemorating the life and work of the distinguished local historian Victor Hatley. It comprises the third-person memoirs of the Rev. John Mastin (1747–1829), printed from a manuscript recently deposited in the Northamptonshire Record Office, along with a republication of the first edition of Mastin's well-known *History of Naseby* which first saw the light of day in 1792. The editors have contributed a brief introduction and intelligent footnotes, while Glenn Foard offers an assessment of the value of Mastin's *History* to our current understanding of the pivotal Battle of Naseby.

Unlike most eighteenth-century clerical memorialists, Mastin was the non-graduate son of a grazier who entered the priesthood at the age of 30 after working in various counties as a secretary/servant, valuer, land-agent and farmer. Nevertheless, he learned his letters well and was reckoned 'a good scholar' at 13 despite (or perhaps on account of) regular thrashings with the birch while suspended from a bacon hook in his father's house, this being the standard punishment for playing truant! Meanwhile he read widely, wrote music, hunted, shot, fell in and out of love and discovered the pleasures of the alehouse, 'which he afterwards regretted'. By his early twenties Mastin was a land agent in Hertfordshire in vigorous pursuit of a wife. Having played the field with some gusto he eventually settled on a young heiress of 16 and, in the face of bitter opposition from her parents, eloped with her to Gretna Green, for good measure taking along his father as a witness to the wedding. Once his wife came of age, Mastin was able to get hold of her money and to speculate in the land market, concurrently studying Latin, Greek and Hebrew in preparation for holy orders. Meanwhile he lost little time in perpetuating the Mastins and his wife (stoically, no doubt) had borne him seven children before her twenty-fifth birthday. Ordained in 1777, Mastin became vicar of Naseby in 1783, held a number of other curacies and continued to enjoy income both from his own small landholdings and as agent for others. Although he writes sparingly of spiritual matters, limiting himself to commenting upon where and when he conducted divine services, he was probably a pretty rotten parish priest. What with field sports, *fêtes-champêtres* with the gentry, visiting friends, taking the waters at Buxton, attending the Lord Mayor's Feast at the Guildhall in 1820 (in what capacity?), recovering from broken bones sustained on the hunting field, writing essays for the Board of Agriculture, and farming his glebe, there could have been little time left for pastoral duties.

The tone of Mastin's memoirs are characteristic of their time in the sense that he rarely gives way to any sort of emotion. Typically, when he lost both his wife and his brother on the same day in 1811 he calmly reflected that 'these were events hard to be borne by those not perfectly resigned to the will of God'. The litany of family deaths was probably of less concern to Mastin than the repeated visitations of gout which he suffered as the years wore on. On Easter Sunday, 1814 he collapsed with gout and had to be carried from Naseby church only to recover to take part in the 'fêtes and great rejoicing' celebrating the overthrow of Bonaparte the following month. It is perhaps typical of a man too stingy to stump up two guineas annually following his election to the Society of Antiquaries that he should note sniffily after the village party that 'surely never was money spent more imprudently than such large sums were in Pomp, Show and extravagant vanity'.

Read alongside the *History of Naseby* with its evocation of the local landscape, agricultural practices and customs, Mastin's memoirs represent a useful addition to the corpus of contemporary descriptions of eighteenth-century rural England. The memoirs, occasionally amusing and always informative, embrace both local and national politics, the contemporary land market and its financing, farming, racing, turnpiking, and, in particular, the complexities of ecclesiastical pluralism. The *History*, if by now of peripheral value to students of the Civil Wars, is replete with detailed descriptions of the landscape over which the Battle of Naseby itself was fought. It also offers comments on the state of the rural economy in Mastin's time, notably the problems of inflation and the advance in poor rates arising from the decline in cottage-based weaving. Although a sturdy promoter of enclosure against the opposition of locals

'blind to their own interests', Mastin makes the interesting observation that poor rates in the 1820s were increasing both in parishes in the process of enclosure and those remaining in open field. Rarely judgmental and always to the point, Mastin's writings are characterized by the sort of common sense and eye for detail which only a sound practical grounding in matters of the land allows. He has been well-served by his editors who have resisted any temptation to modernize the text of the *History* and have confined their editing of the *Memoirs* to the addition of paragraph breaks and subheadings along with apposite and well-constructed footnotes. If this is a taster for the Hatley Memorial series there is every reason to look forward to future volumes.

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CHARLES F. FOSTER, *Capital and innovation – how Britain became the first industrial nation. A study of the Warrington, Knutsford, Northwich and Frodsham area, 1500–1780* (Northwich: Arley Hall Press, 2004). xviii + 373 pp. 49 plates; 12 figs; 9 maps. £16.95.

This is the fourth and final volume in the Arley Archive Series, and deals with the same area of northern Cheshire as the three books that preceded it. Whilst they were mainly concerned with the processes of agrarian change and the everyday lives of farming families, this time commercial and industrial activities are placed centre stage. As the title suggests, the book has ambitious aims, seeking to shed some light on the emergence of a 'business culture' in north-west England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As Foster acknowledges, this is not an attempt to analyze the origins of the industrial revolution, but merely to study the emergence of 'a new type of society in a small area of the Mersey basin', through detailing the lives of a large number of families living in this area between 1500 and 1780. From these collective biographies he argues convincingly the importance of two factors, namely the emergence of large numbers of small rural capital owners, and the development of a business culture amongst this group as they increasingly diversified into non-agrarian activities. It is suggested that these two processes set pastoral north-west England apart from the arable areas to the south and east, and most of continental Europe, where an inequitable distribution of wealth and hierarchical gentry culture stunted economic development. Although the distinctions drawn here between arable and pastoral areas are a little overstated, the argument for a closer exploration of capital formation and entrepreneurship amongst small rural property owners is certainly persuasive and provides the book with an organizing theme.

The book is set out in three parts. The first focuses on changes to property rights and rising land values during the period 1530 to 1670, seen as prompting the redistribution of wealth and diversification of the social structure, thus creating the conditions necessary for the emergence of a business community. Here Foster, drawing partly on the evidence from the three earlier volumes, follows the changing fortunes of numerous tenants living and working on the Arley and Tabley estates. In the second part we move forward to 1660, tracking the development of key industries in the Mersey basin through a selection of detailed business biographies. Foster takes us on a tour of the salt works of Northwich and its neighbourhood, visits the sailcloth manufacturers of Warrington, and describes the extensive business network of a leading Quaker family in the town, before concluding with a brief sketch of the social structure of Warrington society in 1771 on the eve of the industrial revolution. The rather brief third section attempts to place the study area within the wider context of the business society of the north-west, and to compare experiences here with other parts of England, Europe and the rest of the world.

This is unashamedly a work of local history with all the attendant strengths and weaknesses of that genre. Foster shows a keen sense of place, an admirable attention to detail, and clear awareness of the local historical and social context within which his study families lived. However, much of the discussion in the book fails to engage with recent debates in rural history or to consider the extensive recent literature on regional industrialization, social networks and entrepreneurship. Given the wealth of evidence presented, this represents a missed opportunity to critique current understandings of early industrial development. For instance, by comparing taxation and probate records with detailed tenurial histories Foster, presents evidence that many families had accumulated levels of wealth beyond those attainable from their known landholding and thus must have been engaged in some other economic activity. This challenges existing assumptions about the diversity of occupational structure in the countryside during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, yet the implications of these findings appear not to be fully appreciated. Indeed, the thread of the argument is sometimes lost in the detail of the discussion, particularly in Part Two, where the detailed biographies of particular business families are presented. The various chapters in this part of the book are certainly less clearly related, and hence the argument more fragmented. The contextualization of evidence in Chapter 11 also seems rather detached and would have been more powerful if woven into the body of the text.

That said, there is much to be taken from this book by the agricultural historian. Part One, in particular, covers many key aspects of agrarian change including property rights and the land market; rural capital accumulation; social mobility; household and family structure; occupational diversification, and the role of dissenters in industrial and agrarian change. Throughout the book's pages, Foster clearly demonstrates the agrarian roots of industrial development in north-west England, charting the paths by which many business families emerged from amongst the small freeholders and three-life leaseholders of the mid-sixteenth century. This book then contains some important findings, and a wealth of evidence both within the text and extensive appendices that many readers of the *Review* will find useful for their own research. Certainly its significance extends beyond the realms of local history, and it deserves to be read widely by historians of the period.

ANDREW HANN
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ALAN R. H. BAKER and MARK BILLINGE (eds), *Geographies of England. The North-South divide, imagined and material* (CUP, 2004). xi + 216 pp. 16 tables, 18 figs. £45.

Recent years have seen a growing interest amongst historians in regions and regionalism. Part of this has been the continued chewing over of the old chestnut of a North-South divide splitting England into economically, socially and culturally separate spheres. This edited collection of six essays offers a stimulating approach to this topic by exploring the development and idea of a divide over the last thousand years. It thus illustrates the way in which such distinctions are temporally as well as spatially informed. By beginning with the present and working back through time, the book forms a refreshing departure from the usual notion that a narrative must be told from the start (in the past) to its conclusion (in the present). However, this approach brings with it the danger that we project onto the past those concepts and geographies which are seen as important today, but which had little resonance with people in earlier ages. This seems especially true of the notion of a North-South divide: whilst differences between the two regions are apparent whenever we look for them, the idea that this amounted to a significant spatial or psychological divide becomes less certain as we move back in time. In attempting to discover something of the roots of perceptions of place, self and other, this book highlights the constructed and relational nature of North and South: it is impossible to have one without the other. And yet it is clear that this kind of approach is problematical in its application to earlier times, especially the early modern and medieval periods. Assembling data which might be used to reveal 'real' divisions is one thing, reconstructing the thoughts and imaginations of people who lived a thousand years ago is quite another, especially when the vast majority of them left no written record.

The early chapters are thus generally strong on both the materiality and imagination of a North-South divide. In discussing the late twentieth century, Ron Martin outlines the stark contrasts between the two halves of the country, but devotes most attention to the underlying causes of this division, arguing that its re-emergence in the last thirty years is linked to a shift in Britain from an industrial to a post-industrial society. In the second chapter, Danny Dorling argues strongly that the middle decades of the twentieth century were the period when the division between North and South ran deepest in material terms without becoming apparent to the people at the time. There is a problem here, however, in that he largely ignores a wide range of literature which set out to explore what was clearly recognized as a deep and, at least in part, socially-constructed divide. Chapter Three focuses on the period 1830–1918. Here, Philip Howell maintains that, even during an age when northern industrialism was at its height, economic and political power never shifted from the South and especially London. Moreover, he argues, southern culture was also in the ascendancy and southern notions of Englishness increasingly came to dominate the national psyche. In contrast, Mark Billinge sees the period of the classic industrial revolution as being marked by a pronounced shift in the balance of power towards the industrializing North. Yet what emerges most strongly from his analysis is the complexity of English regionalism and identity. The problems of identifying a coherent and strongly differentiated North and South appear to become more severe as we move back in time. John Langton's survey of early-modern England is equivocal on the existence of a 'real' divide, whilst imagined geographies placed more emphasis on the nation than the region. Following from this, Bruce Campbell argues that many apparent manifestations of a North-South divide in medieval England were, ironically, the result of attempts to construct – both in reality and in the collective consciousness – an English nation; rather that North-South distinctions were blurred by those of upland-lowland, London-provinces and core-periphery.

Individually, then, each chapter offers a fascinating account of English economy and culture, regionalism and identity. In order to explore the extent of and reasons behind the changing realities and imaginings of North and South, however, we need to be able to trace themes and concepts from one chapter to the next. Here, the diverse approaches and standpoints of the

contributors can make comparisons through time problematical. What emerges clearly enough is that, whilst differences between North and South were a feature of England from the Norman conquest onwards, the perception of division hardened through time, especially during and after the industrial revolution. Martin, Dorling and Howell are clear about the existence and strength of a North-South divide, whereas Langton and Campbell seem far less certain that this is what they have found. In emphasizing the over-riding importance of the medieval and early modern project of nation-building, they imply that internal spatial divisions can only emerge once there is a strong national identity. In this light, the North-South divide can be seen as a political project, embarked upon once national borders and identities were secure, which had the intent of (re)establishing the superiority and dominance of power in the core. Whether this is how we choose to read and understand North and South, this exploration of the changing realities and imaginings of this most contentious of socio-spatial divisions serves to challenge what we think we know about England's past and present.

JON STOBART
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MARK COOPER and JOHN DAVIS, *The Irish fertiliser industry. A history* (Irish Academic Press, 2004). 408 pp. 60 tables; 25 illus; 32 figs. £49.50.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Irish chemical industry was relatively insignificant in a United Kingdom context, except for the Irish fertilizer sector which accounted for about 9.5 per cent of UK fertilizer output and about 10 per cent of employment in the UK fertilizer industry (at a time when Ireland had about 10 per cent of UK population). This study of the fertilizer sector casts much new light on one of the many Irish industries we know relatively little about from an historical perspective and it is therefore a welcome addition to the historiography. It again demonstrates that despite the fact that Ireland was the least industrially developed region in the United Kingdom during the industrial revolution, it had some significant industries and companies in particular niches. Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century the Irish fertilizer company, W. & H. M. Goulding, had become the largest fertilizer company in these islands.

This study illustrates the importance of agriculture for the Irish industrial sector: agricultural demand provides the background to the growth of the fertilizer sector historically. The authors trace efforts to raise Irish soil fertility prior to the production of artificial manures, when sea sand, lime and marl, dung, seaweed, excrement, offal, and powdered bones amongst other organic materials were used to good effect. This section is the most speculative part of the book. For example the authors imply that arable farming (and thus it is assumed manuring also) featured little in Gaelic agriculture in the centuries leading up to the plantations. However, the archaeological evidence suggests that Irish milling technology in the early medieval period was quite advanced by European standards and the number of sites were relatively numerous, which implies that there was more arable farming in the Gaelic economy than has generally been assumed (see C. Rynne in A. Bielenberg ed., *Irish flour milling: a history 600–2000* (Dublin, 2003)). Moreover, in many parts of the country newcomers/planters turned land over to pasture and away from arable farming. Essentially the historical jury is still out on whether other aspects of the Gaelic agrarian economy (such as the use of manure) were also somewhat more advanced than suggested by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century colonial commentators, who are cited here uncritically by the authors.

In a chapter on science and the emergence of the industry, our attention is drawn to the important contribution of an Irishman, Dr John Murray (1787–1871) to the discovery of superphosphates. Murray retained an abiding interest in agriculture and chemically-prepared manures despite his medical career. The authors have carefully pieced together the genesis of the Irish industry largely from qualitative sources. The lack of full official trade statistics (including trade with Great Britain, which accounts for the bulk of Irish trade) between 1822 and 1904 has reduced any inferences the authors could make about important imported materials during a critical period in the development of the Irish industry, but they use this import material to good effect after 1904 when full trade returns were again available. The import data published annually by the Belfast and Cork Harbour Commissioners during the second half of the nineteenth century could have been used to good effect to ascertain changes in raw material inputs, and the scale of competition from British companies. The Irish foreign trade data in the British Parliamentary Papers might also have provided additional evidence on imports of raw materials. Moreover, given Goulding's importance in both an Irish and United Kingdom context, more attention and space could have been given to the development of this company prior to 1921.

The strongest section of the book deals with the history of the industry from the 1920s onwards, when the statistical evidence improves both north and south of the border. The modern period accounts for the lion's share (196 pages) of the written text (306 pages). The working experience of one of the authors within the industry for over forty years no doubt contributed to

an informed knowledge of the more recent period. The industry experienced limited structural change in the interwar years, its salient feature being Goulding's rising share of the market both north and south of the border. Irish farmers at this point consumed relatively low levels of fertilizers by European standards (the greater emphasis on livestock farming seems to have been the main factor here, as fertilizer was less commonly used in connection with pasture until after the Second World War). The contrast between the north, where consumption rose during the Second World War, and the south, where it declined dramatically is a striking indication of the divergence of the two economies in this period.

From the 1950s, fertilizer consumption among farmers in Ireland rose steadily across the island as fertilizer usage became a common feature of grassland management, even more so in the decades after 1973 when Ireland became part of the EEC and grassland farming expanded further. The authors have produced an excellent account of the response of the Irish industry to these new and improved conditions. Curiously, while the Irish chemical industry has grown dramatically in the last decades (driven largely by multinational investment) and now makes an important contribution to Irish GDP, Cooper and Davis have forensically charted and illuminated the demise of the Irish fertilizer sector in the same period. It seems that the lack of foresight, consultation and planning within the sector and the failure to form a public/private partnership, using available knowledge and fixed assets as well as much needed new investment, resulted ultimately in the collapse of an important industry in which Ireland had traditionally been able to compete.

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CAROL TWITCH, *Tithe war, 1918–1939. The countryside in revolt* (Norwich: Media Associates, 2001). 303 pp. Illus. £14.95.

Between the late 1920s and the outbreak of the second world war a curious rural revolt shook parts of the English and Welsh countryside. The cause was the tithe, anciently, according to the Church of England, the first tenth of the produce of the land paid to maintain God's work on earth. The 'war' of the 1920s and 1930s was not the first time tithes had caused problems. Secular ownership of many tithes after the reformation was a source of anger and grievance throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, rioting marked the introduction of a new potato tithe on the Isle of Man in 1825, while many small farmers in the south and east of England used the tithe as a reason to support Captain Swing. Eric Evans' admirable study *The contentious tithe* of 1976 took the story up to the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836, which converted a physical 'tenth' into an annual money payment known as the tithe rent charge based on the previous seven years' grain prices.

Commutation was, according to Evans, largely successful with 'little cause for complaint' either by farmers or the Church. Even the depression in wheat prices after 1879–80 seems to have left the system remarkably untouched with the rent charge remaining stable in relation to the original 1836 settlement until 1885. However problems remained. The tithe was abolished in Ireland after Irish disestablishment and a bitter campaign. In Wales, the young David Lloyd George cut his political teeth in the anti-tithe agitation of the mid-1880s and even in England the great royal commissions on agriculture of the 1880s and 1890s contain more than a hint that along with tenant right, the tithe was still a grievance for some farmers, especially as cereal prices remained low.

In 1891, a new act dealt with some of these problems but it was after the Great War that the problem of the tithe became acute. There were two reasons for this. Tithe was a charge on land and hence the responsibility of the landowner. The sale of something like a quarter of agricultural land to its tenants in the years 1918 to 1922 enormously increased the number of tithe payers. Moreover, these were often 'small men' heavily burdened with mortgage debts. Second, the collapse of cereal prices, first in the early 1920s and then again in the late 1920s and early 1930s pressed hard on the livings of these new farmers. On the other side, the income of the Church had been falling across the board since the 1900s. As a result the demands of a new and less wealthy clergy meant the Anglican communion and especially Queen Anne's Bounty, the body responsible for collecting and administering the tithe, needed to maximize income.

It is this point the Carol Twitch's book really begins. Although she presents a usually clear account of a complex and, to me at least, mysterious system of taxation, it is with the 'war' that her account comes to life. Drawing on the diaries and letters of A. G. Mobbs, a key figure in the East Anglian and then the national anti-tithe campaign, as well as his considerable archive, she gives a detailed and passionate account of the 'tithe war'. Some of the material is well enough known to specialists, while some of the more spectacular events, like the auctions and distraint of goods in East Anglia and elsewhere have been the subject of two television programmes. However, as the first full length account of the movement, the book has huge value: I only wish I had had it to hand when writing my own recent book on the period. The story of Mobbs in particular, who was still fighting the tithe in the 1970s, restores to the historian of popular

movements an unlikely hero. The careful use of his papers and other sources provides the academic as well as the interested general reader with a real sense of the anger of those involved as well as the intransigence of a Church which insisted that tithes were simply a species of private property and equated an attack on what was, after all, a tax on farming, with the end of civilization.

The centrality of A. G. Mobbs and the other key East Anglian figure, the novelist and farmer Doreen Wallace, does mean that the book is strongly centred on Norfolk and Suffolk. This does lead to a slight tendency to marginalize Kent, the other major centre of the English anti-tithe movement. What it does not do, though, is marginalize the first president of the National Tithepayers Association, the Rev. Roderick Kedward. If Mobbs represented the rather conservative face of East Anglia driven to revolt by the trials of agriculture, Kedward stood for another rural England, that of radical nonconformity. For Kedward and men and women like him, the tithe was an attack on the rights of the freeborn Englishman which nonconformists had defended since the seventeenth century.

There are complex and sometimes uncomfortable bits to the story, which this book is less firm on. Throughout Europe in the inter-war period there were close links between the extreme right and agrarian movements and this was the case with the anti-tithe campaign, which was courted by the British Union of Fascists. Although few of those involved among the tithe payers were fascists, it is clear that Mosely did find support among farmers and that figures like Viscount Lymington shared an active commitment to both far-right politics and the anti-tithe movement. The relationship between the farm worker and the anti-tithe movement is better dealt with although the difficulties many farm workers, especially of the older generation, found in supporting a farmers' movement are not always understood. At its most simple, it was difficult to have sympathy for farmers (and the NFU), who, whilst they were complaining bitterly about tithes, were also cutting wages.

In 1936 the government abolished the tithe. The Church was compensated by a payment of some £70m, which was to be recouped by a tax on individual farmers farming titheable land and to be paid over a sixty-year period. In fact these payments ended in 1976 when the government decided that sufficient funds were available in the tithe account to enable full redemption of tithe annuities to take place.

Despite any criticisms, this is an excellent book. Its huge number of photographs and its detailed work especially on East Anglia provide historians with a starting point for a wider study. In the meantime it can be strongly recommended to all those interested in a widely remembered but little studied part of the history of rural England.

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E. J. T. COLLINS (ed.), *Crafts in the English countryside: towards a future* (The Countryside Agency, 2004). 324 pp. Illus. £20.

Between 2001 and 2004 the Countryside Agency, supported by several rural charities, commissioned Ted Collins and his team of specialists to carry out a survey of traditional rural crafts in England, and this is the result of their efforts. They cover a wide range of activities: the horse industry, meaning not only breeders, riding and racing stables and so on, but also the supporting trades, principally saddlery and farriery; wheelwrights; the various kinds of blacksmiths, such as artists and engineers as well as farrier-blacksmiths; the greenwood crafts, producing fencing materials, garden ware, furniture, charcoal, and thatching spars; pole-lathe turners; basketry; historic gardens; wind- and water-milling; and a variety of historic building crafts, from thatching and tiling to timber framing, earth walling, flintworking, glazing, and plastering. They examine the current state and function of these trades, paying particular attention to the state of the labour force and its skills, and the training and education needed to maintain them. There is also an associated website, www.craftsintheenglishcountryside.org.uk, that contains further statistical data and other appendices.

This is not a work of history, but it contains much history, and history is integral to its purpose. There have been other examples of historians contributing to policy debates (Hoskins, for example, wrote part of a Royal Commission report on Common Land), but this goes further. History is, in a sense, part of the product or service that many of the rural crafts produce. It is no longer necessary to possess a willow basket to carry one's shopping or washing; a plastic product will do the job, although it may not do it so well or be as pleasing to look at. Thus the traditional crafts now produce luxuries rather than necessities. Their products are now free to appeal to niche market consumers who buy them for what they are as much as for what they do. In 1927 *The Times* carried a perceptive review of *The rural industries of England and Wales* volume 1, by Helen FitzRandolph and Doriel Hay, predicting this outcome: 'The old trades may yet be renewed by a demand, defying the lure of cheapness, for soundness and simplicity, for the traditional forms whose adaptation to use makes their inherent beauty – qualities which were once to be had in the village shop, and now seem likely to be the perquisites of the great'. Hence the need for the

historical sections in most of the chapters of this report, and consequently its value for rural historians.

In comparison with farming, rural crafts and trades have been relatively neglected by both policymakers and historians over the last fifty years. After FitzRandolph and Hay's very detailed 1926–7 survey, there were a few more works in the 1950s and '60s, mostly describing the decline of individual crafts, but since then there has been very little. A comparison with the earlier surveys is interesting. There is nothing here on weaving, dyeing, spinning or lacemaking, on tanning, or making clogs or coracles, but there is hard evidence of buoyant demand for coppice products, a revival in traditional milling, and a demand for skilled labour in many crafts, to pick just a few of the report's conclusions. Although it may not have been its primary purpose, this book is therefore the nearest thing we have to a history of these activities in the late twentieth century, which we can now see was a crucial period in which, for some crafts at least, decline was replaced by survival or revival.

PAUL BRASSLEY
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Elsewhere and General

GOVIND P. SREENIVASAN, *The peasants of Ottobeuren, 1487–1726. A rural society in early modern Europe* (CUP, 2004). xix + 386 pp. 35 tables; 52 figs; 2 maps. £55.

This work joins a rich tradition of anglophone studies of early modern south-western Germany that utilize the dense and high quality stock of sources from the region's varied and numerous political entities. Ottobeuren was one such entity, a micro-state with a population never exceeding 10,000 in this period, ruled by the monastery of the same name, in the Allgäu region in the far south-west of modern Bavaria. The detailed archive- and record-keeping of the monastery has allowed Sreenivasan to piece together an exceptionally wide-ranging study of social and economic life in this rural, largely agricultural region over two centuries. The volume is organized chronologically, but the greatest weight is laid on the period *c.* 1560–*c.* 1630.

The book's primary thrust is to describe a major transition from what Sreenivasan calls a 'discrete society' of subsistence agriculture, in-kind orientated exchange and largely local social and economic relationships, to a commercialized, monetized and increasingly outward-looking and specializing economy. It is argued that this is 'Smithian' growth, economic progress founded on market integration and the benefits of specialization. This is an important thesis, in part because it is unusual for a monograph to engage directly with this very current macro-economic debate about the nature of European economic development, but also because it discovers the traits associated with the more progressive economies of north-west Europe in, relatively-speaking, a remote, clerically-governed backwater. Sreenivasan dates the beginning of this transition to around 1580, and it was largely complete by 1620. By the second half of the seventeenth century, commerce was an essential part of peasant life, sustained by textile production and distilling in the post-war agricultural depression. He argues that a significant (though not the sole motor of this change) was a shift in inheritance and 'household-ing' practice; a shift from partible inheritance of farms to the maintenance of large holdings, alongside the paying-off of siblings and retirement contracts that often involved the buying-out of previous owners by heirs. These practices necessitated a much greater degree of liquidity in the economy, and access to and utilization of credit, and hence enforced commercialization. The process itself seems to have been kick-started by increasing demographic and ecological pressures by the mid-sixteenth century. But this world was not subject to a Malthusian trap according to Sreenivasan. Although (in common with many, but not all, parts of central Europe) population ceased to grow after the mid-1560s, agricultural output rose in response to these changes, persistent harvest shortfalls were avoided, and demographic stability was maintained by out-migration.

It is a provocative thesis, vividly set out. Agricultural historians will be most engaged with the claim of the successful expansion of grain output (though not productivity per cultivated hectare) towards the end of the long sixteenth-century, in what was apparently a very traditional three-field system. Sreeniavsan's evidence for this is not however overwhelming; the breakdown of tithe receipts (p. 124) does not suggest an invariant traditional three-field system across the region. Unfortunately, the author has not provided sufficient methodological information to allow proper checking of the steps taken to produce his estimates of harvest size and yield. It would be surprising indeed if oat yields (pp. 146–8) in the 1620s and 1660s in this alpine sub-region were really as high as those obtained in most of north-west Europe only by the middle of the eighteenth century. I wondered if inappropriate conversions of local volume measures might have generated these results, but, lacking sufficient information or referencing in the section on weights and measures, could do no more than surmise. The trickiness always associated with such quantifying work might mean that the lack of an exhaustive statement of the methodologies applied is venial, but in this case accuracy is certainly essential for a whole series of claims about the expansion of output,

the vulnerability of the region to Malthusian mortality crises (which do not, it is clear, appear to have occurred), and the size of subsistence holdings. Other related and potentially significant questions are not touched upon, such as was none of the cereal crop used as fodder for livestock, as appears to be implied? And what would happen to his results if he took his own higher, rather than lower, estimate for population growth between 1560 and 1620? If holding sizes, intra-village social differentiation and yields remained as consistent over time as Sreenivasan appears to suggest, who was eating the surplus produced by larger holdings before commercialization developed? Why did the grain output in the larger settlements drop between the 1560s and 1615–24, but rise in small hamlets? Sreenivasan's argument is thus suggestive, but neither definitive nor conclusive. Indeed, despite the self-consciously comparative stance that introduces the book, it is a shame that many of the observations are not put in a wider context. The author appears unaware, for example, that Christian Pfister published extensive tithe series showing similar trends for nearby regions of Switzerland in his seminal work in the mid-eighties. Similarly, there is little sense of the demand side of increased commercialization, possibly driven by the development of Swiss proto-industry, or the fact that other regions of the German south-west do not appear to show the developments outlined here, though Sreenivasan is careful to state that his model may not be more widely applicable. English readers in particular might miss reference to recent debates on inheritances practices, holding size, and commercialization, debates that Sreenivasan has previously engaged in himself.

Nevertheless, there is a wealth of valuable material, and rich pickings for those interested in the development of the devolution of property, kin-group relations, the apparently limited ability of institutions to withstand pressures for commercialization, market integration, credit and the role of money in the rural economy, the guild system and textile production, and the potential for development in supposedly 'marginal' regions of Europe. This is quite a list. Sreenivasan has an eye for the detail, contingency, and increasing flexibility of kin and property relations, though the detail provided in numerous case-histories may be burdensome to the reader less engaged with the particularities of the region. He is to be applauded for producing an agrarian history that achieves the rare feat of spanning the period form the late fifteenth to the early eighteenth century. The book is likely to be influential, but the claims relating to agriculture in particular should not be taken as gospel.

PAUL WARDE
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NADINE VIVIER (ed.), *Ruralité française et britannique (XIIIe-XXe siècles). Approches comparées. Colloque franco-britannique du Mans, 12–14 septembre 2002* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2005). 254 pp. €20.

In September 2002 members of the British Agricultural History Society and the Association d'Histoire et Sociétés Rurales met at the Université du Maine (Le Mans) to take stock of rural history on both sides of the Channel. In so doing they followed the example of rural geographers whose fifth *colloque* will take place in Clermont-Ferrand in 2006. The date was well chosen since the BAHS celebrated its fiftieth anniversary during that academic session and the AHSR celebrated its tenth year. The topic was appropriate since questions about English agricultural history have appeared in the *concours d'agrégation* (national competitive examination for intending teachers of history in *lycées*). A selection of the communications delivered at Le Mans appear in *Ruralité* which contains thirteen major essays – all in French – by five British and nine French scholars. Five shorter pieces offer introductory and concluding statements.

Varying emphases, approaches, scales of investigation and source materials in the two countries are highlighted by Professor Nadine Vivier (Le Mans) and Jean-Pierre Jessenne (Lille). The sheer size of France (four times the land surface of England) and the recency of its industrial and urban transformations make any attempt at comparison with England a major challenge. Until recently, the requirements of doctoral work differed on the two sides of the Channel, with the PhD being a smaller work than the vast *doctorat d'état* that required many years and would typically be undertaken part-time by university lecturers or *lycée* teachers who thoroughly exploited their local *archives départementales.* (Now, a *doctorat nouveau régime* is quite similar to a PhD). For whatever reason, almost all rural historians in France and England have ploughed their furrows at home; few have undertaken genuinely comparative work or have acquired archival knowledge of conditions across the Channel. Nonetheless, Jean-Pierre Poussou (Sorbonne) has contributed a masterly review essay, entitled 'L'histoire agraire de l'Angleterre à l'époque moderne, vue de France', for the present volume.

As with all proceedings from symposia, *Ruralité* is a compromise between the desirable and the possible, reflecting which scholars were invited to attend and to present papers, the topics analyzed, whether they concentrated on the details of their latest research or provided reviews for a non-domestic audience, and whether they finally delivered publishable copy. Three major themes structure the greater part of the book: women's work on farms (fifteenth to twentieth centuries); village societies and landholding (sixteenth to eighteenth

centuries); and trends in agricultural production as revealed by wills and probate inventories (thirteenth to eighteenth centuries).

Gender issues have attracted less attention among rural historians in France than in England but Scarlett Beauvalet (Amiens) and Jacqueline Sainclivier (Rennes) sketch what has been accomplished on French rural women from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries and on female farm workers during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Roland Hubscher (Paris) sheds light on the harsh lives of Italian and Polish women who migrated to work on French farms between the two world wars. Jane Whittle (Exeter) and Nicola Verdon (Reading) provide English contributions on the gender division of labour in the countryside. Landholding and rural society in France are examined by Annie Antoine (Rennes), who covers the vast theme of the changing relationship between ownership and tenancy from the late middle ages to the Revolution, and by Gérard Béaur (Paris), who focuses on rural landholding both before and after 1789. Richard Hoyle (Reading) provides detailed case studies of changes in family farming in Yorkshire and Staffordshire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The final theme is dominated by two contributions from English scholars, with evidence from wills being examined for medieval times by Philip Schofield (Aberystwyth) and for the span from 1550 to 1750 by Mark Overton (Exeter). Dominique Rosselle (Lille) gives a view of the importance of wills in pre-Revolutionary France.

As with many collections, the title of this book implies rather more cohesion than is achieved by the sum of its parts. Whether the juxtaposition of a set of single-country essays plus brief linking sections really represents *approches comparées* is debatable. The fact that all the papers are in French will certainly enlighten French students but may do little – or nothing – to inform their increasingly monolingual counterparts across the Channel. That remark is not intended to belittle the sterling work of Béatrice and Nadine Vivier (vice-présidente of the AHSR) in translating the English papers but is simply a statement of harsh reality. Will the publication of *Ruralité* (interestingly in the singular) stimulate rural historians from one side of the Channel to undertake fundamental research in the other? I would like to think that the answer might be positive but my own experience of 'systems' and academic expectations in both France and England leads me to think that this will be unlikely.

Tables and diagrams in *Ruralité* are few, as are typographical errors; however the map on page 7 showing 'Huntshire' made me smile. Staff of the Presses Universitaires de Rennes, who also handle book projects from other universities in north-western France, are to be congratulated for producing a scholarly book for only 20 Euros. Would that British publishers could do likewise!

HUGH CLOUT
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BAS J. P. VAN BAVEL and PETER HOPPENBROUWERS (eds), *Landholding and land transfer in the North Sea area (late middle ages – nineteenth century)* (Turnhout: Brepols. CORN Publication Series 5, 2004). 292 pp. 29 tables; 30 figs. €63.

This volume is the fifth in the series of collaborative publications resulting from the regular CORN (Comparative Rural History of the North Sea Area) conferences. It explores the themes of land ownership, tenancy arrangements and relationships, the extent of land transfer and the operation of land markets, and their economic and social consequences in northern France, Belgium, the North Sea coast extending from the Netherlands to Denmark, and in England. This is a subject that will be familiar to many from the Brenner debate of the 1980s, but the approach taken in this collection is the antithesis of those adopted by the combatants on that occasion. Here, essays provide a series of geographically-restricted and closely-defined agrarian case studies, which explain themselves in their own terms, without launching into dramatic spatial or temporal generalizations. This collection of thematically and geographically contiguous studies stimulates comparative interpretation of the causes and trends in land markets and holdings, without ignoring the influence of regional legal codes, seigneurial regimes or governmental activity.

These essays highlight several important common themes. The first is the long-term impact of different legal and customary systems of land tenure. In many western and central regions within the Netherlands, and the Friesian coast 'feudal' tenures disappeared in the population expansion and land reclamation of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In the Paris basin, the development of land markets was retarded by the absence of clear legal title, and the persistence of rights to rent-charges (*fieffes*) levied on lands. In Denmark and coastal Germany, absolute property rights were established in law only in the late eighteenth century, yet markets existed in shorter-term lease-rights. In each case, the structures of law and custom seem to account for these significant variations.

A second theme is related to this, and echoes Brenner – the power relations that accompanied property rights. In England, Hoyle demonstrates that while customary tenures were relatively secure, they continued to be burdened by intrusive seigneurial rights and levies at least

until the seventeenth century. Knottnerus, meanwhile, sketches out a Brenner-like distinction in the coastal regions from Groningen to Friesland, between regions in which the political authorities sought popular support by bolstering the rights of the freeholders and long leaseholders against the local nobility, and areas where local landlords and political authorities worked together. However, he deviates from Brenner in suggesting that security of tenure, market conditions, ecology and economies of scale fostered the creation of 'capitalist farmer-entrepreneurs', rather than financial exactions by landlords. Hybel sketches the process of refeudalization of the Danish peasantry, a process that cost them much of their legal identity and land ownership, but never resulted in the imposition of labour-services of the kind found east of the Elbe. Beckett and Turner emphasize that despite the extensive development of 'capitalist' farming in England in the eighteenth century, it took place alongside the persistence of customary tenures, and long-term leases for lives, rather than occurring as a result of their extinction, as Marx suggested.

These studies also offer other qualifications to existing hypotheses. They tend to support the broad outline of Brenner's thesis about the importance of landlords. Where landlords were strong, and bolstered by the state, leaseholds emerged, and farm sizes grew. By contrast, in areas where small proprietors were sanctioned by local or central authorities, subdivision occurred. In the latter case, as is suggested by Vanhaute's study of Flanders, tenancy and market-oriented agriculture might also emerge, but also with exploitative rents and highly labour-intensive cultivation. However, all these studies differ from Brenner in emphasizing the importance of regional and sub-regional variation, particularly in the Low Countries. Here, areas of big estates, large tenant farms, and a non-landed labour force could exist next to areas thickly populated by owner-occupying smallholders. Both could be attuned to their respective forms of market opportunity, ecology and agronomy.

These variations emphasize the significance of a further theme implicit within this research. In common with other studies of landholding, these essays emphasize the significance, and perhaps the increasing significance, of sub-tenancy and land leasing. The contributions of Thoen, Vanhaute, van Bavel, Knottnerus, Whittle, and Beckett and Turner all touch on this practice. In some respects, sub-tenancy may have to be included alongside market development, systems of tenure, or monetary exaction by landlords and the state, as one of the mechanisms that amplified agrarian capitalism. It is difficult to study, because such arrangements were either not recorded in existing records of tenure, or (often) expressly forbidden by them. Even so, the fact that a leasehold land market can be seen emerging in a number of disparate regions through this period suggests that this phenomenon may be worthy of its own CORN volume in the future.

If these essays generally skirt around the potential impediment of the Brenner debate, they also steer clear of another problematic hypothesis of the 1970s and '80s, 'proto-industrialization'. This is of greatest relevance to the studies of Flanders and the Netherlands, where there is a clear implication that the persistence and sub-division of small holdings was due, in part, to the support from industrial by-employments, the impact of urban, manufacturing capital, and the food demands from urban populations. Obviously, the debate about the effects of 'proto-industry' has been well rehearsed, particularly in Flanders, but these studies provide hints of intriguing divergences. In Flanders, Thoen suggests that the effect of townspeople buying land in the late middle ages was to split estates and entrench small leaseholds, while in southern Holland, van Bavel suggests that urban capital was used to amalgamate smallholdings and buy out the peasantry. Once again, the comparisons offered by these contiguous studies hint at the inadequacy of existing interpretations and generalizations.

These essays are thought provoking, because they illustrate how such divergent patterns of agrarian development could occur between states and regions, and even within regions. While in general their authors and the editors are content simply to emphasize this diversity, rather than to formulate elaborate new hypotheses, these essays stimulate the reader to think comparatively about the patterns of agrarian development in northern Europe. They provide a series of important examples that will enrich national debates, and hopefully form the basis of new research into landholding in under-studied parts of coastal Germany and Denmark. If the comparative dimension of these essays is illuminating, so are the recurrent themes, notably the continuing importance of 'feudal' tenures across the region, and the significance of sub-tenures in oiling the wheels of many tenurial and transfer mechanisms. In these respects, if this collection is more likely to begin debates rather than to finish them, in doing so it continues admirably to fulfil the original objectives of the CORN network.

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BRIAN DONAHUE, *The great meadow. Farmers and the land in colonial Concord* (Yale UP, 2003). xx + 311 pp. 13 plates; 25 figs. £25.

Explorers and settlers usually overestimate the capacity of an unfamiliar country to support intensive agriculture,

as did Eric the Red when he coined the name Greenland, the creators of the Oklahoma dust bowl, and those Englishmen who during the late 1960s imported 'improved' farming methods to the apparently underutilized savanna landscapes of Alentejo, Portugal (see O. Balabanian, *Problemas agrícolas e reformas agrárias no Alto Alentejo e na Estremadura Espanhola* (Lisbon, 1984)).

Is southern New England another example? The story goes that the pilgrim fathers and their successors tried to make it an English-style countryside. Like giants, they dug up forests and rolled boulders into walls; they wrested a meagre living from a glaciated granite landscape; but ultimately it was in vain. They fled to better land beyond the mountains, and the forest won back their field-walls and cellar-holes.

This book tells a rather different story. It deals with Concord, Massachusetts, from 1650 to 1770. It opens with the settlement established and ends before its final boom and bust. The author contends that the landscape was complex and parts of it were quite good farmland. The settlers quickly learned what to do with each part; they adapted their farming, eating American maize instead of wheat and drinking rough cider. New England accommodated population growth – up to a point – and provided a comfortable and sustainable life-style.

However, winters were colder than in Old England and soils less fertile. Farmers needed more firewood and more hay for their cattle. They had plenty of forest, and got just enough hay by converting swamps to meadow. More hay generated more manure. But these practices were labour-intensive, a point not sufficiently made in the book, and labour was short. With two acres of wood to cut, chop, and cart each year, thirty-odd acres of hay to mow, and dung from animals that had eaten all that hay to spread on the fields, and using oxen instead of faster horses or mules, how could a New England farmer have time to enjoy his comforts? Were his prolific children a substitute for slaves?

This fascinating story deals only summarily with earlier and later periods. Why did Kentish clothiers and Buckinghamshire tailors abandon good jobs in 1635 to turn peasant in a lonely, hostile land? How did they find time and skill to make fields as well as till them, to frame houses, to fence pastures? What did they eat while doing it? What happened when a scythe broke or they ran out of nails? How did they find out what was cultivable? What mistakes did they make?

The original land-grant of Concord was an exact six-mile square, but American obsession with geometry went no further. Inside the square, in fifteen years, there was a land-map as complex and irregular as any that had taken 1500 years to evolve at home. While open-field strip cultivation was declining in England it was introduced into the colonies, including Concord. The next town was called Sudbury; but Sudbury (Suffolk) had already abolished its open fields. Dr Donahue, alas, does not say how many settlers came from open-field English parishes.

I commend this book, the authoritative fruit of twenty years' research by an author who is himself a New England farmer. But it can be confused and verbose. Details of climate emerge on page 95, and the perfunctory index does not find them. The computer-drawn maps have crude outlines and inconsistent scales and keys. I lost an intricate argument about watercourses because the map confuses them with roads. Much of the book traces every field that successive generations bought and sold, in long paragraphs that I found incomprehensible, having no map locating Elm Brook Hill, Shawshine Corner, etc. etc. Was unrelieved text the best way to convey this detail? Illustrations include photographs taken long after the events described, but no facsimiles of historic maps or other archives.

The notes are excellent. Why, Yale University Press, were they exiled to the end of the book? Your computer produces admirable footnotes; why not use it? And why did your editor not insist on a frontispiece map, with contours, identifying every place in the text?

OLIVER RACKHAM
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VIRGINIA DEJOHN ANDERSON, *Creatures of Empire. How domestic animals transformed early America* (OUP, 2004). xiii + 322 pp. £22.99.

Title and subtitle describe its topic but do not convey the richness of this book's argument, moving between the Chesapeake and New England, white settlers and native Americans, ideas and action, land and people across the seventeenth century. Anderson uses two insights to study the importance of livestock in the American colonies from the early days of settlement to the 1680s: Alfred Crosby's, in *Ecological imperialism*, that European colonies succeeded by establishing familiar agricultural ecosystems, and William Cronon's, in *Changes in the land*, that the European settlers and indigenous inhabitants of New England held very different ideas about property. Her accounts of livestock management and livestock law will interest agricultural historians but they should pay more attention to her discussions of ideas about animals and property in the different cultures of the colonies.

She presents her case in three sections. Two chapters on 'Thinking about animals' describe the views native Americans brought to their encounters with cows, pigs,

and sheep and the settlers to their sightings of moose, deer, and skunk, and puts them in the larger context of concepts of animals, people, property, and the world. Three more on 'Settling with animals' tell how the Europeans imagined they would manage their stock and how they actually did it in Chesapeake and the New England colonies. A final two, 'Contending with animals', deal with the clashes livestock caused between Europeans and native peoples, with emphasis on the later years when white settlers enlisted livestock to dispossess their neighbours.

In outline Anderson tells a familiar story in the history of European settler colonies: dreams founded on ignorance, destroyed by the realities of the land and the indigenous peoples, followed by settler adaptation, usually without admitting things went wrong and almost always at the expense of the indigenous peoples. The details, though, carry readers into new territory, and the book's strength lies in a close study of the interaction between ideas and action by examining incidents, laws, and processes. She probes court cases of Algonquin encounters with cows, pigs in native American cornfields, and disputes over fence laws, among other things, to see what livestock meant to different people and how experience changed their ideas. She shows, for instance, how much the settlers saw livestock management not only as a sign of civilization but a civilizing influence. They urged their neighbours to raise cows, on the theory that this would raise their culture, and when they refused, or adopted stockraising to their culture rather than their culture to stockraising, decided the native Americans indeed had little civilization. They were dismayed when conditions in the Chesapeake and New England brought a decline from stewardship of closely-managed animals to asserting legal title over loosely-ranging stock and from raising cattle to depending on less prestigious pigs. In explaining this last she not only gives full weight to differences in climate and settlement patterns between the areas and the common shortage of labour but compares the social value of the various kinds of stock – cattle, horses, sheep, goats, and pigs. Describing trespassing stock she notes not only that pigs caused the most problems (Cronon mentioned that) but that native American women, who were in charge of their families' fields, suffered the most from these depredations.

Anderson steers between micro-history and the broad overview, recounting incidents without losing sight of the large picture, and she manages the difficult feat of writing an entire book on livestock as creatures of empire without making them its sole agents. This is a rich account, developing an important facet of agricultural history. It will be of particular interest to historians of European settler colonies as an example of how to attack some interesting questions and as data for a comparative study – which someone ought to do.

THOMAS R. DUNLAP
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DAVID R. FOSTER and JOHN D. ABER (eds), *Forests in time. The environmental consequences of 1000 years of change in New England* (Yale UP, 2004). xiv + 475 pp. £35.

Years ago, the eminent historical geographer H. C. Darby reflected upon the difficulties of dealing with space and time together, a challenge that he regarded as central to his discipline. Decades on, the various solutions he proposed seem curiously limited: among other things he advocated the analysis of relict features in the landscape and the use, singly or together, of vertical themes (broadly historical narratives) and geographical cross-sections in constructing accounts of changing places. Cross-sections – narrow slices through the column of time – were embraced because they allowed students of the past to describe the geography (landscape patterns and differences from place to place) of former epochs. Moreover, suggested Darby, a series of such cross-sections, drawn at different times could capture something of the dynamics of change. To illustrate this point, he turned to the dioramas depicting the area encompassed by the Harvard Forest at several periods since *c.* 1700. Although they were unusual, by virtue of their construction in three dimensions rather than in words, these six scale-models of the Petersham, Massachusetts area at intervals representing 'The pre-settlement Forest', 'Initial clearing of the land, AD 1740', 'The height of agriculture, AD 1830', 'Farm abandonment and white pine establishment, AD 1850,' and so on were taken, individually, to exemplify the geographer's essential interest in regions, areas or landscapes and, collectively, to embrace time, or history.

Today, few geographers pay much regard to these and other similar contortions intended to create room for the study of the past in a discipline that was then resolutely focused on contemporary spatial patterns. The world has moved on. But the intellectual anxieties that led Darby into such musings are worth remark, because they have shaped the discipline of geography into the present. Efforts to construct the subject as the study of space (or areal differentiation) with systematic and synthetic (or regional) emphases served to marginalize work in the human-environment tradition that sought to integrate and understand the complex intersections of nature and culture that shape life on earth. Thus, it might be argued, geographers substantially abandoned forms and fields of inquiry that have since proved

fertile ground for the work of ecologists, environmental historians and others.

These thoughts are provoked by my reading of *Forests in time*, a work centred on the Harvard Forest that includes illustrations of the dioramas that captured Darby's attention – and much more. Let there be no mistake. This is a remarkable book. The product of close collaborations among fifty scholars devoted to integrating 'biology and environmental science with an understanding of the complexities of landscape history in order to forge meaningful interpretations of the present' (p. xi), it offers a wonderfully full, thoughtful and accessible account of the physiology of ecosystems and the interactions of humans, plants and animals in north-eastern America over the last millennium. It is also, in a way, a reminder of what a certain kind of geography might have been and a powerful argument for the reopening of conversations and collaborations across the lines that all too often divide that discipline into distinct, systematic, enclaves.

Established in 1907, through the efforts (in part at least) of Nathaniel Shaler, an important figure in early American geography, the Harvard Forest has long been the focus of historical as well as scientific work, and these emphases were sharpened and invigorated in 1988 when scholars from several disciplines, universities and research institutes came together under the auspices of the Harvard Forest Long Term Ecological Research program. Combining ecological history, experimental field manipulations and long term measurements in cross-disciplinary studies attentive to a variety of scales from site and the landscape to sub-regional and regional levels, the LTER initiative has yielded, in this book, an altogether fascinating account of the changing forest ecosystems and landscapes of New England.

The book is divided into five parts. The first sets the scene. The second, three times as long and probably the section of the volume of most general interest to agricultural and environmental historians, explores regional history and landscape dynamics. Chapter Four, the first in this section of the book, offers a superb encapsulation of 'The environmental and human history of New England', and others explore the forest's responses to land use and climate changes and consider wildlife dynamics. Part Three assesses the legacies of historical change in the modern forest landscape. Here specialists explore such matters as the influence of land-use patterns on soil properties, and exchanges between the forest and the atmosphere. Part Four, the longest, reports on a series of long-term experiments that compare 'ecosystem responses to historical disturbances with those initiated by novel' contemporary stresses (p. 232); hurricane blow-downs, gap dynamics and soil warming are among the topics investigated in these pages. Finally, a relatively brief fifth section contemplates 'Lessons from the Forest and its history.'

Fittingly, the final words of this impressive volume are structured by a series of reflections upon the works of Hugh Raup, a former director of the Harvard Forest. These point, among other things, to the fact that ecology has become a genuinely historical science since Raup wrote in the 1960s that an historical perspective can aid understanding of 'what appears unexplainable in the present' (p. 396), and that people as well as biogeochemical processes will shape the landscape of New England in the future as in the past. All in all, this volume is a model of its kind. It offers a coherent, interdisciplinary synthesis of historical and scientific research and a compelling account of changes driven by human actions and natural processes over hundreds of years. Whether one thinks of it (as Michael Williams has in *Science*, 306, 26 November 2004) as a biography of the Harvard Forest or (as Timothy Fahey does on the dust-jacket) as 'a guide to understanding ecological changes on our human-dominated planet' one comes away from this work with a heightened awareness of the value of paying close attention to particular localities in efforts to understand the ramifications of human-environment interactions through time, and convinced, with Thoreau, that the forests of New England are cultural as well as natural places.

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G. J. LEIGH, *The world's greatest fix. A history of nitrogen and agriculture* (OUP, 2004). xi + 242 pp. 3 tables; 88 figs. £20.

In the 1960s Professor Leigh, then at the beginning of his career, was appointed to the new ARC Unit of Nitrogen Fixation at the University of Sussex. The unit was finally closed in the 1990s, and this book is in effect a discursive account of the historical background to its work.

After an opening chapter that sketches the main themes of the book, there follows a chapter on the development of farming across the world, including native American, Mayan, and Chinese agriculture, and a discussion of what Roman agricultural writers said about manure. Leigh concludes from this that the supply of fixed nitrogen has determined the supply of food and thus the size of the human population throughout history. He then goes on to examine the history of English agriculture, and especially the role of guano and Chilean nitrate in the nineteenth century. The following chapter describes the rise of agricultural chemistry, and in particular the contributions of Davy, Boussingault, Liebig, and Lawes and Gilbert to explaining how

inorganic fertilizers worked, and of Hellriegel and Wilfarth in demonstrating that the presence of nitrifying bacteria on their roots enabled legumes to fix their own nitrogen. At the end of the nineteenth century, Leigh argues, it was clear that the increasing agricultural production needed to feed the expanding world population would eventually be threatened by diminishing stocks of existing nitrogenous fertilizers. This led to a search for some means of fixing nitrogen from the air so that it could be used by non-leguminous plants. The result was the Birkeland–Eyde process, which relied on enormous quantities of cheap hydro-electricity and so was only ever adopted in Norway, the cyanamide process, which was also energy-intensive, and the one that eventually came to dominate the nitrogen fertilizer industry, the Haber-Bosch process.

The remainder of the story of inorganic fertilizers is about their increased adoption by farmers and the growth of the business on an international scale, but Leigh has little to say about this. His attention turns instead to the problem of biological nitrogen fixation, with which most of his career was concerned. If the nitrifying bacteria that fix nitrogen for legumes could be transferred on to non-leguminous plants, the need for fertilizer, and thus the cost of food production, would be correspondingly reduced. There might also be an additional environmental benefit, in that the nitrogen would be produced as the plant needed it, and so would be less likely to escape into groundwater and produce eutrophication problems. From the 1960s the chemistry and biochemistry of the process received much scientific attention, summarized clearly in Chapter Six. Over thirty years much was learned, but not enough: 'the ultimate secret of biological nitrogen fixation', Leigh tells us, 'still eludes all attempts to uncover it' (p. 186). We are left with fertilizers as our principal source of nitrogen. For those who see this as a problem, Leigh devotes his final chapter to an evaluation of the role of fertilizer nitrogen in eutrophication, human health, and global warming. He is more optimistic than other writers have been. 'The overall balance of the effects of nitrogen and its compounds on humankind is not absolutely clear', he concludes, 'but currently it seems overwhelmingly positive' (p. 219). There are risks of eutrophication, 'but these should be manageable' (p. 217). Leigh see this as 'an epic tale of human endeavour … the problem of feeding the human race is really solved' (p. 219). There are villains – the motives of politicians and commercial companies are 'not to be trusted' (p. 217) – but there are also heroes, in the form of science and the scientists 'whose inquisitiveness, imagination, and application have placed the ultimate solution to the age-old problem of feeding the population of the world in our hands' (p. 220).

This claims to be a book written for that mythical beast, the general reader. It is not for the scientific specialist, for Leigh has already edited a summary of the research (*Nitrogen fixation at the millennium* (Elsevier, 2002). Neither is it for historians of science and technology, for they will find its approach out of sympathy with their current methodologies. Nor is it for specialist agricultural historians, for it contains much that is already available elsewhere, notably in V. Smil, *Enriching the earth* (MIT Press, 2001), and only one chapter of new material – on the activities of the Nitrogen Fixation Unit – that they will find fresh and interesting. Given the author's admitted regret at no longer having 'the immense privilege of studying a challenging problem with a minimum of bureaucratic interference' (p. viii), it may perhaps be aimed most directly at those who withdrew the funding from the Unit, to show them where the basic research that it did fits into the wider picture.

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Conference Report
The Society's Spring Conference, April 2005

by Elizabeth Griffiths

The Society's Spring conference, organized by our president, Professor Christopher Dyer, was held from 11–13 April at the University of Leicester. Magnificent Edwardian houses and towering cedars created a charming setting in which to enjoy a wide range of stimulating papers.

Dr Fernando Collantes, University of Zarogosa, Spain opened the proceedings with his paper, 'Marginal peasant communities and European industrialization, 1800–1900: a study in comparative trends'. He provided a fascinating comparative analysis of the economic evolution of upland communities of Switzerland, France, Italy and Spain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the start of industrialization, these communities were mainly composed of peasant families, combining small scale farming with non-agricultural activities. Industrialization brought three mechanisms into play which transformed these economies: tensions favouring farm specialization; the emergence of alternative employment in industry and services; and incentives for peasant migration into cities. But, as he showed, regions and countries reacted to these forces in different ways, at different times and with different outcomes. The Swiss Alps provided the best example of a seamless and successful transition to rural modernity, while change in Southern Spain and Italy was largely the by-product of demographic crisis. He agreed with questioners that political structures played a significant role: the Swiss cantons with their decentralized system enjoyed many advantages, while the Mediterranean mountains of Spain and Italy suffered from their historic poverty and geo-political isolation, as did the highlands of Scotland. Dr Collantes impressed the audience with his brilliant delivery in a foreign language, with few notes, using simultaneously Powerpoint and OHPs.

After supper, Professor Alan Everitt treated us to a portrait of Leicestershire society. A meticulously crafted paper delivered with just the aid of a microphone and a map, Professor Everitt described a region where town and country had always been well integrated and at ease with itself. His memories stretched back to the 1960s, when Leicester inhabitants still holidayed in Skegness with the *Leicester Mercury* under their arm. But behind this modesty lay hidden depths: Leicestershire people were adept at making money and enjoyed the highest household income in Europe. This skill and creative force, he argued, stemmed from the native society of yeomen, craftsmen and tradesmen. Once they became the manufacturers and leading business families of the city, they retained their links with the countryside, often retreating to cottages in the Charnwood Forest. The network of village carriers, famously discovered by Everitt, cemented the links between town and country, collecting agricultural produce and delivering it for sale in the markets of Leicester. Many observed that the diversity of the local economy and the adaptability of its people survive today in Leicester's distinctive and successful multi-racial society.

After breakfast, Matt Tompkins (University of Leicester) began the New Researchers' Session with his paper on 'Small-scale piecemeal agricultural improvement by peasants in a south-east Midlands open field village, 1300–1600'. The village, Great Horwood, situated in Buckinghamshire on the northern claylands of the Vale of Aylesbury, was a nucleated settlement dominated by open field arable in the 1300s. Using a fine run of court rolls from New College Oxford, Mr Tomkins traced the conversion of the village to pasture in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This process was achieved by piecemeal enclosure between 1440 and 1530, the adoption of grass leys in the open fields from the 1570s and a licence permitting tenants to enclose one acre each in 1574. By 1610 half the parish was laid down to pasture. This change had been accomplished not by large landowners, but small scale peasant farmers, who, operating within the open field system and benefiting from light seigniorial control, had effected their own 'agricultural revolution' in response to the demands for livestock and

dairying from the growing London market. Mr Tomkins wondered why, given the early initiatives, the village had 'festered' and made little further progress towards further enclosure until 1842. This point aroused much debate. Most agreed that the lack of activity should not be regarded as regression, rather that the villagers had reached an optimal situation by 1610.

At the other end of the social spectrum, Sarah Johnston (University of Nottingham) gave a paper on 'Estate improvement and the professionalization of land agents on the Egremont estates in Sussex and Yorkshire, 1770–1835'. She argued that the professionalization of land agents was an eighteenth-, rather than nineteenth-century phenomenaon. Formal education may not have started until 1845, as F. M. L Thompson observed, but agents offered distinctly professional services long before, albeit of a slightly different kind. The professional mix depended on the needs of individual landowners and the context of the time. George Wyndham, third earl of Egremont, for example, employed two solicitors in succession to manage his Sussex estate at Petworth between 1770 and 1835. They called themselves 'stewards', but were 'agents' in every sense of the word, as they handled legal disputes, issues around enclosure and land purchases, drew up estate accounts; managed political campaigns, and deputized for the Earl in sticky local situations. Their contribution to estate improvement was not to supervise the tenantry and disseminate agricultural information – this task was performed by a bailiff – but to navigate the legal and political changes that underpinned the process. There was general agreement that this aspect of the agent's role, as lightening conductor for his employer, has been underestimated.

Following this stimulating paper, Richard Glass (Anglia Polytechnic University) discussed 'Agricultural organizations, networking and the exchange of information in nineteenth century Suffolk'. Mr Glass argued that the dissemination of agricultural knowledge did not always depend on the landed classes; it was in fact a more egalitarian process with local farming clubs and societies playing a leading role. With the aid of maps and graphs, he showed that the incidence of these organizations, invariably clustered around market towns, owed their survival to the support of their non-agricultural membership. Meeting in the public houses, they highlighted the co-dependence of rural and urban communities. The nature of these organizations changed over time. They had declined in numbers by 1914 and become more specialized, focusing on improved livestock management and marketing through co-operatives, a reflection of the depressed years of the late nineteenth century. Today, few survive, having been largely superseded by local newspapers, agricultural magazines and membership of national bodies like the NFU.

The morning ended with a most thought-provoking paper by Dr Bas van Bavel (University of Utrecht) on 'The emergence and organization of rural factor markets in the Low Countries, thirteenth-sixteenth centuries'. Agricultural development in the Netherlands has long been associated with the early growth of cities and urban markets, but this stimulus did not have a uniform affect on the countryside. Dr Bavel showed how four areas – Flanders, Drenthe, the Guelders River area and Central Holland – served cities in various combinations yet retained their regional divergencies. He attributed this to the uneven organization and evolution of rural factor markets: land, capital and labour. Access to these commodities varied depending on the social and cultural elements prevalent in each area from the high middle ages to the nineteenth century; this explained the different courses followed and the strong regional differences which still existed. He compared the survival of peasants of Flanders, Drenthe and central Holland with the large tenant farmers of the Guelders River area who emerged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Finally, he suggested that in England, with the exception of Norfolk which shared many features of the Low Countries notably its weak manorialism, the institutional forces were much more resistant to change. These points were debated hotly until the need for lunch intervened, but all welcomed the re-introduction of a socio-cultural dimension to our understanding of the development of the countryside.

In the afternoon, Professor Dyer led an excursion through 'Hoskin's Country' to Lamport Hall and Agricultural Museum. On the way we stopped at the deserted medieval village of Carlton Curlew, examined the ridge and furrow, the landscape of nucleation and the possible dating of abandonment, sensing we were following in the footsteps of historical giants. Lamport Hall, the ancestral home of the Ishams, long denuded of family and indigenous furnishings is a heroic example of restoration after occupation by the army in World War Two. The display of farm machinery impressed, with vintage tractors throbbing and stationery engines gurgling showing us quite clearly how the chaff cutters, root cleaners and threshers actually worked.

Next morning Drs Richard Jones and Mark Page (University of Leicester) gave their paper on 'Power and conflict in the medieval forest: some conclusions from Whittlewood'. Forests have a mystical attraction: they were symbols of royal power where kings could indulge their passion for hunting, ride roughshod over the interests of peasants and police the area with their officials,

punishing and fining poachers and miscreants. This 'landscape of authority' was shaped by the medieval forces of power and conflict. With the aid of a map of 1608, Dr Jones and Dr Page showed how the rival claims of hunting, farming and settlement were reconciled. Hunting was confined to parks and lawns where deer could be pursued unimpeded and away from crops, livestock and settlements: the king allowed minor lords to create their own parks under licence within the forest. Conflict between hunters and farmers reached a peak in the thirteenth century, as tenants clamoured for disafforestation to cultivate the land. In 1286 Edward I made concessions permitting assarting in discrete blocks abutting parks and woods. The pressure for settlements was accommodated by the creation of new manorial sites surrounded by cottages, tofts and enclosures. These sites, which flourished in areas of weak overlordship, can be identified from aerial photos. In forest communities the potential for conflict was ever present, but at Whittlewood the king, lords and peasants managed to strike a balance and live in relatively peaceful co-existence.

Professor Nick Goddard (Anglia Polytechnic University) followed with a paper on the politics of sewage disposal entitled 'Pestilential swamps? The environmental politics of Victorian sewage farming'. In theory, sewage farming met the mutual needs of town and country, agriculture and the environment, but in practice it was difficult to accomplish and generated intense controversy. This was the NIMBY issue of the Victorian era, which Professor Goddard guided us through explaining the various systems on offer and the opposition they encountered. Disposal by water carriage with discharge into rivers and the sea, was used mainly by country towns; large cities, with the greatest need, resisted such measures. Irrigation schemes, like the Beddington sewage works at Croydon were fiercely opposed for the sickening smells and 'pestilential swamps' they created in suburban areas. Corporations, required by law from the 1840s to shift their sewage, found themselves in a political quagmire as they picked their way through vested interests, poor science and woolly environmentalism, a scenario familiar to all.

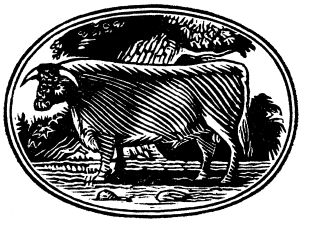
Finally, Kevin James (University of Guelph, Canada) gave us an insight into his doctoral research with a paper on 'Earning a Scottish wage: rural Irish households and migrant labour strategies, 1890–1914'. Long regarded as a negative and pernicious force undermining rural Irish households, Dr James invited us to consider migratory labour as a positive factor, which allowed Irish families to build up a portfolio of labour, avoid permanent migration and preserve their traditional lifestyles in the north-west of Ireland. A range of voluntary strategies were adopted to reduce risk and maintain income levels. Typically a household in Donegal in the 1890s might enjoy remittance payments from the USA, wages from migratory labour, sea fishing, weaving and sewing, and receipts from the sale of seaweed, peat and whisky. The migration season extended from June to November, when cottagers, male and female, left for work in the potato and fruit fields of Lowland Scotland where they earned up to 26*s.* a week, twice the wages of Donegal. Married women stayed at home, not delicately making lace in front of picture postcard cottages, but working as sweated labour in the shirt factories. Unromantic, but realistic and sustainable in a period when rural England suffered severe agricultural depression.

The conference closed after lunch with thanks expressed to Professor Dyer for a stimulating and successful conference held in the most attractive of surroundings.

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