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Forthcoming conferences, 2012–13

'Design and Dynamics of Institutions for Collective Action' 29 November–1 December 2012

Attention is drawn to the call for papers for a conference in honour of Professor Elinor Ostram to be held at the University of Utrecht, which will include a keynote lecture by Ostram herself. Scholars from all social sciences, including history, are invited to present papers on the design and long-term evolution of institutions for collective action in comparative perspective. Stress will be laid upon long-term comparative analyses, in a global perspective.

The full call for papers is at
www.collective-action.info/conference-design-dynamics-icas
and closes on 1 July 2012.

British Agricultural History Society Winter Conference Saturday 1 December 2012

The Winter Conference will be held at the Senate House, Malet St, London

(Please note that the premises of the Institute of Historical Research will be closed for refurbishment at this time.)

Full details will be published on the BAHS Web site and circulated in July.

British Agricultural History Society Spring Conference 8–10 April 2013

The Spring Conference will be held at Askham Bryan College, near York.
Full details will be published on the BAHS Web site and circulated in January.

European Rural History Organisation (EURHO) – Rural History 2013
19–22 August 2013

Rural History 2013 is being organized by the Swiss Rural History Society and will be held at the University of Bern, Switzerland.

The call for sessions closes on 13 October 2012. More details are available on the conference Web site at www.ruralhistory2013.org.

The British Agricultural History Society and *Agricultural History Review* join with her many friends in the profession in wishing Joan Thirsk a happy ninetieth birthday on 19 June 2012.

Harvests and grain prices in Sweden, 1665–1870

by Rodney Edvinsson

Abstract

This paper investigates the impact of harvests and international markets on Swedish grain prices, 1665–1870. The paper finds that harvests at a national level had a greater impact on domestic grain prices than international grain prices. However, at a regional level, grain prices tended to be affected more by harvests outside the region. Furthermore, in the long term, foreign prices became a more important determinant of national grain prices. The conclusion is that, under certain circumstances, grain prices can be used as an indicator of harvest fluctuations and to construct historical national accounts, at least at a sufficiently aggregated level. Such an endeavour needs to be combined with a careful analysis of the impact of prices in the surrounding area.

The benefit of price stability to consumption is a fundamental theme in pre-industrial political economy.[1] In agrarian society, it was largely the growth and fluctuations of harvests that determined the growth and fluctuations of real incomes and consumption. One important indicator of harvest fluctuations is the grain price. The traditional view, as for example argued by Fogel, is that there was a very strong negative correlation between harvests and grain prices, due to an extremely inelastic, although constant, demand for grain.[2] A similar relationship is assumed in the pioneering work of W. G. Hoskins. His study of harvest fluctuations in England, 1480–1759, completely depends on fluctuations in grain prices to assess the scale of the harvest. Hoskins wrote that to look at the annual fluctuations of grain prices was like looking at an electrocardiogram of a living organism.[3]

More recent historians have been more cautious about assuming a linear relationship between harvest quality and price. Bruce Campbell accepts that grain prices 'have provided the starting point for most analyses of the historical incidence of bad harvests', not least since prices 'are typically the most widely recorded item of information about grain'. However, he points out that the relationship is more complex than appears on first sight, since grain prices reflected other conditions as well. It is, therefore, important to compare prices with other independent evidence of harvest outcomes.[4]

[1] K. G. Persson, *Grain markets in Europe, 1500–1900* (1999).

[2] R. W. Fogel, 'Second thoughts on the European escape from hunger, famines, chronic malnutrition, and mortality rates', in S. R. Osmani (ed.), *Nutrition and poverty* (1992), pp. 243–86.

[3] W. G. Hoskins, 'Harvest fluctuations and English economic history, 1480–1619', *AgHR* 12 (1964), pp. 28–45; id., 'Harvest fluctuations and English economic history, 1620–1759', *AgHR* 16 (1968), pp. 15–31.

[4] B. M. S. Campbell, 'Four famines and a pestilence: harvest, price, and wage variations in England, 13th to 19th centuries', in B. Liljewall *et al.* (eds), *Agrarhistoria på många sätt: 28 studier om människan och jorden* (2009), pp. 23–8 and 44–5.

Karl Gunnar Persson argues that price volatility is the combination of supply shock (harvest failure) and poor market integration. Both trade and carry-over mitigated fluctuations in supply, and, therefore, in grain prices. According to Persson, the effect of storage was negligible, but the impact of trade was substantial.[5] Because of slow information and the high costs of transportation, harvest fluctuations had a large impact on prices. In contrast, studies of English agriculture show that the autoregressive effects were strong;[6] implying that grain storage could have a larger impact on prices than assumed by Persson.

For Sweden, several authors have explicitly advised against using grain prices as an indicator for harvest fluctuations, finding that the correlation between grain prices and harvest fluctuations is not strong.[7] Two of the most familiar arguments are firstly that domestic prices were substantially affected by inflationary policies and secondly that foreign prices had more effect than domestic harvests on domestic prices.

Angus Maddison criticizes those who use real wages as an indicator for changes in living standards, maintaining that wages are not macroeconomic data.[8] This reasoning could also be applied to grain prices, since most of the harvest was not directed towards the market. Price data often reflected conditions in the metropolitan areas, highly integrated with the international markets, rather than in the countryside.

In their investigation of the Nuremberg region 1339–1670, Bauernfeind and Woitek found that the correlation between detrended rye prices and tithe revenues was only –0.4,[9] implying that only 16 per cent of the variance in tithes could be predicted by price. The cycles in rye prices were also more regular than for tithes, which they suggest may be due to the effect of granary stocks smoothing out annual price fluctuations. In his study of Swedish prices 1732–1913, Lennart Jörberg similarly concludes that 'the uncomplicated conception of a strong correlation between price and estimated yield is not borne out by a closer analysis'.[10] Mary Young finds a co-movement of yield ratios on a farm and grain prices in Scotland, 1673–1695,[11] but it does not seem to be very strong on a closer inspection. A common feature of these three studies displaying a low correlation between harvests and grain prices in the pre-industrial period seems to be that they are based on regional or local data and, therefore, do not reflect the relationship at a higher level of aggregation.

This paper investigates how domestic harvests and international grain prices affected domestic grain prices in Sweden between 1665 and 1870. The study utilizes data on harvest outcomes during the early modern period that is of better quality than is available for many other countries at the aggregated national level. Although this harvest series is based on sources

[5] Persson, *Grain markets*, p. 54.

[6] S. Scott, S. R. Duncan, and C. J. Duncan, 'The origins, interactions and causes of cycles in grain prices in England, 1450–1812', *AgHR* 46 (1998), pp. 1–14.

[7] B. Å. Berg, 'Volatility and integration: Swedish Rye Prices, 1600–1900' (unpublished licentiate thesis, Stockholm School of Economics, 2003); L. Jörberg, *A history of prices in Sweden,* II, *1732–1914* (1972), p. 71; L. Leijonhufvud, *Grain tithes and manorial yields in early modern Sweden: Trends and patterns of production and productivity,* c.*1540–1680* (2001).

[8] A. Maddison, *Contours of the world economy, 1–2030 AD: Essays in macro-economic history* (2007), p. 308.

[9] W. Bauernfeind and U. Woitek, 'Agrarian cycles in Germany, 1339–1670: A spectral analysis of grain prices and output in Nuremberg', *Explorations in Economic History* 33 (1996), p. 470.

[10] Jörberg, *Prices in Sweden*, II, p. 71.

[11] M. Young, 'Scottish crop yields in the second half of the seventeenth century: evidence from the Mains of Castle Lyon in the Carse of Gowrie', *AgHR* 55 (2007).

that also exist for other countries, such as tithes, it adjusts some of the biases of these sources by relating them to the more reliable data collected by government statistical offices. The series is also a truly national one, given that it is based on data from many different counties or regions. The investigation stops at 1870, since it was at this moment that the Swedish economy started to industrialize. It was also in the period 1870–1913 that a major decrease in disparities between grain prices in various locations took place internationally due to the falling cost of transport that occurred after mid-century.[12]

In this paper it is maintained that it took up to several years for the national price to fully adjust in response to a divergence between domestic and international prices. Under such circumstances, annual harvest fluctuations had a greater impact on national grain prices than international grain prices, despite the existence of a relatively strong integration of grain markets. For Sweden, this applies only for short-term fluctuations at a national level, since at a regional level, grain prices tended to be more affected by harvests outside of the region and in the long-term prices were mainly affected by other factors. To what extent this can be generalized depends on the pattern of market integration. The important point is that various levels of aggregation and different time scales must not be confused.

I

The per capita harvest index that is used in this study is based on various series for different periods, tithes for the period 1665–1737, subjective harvest estimates for 1737–1802 and official harvest data and estimated yield ratios by priests and county governors for 1802–70 (see Figure 1). A per capita quantity index is used, from which potatoes are excluded (although data exists for the potato harvests from 1802, as shown in Figure 1). The index is presented in kilograms of grain, and includes seed reserved for sowing and grain fed to animals. This quantity index does not take into account the different values of various grains, which a volume (constant price) index does (for example, of the Laspeyres or Paasche types), although the difference between a quantity and volume index is quite small for the period 1802–70, for which data on different grains exists.

In Sweden, official statistics on crops have been gathered at the county level since 1802.[13] Annual data exists for 1802–20 and from 1865 onwards. After 1820, official data on crops stopped being reported annually, and were instead reported only every five years. Annual data is available again from 1865. Nevertheless, annual reports on the harvest by 24 Swedish country governors exist for the missing years, including statements on yield ratios of various grains. This material has been used to construct annual estimates of per capita production of crops for the period 1820–65 as well.[14] At present, there is a general consensus that the official harvest estimates for the early nineteenth century must be increased by around 100 per cent,[15] and by a

[12] K. O'Rourke, 'The European grain invasion, 1870–1913', *JEcH* 57 (1997), pp. 775–801.

[13] Statistics Sweden, *Historisk statistik för Sverige*, II, (Örebro, 1955).

[14] Some of this material has been published in *Post-och Inrikes tidningar* (Stockholm). The primary material can be found in The National Archives (Stockholm), Statskontoret, kansliet, E3N.

[15] C.-J. Gadd, 'Swedish agricultural production, 1800–1910' http://www.ekhistmote09.ekhist.uu.se/filedownload.php?id=114 (viewed 1 June, 2009).

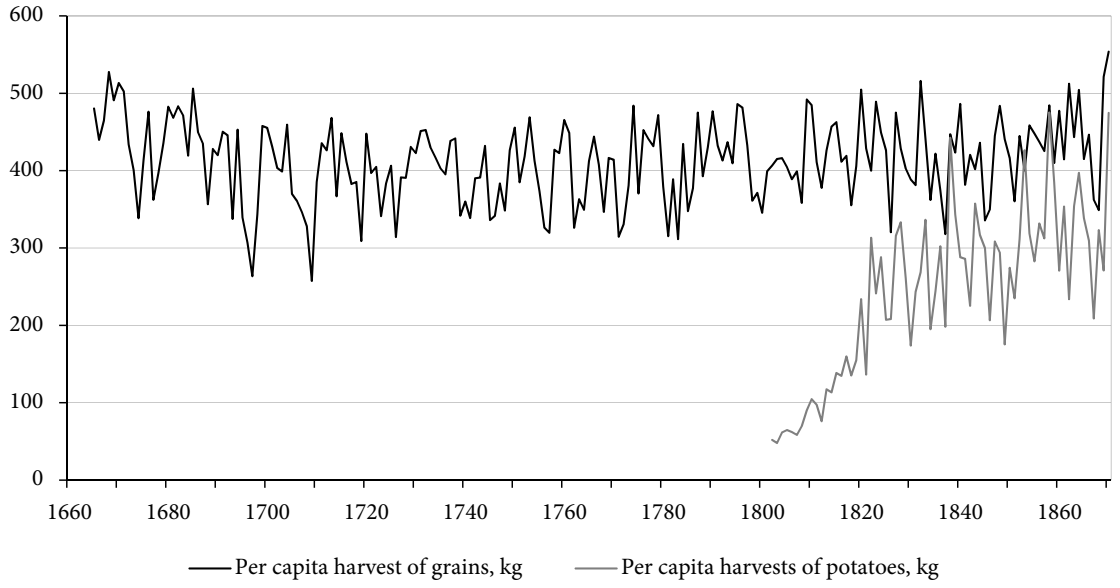


FIGURE 1. Per capita harvests of grains and potatoes in Sweden, 1665–1870 (in kilograms and including seeds and forage)

decreasing amount until around 1910 by which time official data is assumed to represent actual harvests accurately. However, the annual fluctuations of this series seem to be reliable. Previous studies on the underestimation of official statistics have been used to adjust the absolute levels in seeds and absolute harvests.[16]

There is also a difference in volatility of harvests when measured by weight (kilograms) and volume (barrels). Weight volatility was somewhat higher than volume volatility, since density of grains correlated positively with harvest fluctuations (according to official statistics after 1865). Since the harvest estimates in 1802–65 are based on volume values, the standard deviation of harvest fluctuations have been adjusted somewhat upwards by comparing the relation between weight and volume fluctuations in 1866–88.

Tithes probably constitute the most direct quantitative evidence concerning harvest fluctuations before the nineteenth century, and have been used with varying success in various international studies as an indicator for grain output.[17] The tithe is traditionally a tax levied at 10 per cent of the harvest. In Sweden, after the Reformation, the Crown took two thirds of the tithe, while the remaining third was retained by the vicar. Thus Crown tithes were supposed to represent a fifteenth of the harvest (although in the counties previously belonging to Denmark and Norway tithes were supposed to represent a thirtieth of the harvest). While the tithes have

[16] Ibid.

[17] See, for example, E. Le Roy Ladurie and J. Goy, *Tithe and agrarian history from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries: an essay in comparative history* (1982); Bauernfeind and Woitek, 'Agrarian Cycles'; Leijonhufvud, *Grain Tithes*; B. Dodds, *Peasants and production in the medieval north-east: the evidence from tithes, 1270–1536* (2007); B. Dodds, 'Demesne and tithe: peasant agriculture in the late middle ages', *AgHR* 56 (2008), pp. 123–41.

been shown to be unreliable concerning the absolute level of harvest, they seem to be more reliable when determining annual fluctuations.[18]

For the period 1665–1737 this paper uses a per capita tithe series that has been presented in an earlier study.[19] For the period 1665–1680 this per capita harvest index is based on tithe data gathered by Lotta Leijonhufvud.[20]

A problem when estimating volatility from tithes is that these were much more volatile than the national harvest, since the empirical data only covers the harvest in one or at most several regions. Furthermore, tithes tended to fluctuate more than the actual harvest, since the proportion of the harvest that was taxed decreased in years when harvests were lower (when various areas were hit by severe harvest failures the tithe tended to decrease towards zero).[21] After the 1730s, the tithe data is less reliable. Instead, for the period 1737–1802, an index of subjective harvest estimates is used.[22] The subjective harvest estimates for this period also exist for various counties.

When the data sets of the various sub-periods have been spliced together to form one series for the whole period 1665–1870, the standard deviations of annual changes in harvests according to the better data from 1803–1870 are assumed to have been the actual ones (which also corresponds well to later agricultural statistics). The standard deviations of earlier indicators are adjusted to this benchmark period, by looking into temporal overlaps between the three series. The splicing is made difficult since the three series are based on different sources, and there is no consistent individual series that is reliable for the whole period.

The ratio between the standard deviation of annual logarithmic changes in 1738–1802 and 1803–20 is assumed to be the same as the same ratio for the annual changes in the index of subjective harvest estimates. The latter shows a downturn in the standard deviation by 17 per cent between 1738–1802 and 1803–20. However, the better data for 1803–70 also shows an increase in the standard deviation by 34 per cent between 1803–20 and 1821–70.

The ratio between the standard deviation of annual changes in 1666–1737 and 1738–1802 is assumed to be the same as the ratio for the tithe index. The latter shows that harvest volatility was roughly the same in the two periods.

The difference between the estimated standard deviations in the three periods was quite small (see Table 1). A Levene's test yields a W-value of 0.263, which is insignificant (p=0.769). Henceforth, the null hypothesis of homogeneity of variances of the three periods cannot be rejected. As a comparison, the standard deviation of the annual changes in per capita grain

[18] See R. Edvinsson, 'Swedish harvests 1665–1820: early modern growth in the periphery of European economy', *Scandinavian Economic History Rev.*, 57 (2009), pp. 2–25.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Leijonhufvud, *Grain tithes*.

[21] Dodds, *Peasants and production*, p. 143 proposes an opposite model for north-east England in the Middle Ages, i.e. that tithes as a proportion of output tended to increase with price, but that does not seem to be how tax collection functioned in Sweden during the early modern period.

[22] Edvinsson, 'Swedish harvests'. The main secondary sources are J. Hellstenius, 'Skördarna i Sverige och deras verkningar', *Statistisk Tidskrift* 29 (1871), pp. 77–127; G. Utterström, *Jordbrukets arbetare: Levnadsvillkor och arbetsliv på landsbygden från frihetstiden till mitten av 1800-talet*, II, (1957), pp. 429–31; A. Imhof, *Aspekte der Bevölkerungsentwicklung in den nordischen Ländern, 1720–1750,* II (1976), pp. 715–54; G. Axelson, *Bidrag till kännedomen om Sveriges tillstånd på Karl XII:s tid* (1888). These authors use direct accounts of harvests, which should not be influenced indirectly by price notations.

TABLE 1. Multiple regressions for the period 1666–1870 and its sub-periods where the logarithmic change in the silver price of grain in Sweden is the dependent variable and the logarithmic changes in per capita harvest for three consecutive years the independent variables

	1666–1737	*1738–1802*	*1803–70*	*1666–1870*
R-value	0.779	0.862	0.766	0.787
Adjusted R-square	0.596	0.734	0.567	0.613
Degrees of freedom	69	62	64	201
Logarithmic change in per capita harvest, beta-coefficient	–0.829	–0.915	–0.845	–0.854
Logarithmic change in per capita harvest, one-year lag, beta-coefficient	–0.283	–0.360	–0.545	–0.397
Logarithmic change in per capita harvest, two-year lag, beta-coefficient	–	–	–0.217	–0.101
Logarithmic change in per capita harvest, *t*-value	–10.330	–13.347	–9.379	–17.950
Logarithmic change in per capita harvest, one-year lag, *t*-value	–3.531	–5.253	–5.521	–7.774
Logarithmic change in per capita harvest, two-year lag, *t*-value	–	–	–2.373	–2.117
Logarithmic change in per capita harvest, significance	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Logarithmic change in per capita harvest, one-year lag, significance	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000
Logarithmic change in per capita harvest, two-year lag, significance	–	–	0.020	0.036
Standard deviation (natural logarithms) of change in per capita harvest	0.153	0.152	0.160	0.154
Standard deviation (natural logarithms) of change in silver price	0.215	0.167	0.181	0.189

production in 1871–1955 was 0.156 natural logarithms, only slightly above the volatility in 1666–1870 (at 0.154 natural logarithms).

One question is whether there is some bias in the empirical sources concerning long-term changes in the volatility of harvests. Should we not expect a decline in the volatility of harvests during the early modern period? One way to make a reasonable judgement is to compare the few indicators we have for this period, and see if they point in the same direction. A problem arises, of course, if various indicators diverge. For example, in England, while the tithe series display a significantly lower volatility towards the end of 1275–1499, the volatility of yield ratio seemed to increase somewhat in that period.[23] Henceforth, since we deal with pre-industrial data, we must be cautious about drawing any definite conclusions.

[23] Campbell, 'Four famines and a pestilence', p. 29.

As discussed below (see Table 1), although the standard deviation of the logarithmic change in Swedish grain prices displays a decline between 1666–1737 and 1738–1802, it is likely that this decline can primarily be explained by improved market integration. There was an even larger decline in the volatility of grain prices after 1870, while harvest volatility did not change much. The price volatility was not much different in the periods 1737–1802 and 1803–70, respectively, which is in agreement with the spliced harvests series.

The somewhat higher volatility of harvests in 1821–70 is also visible in other data. For example, at a farm in Djäknebo, in Blekinge in the south of Sweden, the standard deviation of the logarithmic change in the average yield ratio increased by 18 per cent between 1762–1820 and 1821–61, while at a farm in Björnö, in Uppland, it increased by 12 per cent between 1803–20 and 1821–42.[24]

There are some indications of a decline in harvest volatility in the pre-industrial period, but before 1665. A preliminary comparison of tithes and yield ratios of individual farms in the two periods 1539–1665 and 1666–1870 points in that direction.[25]

II

For the period 1665–1732, the grain price index is largely based on estimates of rye and barley prices in various regions and counties, which is spliced together with the grain price from 1732 onwards.[26] The price is calculated as the average of the prices of rye and barley. For years when the price of only one of the grains is available, the price of grain is estimated based on the ratio of the relative prices of rye and barley in the adjacent time periods. One problem with the different price series is that it is not always clear which series refer to the harvest year and which refer to the calendar year. The Swedish harvest year runs roughly from mid-September in the current year to the mid-September in the following year. The grain prices in this period can be linked to the autumn harvest. Thus the price in the spring relates to the preceding year's harvest. How to treat the month of September can depend on various series; for example, if there is a small time lag, the September price of the current year becomes related to the harvest of the preceding year.

Many price notations, for example Jörberg's price scales, refer to the harvest year since they were gathered at the end of the year. However, much price data from before 1732 refers to the calendar year. These prices are mostly a reflection of the preceding year's harvest, especially if they were collected during the first half of the year. If the prices were gathered over the whole

[24] Utterström, *Jordbrukets arbetare*, I, pp. 201–02; L. Palm, *Gud bevare utsädet! Produktionen på en västsvensk ensädesgård: Djäknebol i Hallands skogsbygd, 1760–1865* (1997), pp. 159–60.

[25] For the period 1539–1665, tithes and yield ratios are from Leijonhufvud, *Grain tithes*.

[26] The main sources are O. Bjurling, *Skånes utrikessjöfart, 1660–1720: En studie i Skånes handelssjöfart* (1945); G. Hansson, *Såld spannmål av kyrkotionden: priser i Östergötland under Sveriges stormaktstid* (2006); B. Ericsson, *Bergsstaden Falun 1720–1769* (1970); A. Hegardt, *Akademiens spannmål: Uppbörd, handel och priser vid Uppsala universitet, 1635–1719* (1975); A. Jansson and J. Söderberg, 'Priser och löner i Stockholm, 1600–1719', in L. Andersson Palm, A. Jansson, and J. Söderberg (eds), *Dagligt börd i onda tider: Priser och löner i Stockholm och Västsverige, 1500–1770* (1991); L. Andersson Palm, 'Priser i Västsverige 1551–1770', in Palm, Jansson, Söderberg (eds), *Dagligt börd*; S. Mårtensson, *Bryggerinäringen i Göteborg: Tiden från bryggaregillets tillkomst år 1661 intill 1800-talets början* (1961).

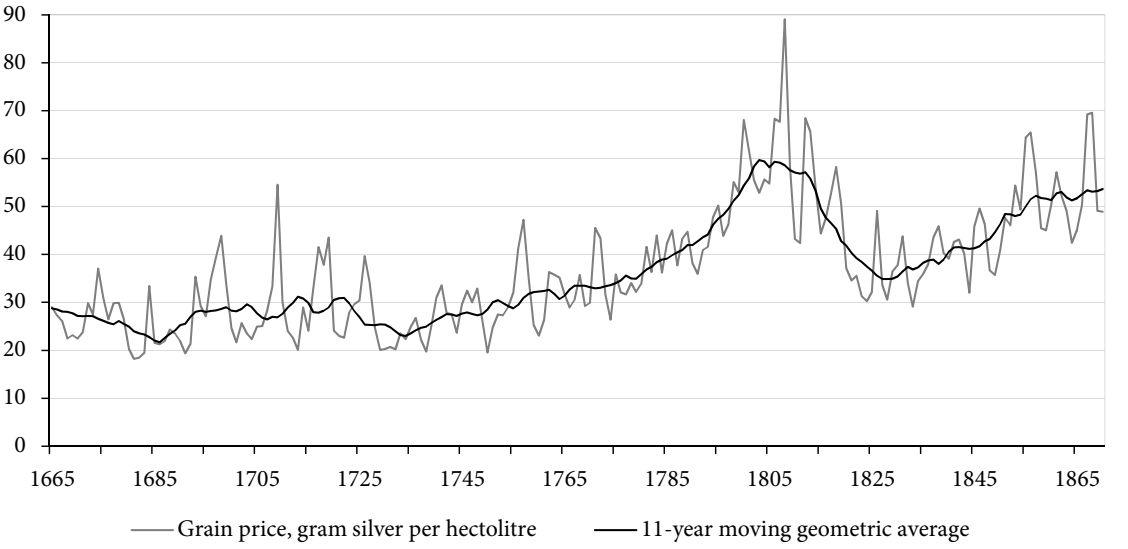


FIGURE 2. The estimated silver price of grain (gram silver per hectolitre) of this study for the period, 1665–1870

calendar year, the data becomes a mixture of two different harvest years. For price series in which it is not clear which harvest year is referred to, this study correlates the series with price series in other regions, international prices and the annual harvests to determine the harvest year.

For the period 1732–1870 the nominal price of the present study is calculated as a weighted geometric average of the prices of wheat, rye, barley, oats, peas and malt based on Lennart Jörberg's collection of price scales in various counties.[27] Malt has been given the weight 0.05, while the weights for the other grains are based on the value shares of these grains in total cereal production in 1802 and 1820. The composition of grains changed during the course of the studied period. However, since the prices of various grains are highly correlated with each other, price indices constructed in differing ways will not greatly differ from each other.

While the monetary conditions after the 1820s were quite stable, the period 1665–1820 experienced several inflationary episodes. To counter this effect, the nominal price of grain is converted into a silver price, i.e. the price of grain is expressed in grams of silver. The exchange rates of the Swedish *riksdaler specie* in *mark kopparmynt* up to 1776, the Swedish *riksdaler banco* in *riksdaler riksgälds*, 1789–1808, and Hamburger *reichstaler banco* in *riksdaler riksgälds* from 1790 onwards are used for this purpose.[28]

Figure 2 presents the price of grain in grams of silver per hectolitre for Sweden in the period 1665–1870. The annual fluctuations were sharp, but up to around the 1770s the long-term trend was quite stable. During the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries some significant

[27] Jörberg, *Prices in Sweden*, I.

[28] Based on the data of the Riksbank project 'Historical monetary statistics for Sweden 1668–2008', http://www.riksbank.com/templates/Page.aspx?id=27394 (viewed 1 May, 2009).

medium term fluctuations occurred. In the long term, the purchasing power of silver declined. The sharp rise around 1800 also led to a corresponding decline in real wages. However, official Swedish harvest data shows that the dip in per capita grain production around 1800 was not as sharp as the increase in grain prices (compare Figures 1 and 2). Medium and long-term movements in grain prices are, therefore, not a good indicator of per capita production.

Table 1 shows that there were some differences in the standard deviation of the annual changes in grain price between the periods 1666–1737, 1738–1802 and 1803–70. However, Levene's test yields a W-value of 0.747, which is insignificant (p=0.475). The null hypothesis of no difference between the variances of the three periods cannot be rejected.

III

To avoid the impact of autoregression, the relation between per capita harvests and grain prices is analysed by taking the first difference to produce a stationary process of the two series, which are first transformed into logarithmic values. However, the Dickey–Fuller test yields $DF_\tau = -4.15$ for the original logarithmic price series and $DF_\tau = -10$ for the original logarithmic per capita harvests series, implying that the null hypothesis of a unit root can be rejected for the original series as well, i.e. without taking the first difference (the critical value is −2.59 for $p = 0.01$). For the first differences, the Dickey–Fuller test yields $DF_\tau = -14.9$ for the price series and $DF_\tau = -20.7$ for the harvest series.

As noted above, there is some uncertainty concerning the homogeneity of variances of the harvest series for various sub-periods. The price series also display a certain heteroscedasticity, although it could not be shown to be significant. Since the possible heteroscedasticity is quite small, the effect on the analysis of the relation between grain prices and harvests is only minor. Even econometricians studying modern conditions emphasize that we should not overreact to the problem of heteroscedasticity. For example, John Fox in his *Applied regression analysis* writes that 'unequal error variance is worth correcting only when the problem is severe'.[29]

A simple analysis shows that, in Sweden, the domestic harvests had a great impact on grain prices. In 1666–1870 the correlation between annual logarithmic changes in the silver price of grains and per capita harvests, the first differences of the original series, was −0.71, although it was somewhat weaker towards the end of the period. The correlation between the second differences of the two series was even stronger, at −0.73, which suggests that the relation is not spuriously generated by autoregression. These correlations are very robust to alternative assumptions of volatilities in various sub-periods. For example, assuming the very unlikely case that the standard deviation of the annual logarithmic change in the per capita harvest series was 50 per cent higher in 1666–1737 than according to the present study, the first correlation would be about the same (−0.71). Assuming a 100 percent higher standard deviation (an even more unlikely scenario) implies that the first correlation is only slightly reduced (to −0.70).

A correlation between the prices and harvests of the current year does not fully take into account the effects of harvests on prices. The effect of the previous year's harvest needs to be considered as well. Storage dampens the impact of current harvests on prices. If a bad

[29] J. Fox, *Applied regression analysis, linear models, and related methods* (1997), p. 306.

harvest occurs, the price will tend to be lower if the harvest had been better than normal in the preceding year. Vice versa, if a good harvest occurs, the price will tend to be higher if the harvest had been worse than normal in the preceding year. The monthly increase in the price of grain over the harvest year partly reflects the cost of storage.[30]

Table 1 presents a multiple regression of the effect of three consecutive harvests on the current year's grain price. For the whole period 1666–1870 the model explains 61 per cent of the variance in the annual change in the silver price of grains. The beta-coefficient for the change in the current year's per capita harvest is about the same for all three sub-periods, 1666–1737, 1738–1802 and 1802–70, which clearly shows how stable the impact of domestic harvests was on grain prices through time.

Nevertheless, the effect of the previous year's harvests on the current year's grain price changed through time. The effects of the previous year's harvests seem to be strongest in 1802–70, and weakest in 1666–1737. The beta-coefficient of the logarithmic change in per capita harvest lagged by one year is almost twice the magnitude in 1802–70 than in 1666–1737, while the beta-coefficient for the change in per capita harvest in the current year is almost unchanged. The coefficient of the change in per capita harvest lagged by two years is insignificant for the periods 1666–1737 and 1738–1802 (and, therefore, excluded from the model for those two periods), while it is highly significant for 1802–70.

This may suggest that storage became more important through time, and, therefore that the influence of the previous year's harvests on the current year's prices became stronger. If, for example, no storage occurs from one year to another, then only the current year's harvest would have an effect on the current year's price (not considering that part of the harvests could be 'stored' by expanding the animal stock). In 1666–1737 and 1738–1802 the only substantial storage was from one year to the next, while in 1802–70 a more prolonged storage capacity must have been established. In his study on the establishment of Swedish local grain banks, so-called 'Parish Magasins', Bengt-Åke Berg also shows that it was in the second half of the eighteenth century that storage capacity expanded.[31]

IV

Markets are sometimes considered to be integrated when the price moves within the 'commodity points', i.e. the difference between the prices in two locations does not move beyond the transaction costs of moving goods from the one location to the other.[32] In his study of Swedish grain prices Bengt-Åke Berg points out that, due to the availability of imports, the domestic price should not be used as an indicator for domestic harvests.[33] In his view, there is a maximum price, which is the international price plus the transaction margin. Import is

[30] J. L. van Zanden, 'On the efficiency of markets for agricultural products: rice prices and capital markets in Java, 1823–1853', *JEcH* 64 (2004), pp. 1029.

[31] B.-Å. Berg, *Volatility, integration and grain banks: Studies in harvests, rye prices and institutional development of the parish magasins in Sweden in the 18th and 19th centuries* (2007).

[32] G. Federico, 'Market integration and market efficiency: the case of nineteenth-century Italy', *Explorations in Economic History* 44 (2007), pp. 293–316.

[33] Berg, 'Volatility and integration', pp. 44 and 91.

the marginal quantity, and whenever there is an opportunity for imports they will have a fundamental impact on domestic prices.

In practice it has been very difficult to estimate the so-called 'commodity points'. A temporary deviation could occur from 'equilibrium', and adjustments could take time. According to Karl Gunnar Persson the more markets are integrated, the faster local prices return to such 'equilibrium'.[34]

In the short-term, the probability that transaction costs increased with increased imports must be taken into account. In a study on freight rates in the 1850s, Klovland showed that the increased import of grains was accompanied by increased freight rates, and vice versa.[35] An average price for freights, insurance, trade marginal, etc, cannot in itself be used. It is the marginal transaction costs that are interesting. Assuming increasing marginal transaction costs, the increase in imports was dampened during bad harvests. The number of ships was limited in the short term. Profits could also be highly variable. A higher rate of profit in one market did not immediately induce a movement towards that market, since there was an expectation that the increase might turn out to be temporary. This implies that it could take up to several years for the domestic price to adjust fully in response to the international price. Under such circumstances annual harvest fluctuations retained a great impact on annual movements in prices.

Furthermore, it must be considered that part of the correlation between domestic and foreign prices can be explained by the correlation between domestic and foreign harvests. Harvests in northern and western Europe were affected by similar conditions, although there were also differences in climatic and other factors. For example, in the period 1820–42, the correlation between annual changes in per capita harvests in Sweden and of the average yield of wheat, oats, barley, potatoes, hay and flax in Ireland, respectively, was as high as +0.57.[36] The correlation between annual changes in wheat yields in Ireland and England, respectively, was for the same period +0.68.[37] The decline in per capita harvests that can be observed for Sweden in the 1690s (see Figure 1) is also reflected in the yield ratios in Scotland[38] and grain prices in England.[39] During the nineteenth century, the Swedish yield ratio of potatoes reached its lowest level in 1846–51 (when looking at six-year periods), which almost exactly coincided with the Great Famine in Ireland.

The impact of foreign prices and domestic harvests on domestic prices can be analysed by relating rye prices in Gdańsk to domestic (Swedish) grain prices and harvests. The Gdańsk price is converted into a silver price by using the exchange rate of the Polish *grosz* against the *thaler*. The logarithmic change in the silver price of rye in Gdańsk is measured from the last quarter in year t–1 to the last quarter in year t.[40] In this way the Gdańsk price is connected to the current harvest year.

[34] Persson, *Grain markets*, p. 93.

[35] J. T. Klovland, 'New evidence on the fluctuations in ocean freight rates in the 1850s', *Explorations in Economic History* 46 (2009), pp. 266–84.

[36] P. Solar, 'Harvest fluctuations in pre-Famine Ireland: Evidence from Belfast and Waterford newspapers', *AgHR* 37 (1989), pp. 160–61. An average of south-eastern and north-eastern Ireland is estimated.

[37] For England based on B. R. Mitchell, *British historical statistics* (1988), p. 195.

[38] Young, 'Scottish crop yields', p. 67.

[39] Hoskins, 'Harvest fluctuations, 1620–1759', p. 22.

[40] Based on T. Furtak, *Ceny w Gdańsku w latach 1701–1815* (1935); J. Pelc, *Ceny w Gdańsku w XVI i XVII wieku* (1937).

Up to around 1800, the Swedish grain market was strongly integrated with the Polish one, not least since imports to Sweden mainly came through the Baltic. The annual change in the Swedish grain price was much more strongly correlated with prices in Gdańsk than, for example, prices in London and Amsterdam. In the eighteenth century, the transport cost between Stockholm and Gdańsk was around a third to a quarter of that between Stockholm and London, and around half or a third of that between Stockholm and Amsterdam.[41] Unfortunately the Polish price series stops in 1815. The integration of the Swedish and Polish grain markets ceased to be important in the early nineteenth century because Sweden became self-sufficient in grains and Poland declined as an important grain exporter to Sweden.

The correlation between the absolute price and harvest is weaker than the correlation between the changes in price and harvests. For example, in 1665–1802, while the correlation between the absolute grain price in grams of silver and the national per capita harvest index was −0.48, the correlation between the annual logarithmic changes of the two series was −0.75. The opposite is true of the relation between domestic and foreign price. While the correlation between the absolute foreign and domestic price was +0.8 in the same period, the correlation between the annual logarithmic changes in the two series was only +0.58. Henceforth, while, in the long run, the price of grain was to a larger extent determined by the foreign price level, in the short run it was to a larger extent determined by domestic harvests. This also explains why the grain price is a better indicator of annual fluctuations in harvests than of long-term trends, as discussed above.

In comparison, the correlation between logarithmic changes in the silver price of barley in England and silver price of grain in Sweden, respectively, in the period 1666–1802 was only +0.29, and barely significant.[42] There is no indication of higher integration of English and Swedish prices in the nineteenth century. In fact, the correlation between harvests in Sweden and England seems to be stronger than the correlation between grain prices of the two areas.

Another issue is whether there was a true Swedish market, and if not, whether the Stockholm–Gdańsk axis was more integrated than Stockholm and other areas of Sweden. An investigation of the correlations between the annual logarithmic changes in the silver prices of rye in various Swedish counties and those of Gdańsk in 1733–1815 shows a stronger positive correlation between these Swedish counties and Stockholm than the same Swedish counties and Gdańsk.[43] This is a clear indication that a distinct Swedish grain market had been formed.

Figure 3 presents the ratio of the rye price in Stockholm to the one in Gdańsk 1543–1815 (based on silver prices). For the period before 1732 the Stockholm rye price is based on the grain price, which has been spliced together with the series from 1732 onwards. The figure shows that the ratio fluctuated sharply on an annual basis. There was no stable transaction margin if rye was shipped from Gdańsk to Stockholm, and for some years must have been completely outside of the 'commodity points' despite the relatively high market integration of the two ports. There was no indication of a maximum price. In the medium and long term, there was a clearly visible trend line. Most notable is the difference between the periods 1543–1662 and 1663–1815.

[41] Based on freight rates in *Stockholms stads priscourant* (Stockholm)

[42] G. Clark, 'English prices and wages, 1209–1914' (2006), Microsoft Excel file, http://gpih.ucdavis.edu/files/England_1209–1914_(Clark).xls (viewed 21 Feb. 2009).

[43] Based on Jörberg, *Prices in Sweden*, I.

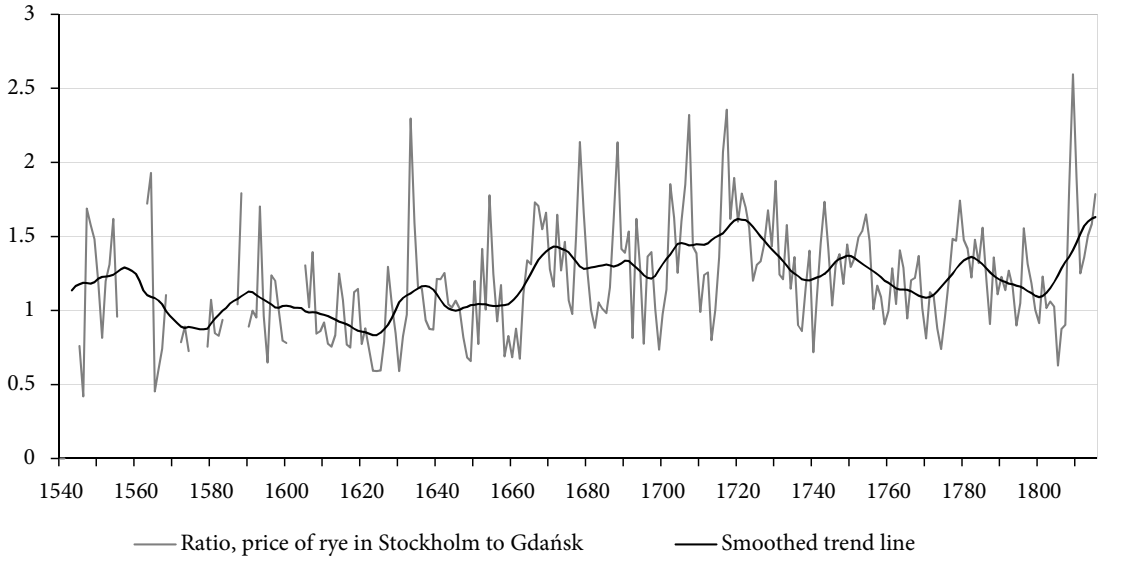


FIGURE 3. The ratio of the rye price in Stockholm to the rye price in Gdańsk, 1543–1815

Up to 1662, rye prices in Stockholm and Gdańsk were roughly the same, while in 1663–1815 the Stockholm rye price was, on average, 32 per cent above the rye price in Gdańsk. It was also during the course of the 1650s and 1660s that Sweden was transformed from a net exporter of grains to a net importer.[44]

Table 2 presents a multiple regression model for 1666–1802 where the dependent variable is the logarithmic change in the domestic grain price. The independent variables are the logarithmic changes in per capita domestic harvests in the current and previous years and in the silver price of rye in Gdańsk. The model explains almost 75 per cent of the variance of the dependent variable, and confirms that the price of grain was affected by the foreign price as well as domestic harvests. However, fluctuations in domestic harvests clearly had a larger impact than fluctuations of foreign grain prices. The relation between the variables was quite stable during the whole time span of 1665–1802. There was no tendency for improved international market integration during the course of the period. The impact of foreign prices even decreased somewhat relative domestic harvests.

Table 3 presents a regression model for the period 1666–1802 where the change in the per capita harvest is the dependent variable and changes in the grain price in Sweden in the current and previous years and rye price in Gdańsk in the current year are the independent variables. It is a model of how well harvest fluctuations could be predicted from price fluctuations.

Table 3 shows that the beta-coefficients of the changes in the silver price of the preceding and current year are of different signs. If a weak harvest occurred, the price tended to be lower if the price was lower than normal the preceding year. Vice versa, if good harvest occurred, the price tended to be higher if the price was higher than normal the preceding year. There also

[44] J. Myrdal, *Jordbruket under feodalismen, 1000–1700* (1999), pp. 243–44.

TABLE 2. Multiple regression for the period 1666–1802 where the logarithmic change in the silver price of grain in Sweden is the dependent variable

Variable	*Beta-coefficient*	*t-value*	*Significance*
Constant		0.226	0.821
Logarithmic change in the per capita harvests	–0.723	–14.105	0.000
Logarithmic change in the per capita harvests lagged by one year	–0.211	–4.277	0.000
Logarithmic change in the silver price of rye in Gdańsk	0.328	6.717	0.000

Model summary: R = 0,859; R^2 = 0.738; adjusted R^2 = 0,732; degrees of freedom: 133; significance: 0.000.

TABLE 3. Multiple regression for the period 1666–1802 where the logarithmic change in the per capita harvest is the dependent variable

Variable	*Beta-coefficient*	*t-value*	*Significance*
Constant		0.017	0.986
Logarithmic change in the silver price of grain in Sweden	–0.820	–13.318	0.000
Logarithmic change in the silver price of grain in Sweden lagged by one year	0.292	5.828	0.000
Logarithmic change in the silver price of rye in Gdańsk	0.150	2.441	0.016

Model summary: R = 0.821; R^2 = 0.674; adjusted R^2 = 0.666; degrees of freedom: 133; significance: 0.000.

seems to be a direct positive correlation between the change in price lagged by one year and the change in per capita harvest the following year. This is the effect of the negative autocorrelation between two consecutive changes in per capita harvest production. Per capita production was stagnant in the long term (i.e. extreme harvests tended to bounce back to more normal levels the next year). Both these effects imply that the partial correlation between the change in grain price lagged by one year (from year *t*–2 to *t*–1) and the change in per capita harvest the current year (from year *t*–1 to *t*) is positive, holding constant for the change in the grain price of the current year (from year *t*–1 to *t*).

Table 3 also shows that the beta-coefficient of the change in the silver price of rye in Gdańsk is slightly positive (0.15), instead of being negative. This implies that, when harvests are to be predicted from the movements of prices, the change in foreign price counteracts somewhat the change in domestic price the current year provided that the two are of the same sign. However, if the changes in domestic and foreign prices are of different signs, the estimated change in the per capita harvest index is strengthened.

Henceforth, even if the existence of foreign markets makes the relation between domestic price and domestic production more complicated, at least for Sweden, the usefulness of grain price as an indicator of harvests should not be discarded. The model in Table 3 predicts more than two thirds of the variance in the annual logarithmic change of per capita harvests. The existence of foreign markets weakens the relation, but it is very strong, and would be even stronger in a closed economy.

V

Trade led to more uniform prices between regions.[45] Since transportation and other transaction costs increased with distance, the correlation between price and harvest should be better the larger the area under study. This is borne out by an empirical analysis of Swedish counties.

In Sweden, the average correlation between grain prices and harvests is weaker at a county level than at a national level. For example, in 1818–70, the median correlation at county level between the annual changes in rye silver price and the yield ratio was only –0.46, while the correlation between the same variables at a national level was –0.66

To exemplify how the regional price was affected by the combined effects of harvest in the region itself, in nearby regions and international prices, two areas are discussed: Uppland, 1666–1753 and Dalecarlia, 1667–1753. While Uppland was an exporter of grains to other regions, Dalecarlia was highly dependent on grain imports, but a major producer of iron and copper. Dalecarlia is also located in inland Sweden (bordering Norway), while Uppland (north of Stockholm) borders the Baltic Sea. Five independent variables are studied: annual logarithmic changes in Gdańsk rye silver price, annual logarithmic changes in the per capita harvests of the current and previous years in the studied region, and annual logarithmic changes in the per capita harvests of the current and previous years in nearby regions.[46]

Table 4 presents a multiple regression where the logarithmic change in the silver price of grain in Uppsala County (part of Uppland) is the dependent variable. It shows that the grain price in this region was mainly affected by the harvests of the region itself and foreign price. Harvests in nearby regions also had an impact, although their effect was somewhat weaker. The two lagged independent variables were excluded from the model. The multicollinearity is very strong for two of the independent variables. The correlation between the logarithmic changes in per capita harvests in Uppland and in nearby regions was as high as +0.77, which implies that it is very difficult to separate the effects of the two as is done in the multiple regression. The three independent variables together, however, have a very high predictive power, explaining almost 75 per cent of the variance.

Table 5 presents the multiple regression for the Dalecarlia region, which gives a very different picture from that for Uppland. Most notable is that the change in per capita harvests of the region in the current year is excluded from the model. Although there was a very weak, but significant, negative zero-order correlation between changes in grain price and per capita harvests of Dalecarlia, when holding constant for the annual change in per capita harvests of nearby regions, the partial correlation becomes slightly positive, although not significant. However, the multiple regression includes the annual change in per capita harvests of Dalecarlia lagged by one year. In other words, harvests of the current year in Dalecarlia did not by themselves have any impact on the grain prices of Dalecarlia, but previous harvests

[45] Jörberg, *Prices in Sweden*, II.

[46] The sources are provided in Edvinsson, 'Swedish harvests'. The tithes from Uppland are based on Hegardt, *Akademiens spannmål*; H. Lindgren, *Spannmålshandel och priser vid Uppsala akademi, 1720–1789: En prövning av markegångstaxornas källvärde* (1971). The tithes from Dalecarlia are based on M. Isacson, *Ekonomisk tillväxt och social differentiering, 1680–1860: Bondeklassen i Bysocken, Kopparbergs län* (1979); J. Söderberg, 'Åkerbruk och boskapsskötsel', in J.-E. Pettersson, and O. Karlsson (eds), *Mora, Sollerö, Venjans och Våmhus socknars historia*, III (1999).

TABLE 4. Multiple regression for the period 1666–1753 where the annual logarithmic change in the silver price of grain in Uppsala County (Uppland) is the dependent variable

Variable	*Beta-coefficient*	*t-value*	*Significance*
Constant		–0.168	0.867
Logarithmic change in the per capita tithe of Uppland	–0.462	–5.332	0.000
Logarithmic change in the per capita tithe of nearby counties	–0.304	–3.493	0.001
Logarithmic change in the silver price of rye in Gdańsk	0.349	6.154	0.000

Model summary: R =0.863; R^2 = 0.745; adjusted R^2 = 0.736; degrees of freedom: 83; significance: 0.000.

TABLE 5. Multiple regression for the period 1667–1753 where the annual logarithmic change in the silver price of grain in Dalecarlia is the dependent variable

Variable	*Beta-coefficient*	*t-value*	*Significance*
Constant		0.027	0.979
Logarithmic change in the per capita tithe of Dalecarlia lagged by one year	–0.294	–4.920	0.000
Logarithmic change in the per capita tithe of nearby counties	–0.661	–10.815	0.000
Logarithmic change in the silver price of rye in Gdańsk	0.421	7.073	0.000

Model summary: R =848; R^2 = 0.719; adjusted R^2 = 0.709; degrees of freedom: 84; significance: 0.000.

did. The impact on the grain prices was, however, dominated by the harvests of the nearby regions, reflecting the dependency of Dalecarlia on grain imports. Interestingly international prices had a somewhat stronger impact on Dalecarlian grain prices, although this region does not border the Baltic.

The two multiple regressions for Uppland and Dalecarlia show that the impact of harvests outside the region (either in other parts of Sweden or abroad) probably had a greater impact on the grain price of the region than the harvest of the region itself. This is a clear indication of market integration. Whether the impact from the region's harvest or nearby regions' harvests was greatest could vary, depending on whether the region was an importer or exporter of grains. Dalecarlian grain prices were almost completely determined by harvests outside of the region. However, a common result of the two multiple regressions was that the impact on grain prices was greater from the harvests in the region and nearby regions taken together than from international grain prices. This is a similar result to the determinants of national grain prices. The impact of foreign prices was about the same in the two counties. This underlines why the area under study is of crucial importance when studying the relation between harvests and grain prices.

VI

This paper investigates the relationship between harvests and grain prices in Sweden, 1665–1870 to study the long-term integration of grain markets. Although it focuses on Sweden, it has a wider relevance for the early modern period in general. To investigate market integration we need sources on grain prices as well as harvests. Prices are readily available for a number of countries, but reliable sources on harvest fluctuations at aggregated national levels are scarce. Tithe data exists for a number of countries and regions, but this source is highly biased and needs to be corrected for underassessment.

In a pre-industrial society, it was largely the growth and fluctuations of harvests that determined the growth and fluctuations of the overall economy. The traditional view, as held by Fogel and Hoskins, is that there was a very strong negative correlation between harvests and grain prices, since demand was extremely inelastic. A somewhat different view is that due to the integration of international grain markets, domestic prices were weakly correlated with domestic harvests.

This paper uses the rye price of Gdańsk as an indicator for international prices. Swedish grain markets were relatively integrated with the Polish ones. In contrast, the grain prices of London, for example, were only weakly correlated with Swedish prices. There was probably a higher correlation between Swedish and British harvests; the similarities in the conditions of cultivation were greater than the economic ties of the two areas.

In this paper it is argued that it might take several years for the domestic price to fully adjust in response to a divergence between domestic and international prices. Under such circumstances, annual harvest fluctuations had a greater impact on domestic national grain prices than international grain prices, despite the existence of a relatively strong integration of grain markets. In Sweden, this applies only at the national level, since at a county level, grain prices tended to be more affected by harvests external to the region, especially in regions that were heavily dependent on the outside supply of grains. Medium- and long-term changes in grain prices, as well as real wages, were probably also more affected by factors other than per capita harvests.

The existence of import and storage smoothed out demand. Although grain import was responsive to harvests and prices, this paper concludes that changes in quantity of grain held in store and internal trade were probably more important than imports in smoothing demand and consumption over time. Karl Gunnar Persson's hypothesis that granaries had a negligible effect may be questioned, and this paper finds supporting evidence for Bauernfeind's and Woitek's view that stocks were important for price fluctuations.[47] However, up to the eighteenth century, storage only smoothed demand from one harvest year to another, and it was not until the nineteenth century that more long-term storage capacity was developed. The early-modern economy could handle individual years of severe harvest failures, while two or more such years in a row tended to have catastrophic consequences, especially if the availability of grains through imports was reduced.

[47] Bauernfeind and Woitek, 'Agrarian Cycles'.

This paper suggests that grain prices can be used both as an indicator of harvest fluctuations, and to construct historical national accounts. The method of identifying harvest failures through the study of grain prices should not be completely discarded. Nevertheless, there are a number of risks involved in such a project. For example, improved market integration caused price volatility to decrease, without that necessarily implying a corresponding decline in harvest volatility.

The area under study is crucial when investigating the relation between harvests and prices. Confusing levels of aggregation may lead us to draw the wrong conclusions concerning the relationship between grain prices and harvests in the pre-industrial period. If we choose to study a smaller area, then we will find no strong relationship between harvests and grain prices. Grain prices in regions and countries that were well integrated with other markets may reflect harvests in the surrounding area rather than the investigated region or country itself, which would be similar to the Dalecarlia region in Sweden as discussed in this paper or the Nuremberg region as studied by Bauernfeind and Woitek. However, if we choose to study a larger area, then the relationship between harvests and grain prices tends to become much stronger, since transport costs increased with distance.

If grain prices are to be used as indicator of harvest fluctuations, a careful analysis of the impact of the surrounding area as well as inventory effects must be conducted. The best option would, as suggested by Campbell, probably be to combine grain prices with other indicators, or to use grain prices as a cross-check when other more direct indicators, such as tithes or yield ratios, are reliable.[48] Even if it were shown that grain price is not a good indicator for harvest fluctuations for countries such as England, Poland, France or Holland, because of the high integration between those markets, it may turn out to be a much better indicator of harvest fluctuation in Europe as a whole.

While the construction of historical national accounts for a number of countries has made substantial progress in measuring growth and interpreting its causes after the industrial revolution, the pre-industrial period is much more neglected, and there are substantial disagreements concerning the growth performance before the nineteenth century.[49] Improving the quantification of pre-industrial economic growth is one of the greatest challenges facing economic historians in the next decades. Short-term fluctuations must not be neglected in favour of long-term trends, the preoccupation of modern society. In the pre-industrial society, minimizing the risks of severe harvest failures was far more important than maximizing production and profits. More in-depth studies of the relation between grain prices and harvests at an aggregated level for a number of countries, not only in Europe but also in other parts of the world, are indispensable for a better understanding of pre-industrial economic dynamics. This will also have ramifications for adjacent fields, such as environmental and demographic history.

[48] Le Roy Ladurie and Goy, *Tithe*, pp. 25 and 37.

[49] Maddison, *Contours*, p. 295.

Hail as hazard: changing attitudes to crop protection against hail damage in France, 1815–1914*

by Alan R. H. Baker

Abstract

French peasants were accustomed to confronting environmental hazards such as droughts, storms and floods as well as diseases afflicting their crops and livestock. Their insecurity of living had traditionally been countered by a fatalism fostered by the Church. During the nineteenth century, scientific knowledge undermined the traditional role of popular religion and encouraged farmers to embrace a rational form of risk management, that of commercial or mutual insurance. This paper considers how French peasants addressed the specific hazard of damage to crops by hailstorms between 1815 and 1914. It examines the transition from ringing church bells to ward off storms to reliance on formal insurance but it also touches on attempts to divert or mitigate storms using hail cannon. It refers particularly to the middle Loire Valley *département* of Loir-et-Cher within the general context of France as a whole. It also compares the growth of hail insurance with that of livestock insurance. It concludes by briefly comparing the situation in France with that in England.

French peasants were accustomed to confronting both man-made and natural hazards, both edicts of governments and acts of God. Against the many threats they faced, both cultural and natural, individual peasants had traditionally sought group protection within the immediate family and the proximate rural community, but also in the more remote Church. The insecurity of life for many in rural France at the beginning of the nineteenth century had long been countered by a peasant fatalism fostered by the Church. The peasants' sense of helplessness when facing natural disasters, of their subordination to natural forces, was linked to a popular religion whose practices were interpreted as providing some assurance and protection against the many adversities which could befall them, their families and their properties. When such protection failed, as it often did, religion encouraged a fatalistic acceptance of those adversities as 'acts of God'. During the early modern period, hailstorms were interpreted by European Christian theology as divine retribution, as proof of God's omnipotence and of his punishing people for their sins. From the eighteenth century onwards, ideas from the Enlightenment and the associated growth of science came to challenge paternalistic religion. Attitudes towards natural hazards saw belief in a traditional deity replaced by faith in a modern rationality. Hail

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came to be perceived as a natural hazard, a risk that might be better managed by a logical policy of insurance than by prayerful attempts to appease a deity.[1] This paradigm shift in attitudes is directly observable in the writings of the educated elite but can only be detected in a partially literate peasantry by examining the extent to which they purchased insurance.

This paper adds to the 'extremely limited' number of historical studies dealing with the risk of hail and its management.[2] Eugen Weber's classic study of the transformation of peasant *mentalités* in France between 1870 and 1914 narrated vividly the decline of religious influence in the countryside but ignored the role of insurance as an alternative to religious practices as risk management.[3] Similarly, even the seemingly comprehensive (and certainly extensive) portrayal of the French peasantry between 1789 and 1914 edited by Maurice Agulhon and Robert Specklin paid scant attention to agricultural insurance. It referred only briefly to the development of livestock insurance societies after 1904 and merely noted in a single sentence the existence of a smaller number of societies providing protection against damage to crops by hail.[4] This neglected phenomenon in the history of French agriculture merits more attention.

I

Peasant conservatism may be understood as a way of managing risk: keeping to the known when facing the unknown. John Berger has described the peasantry as 'a class of survivors'.[5] His empathetic view of the peasantry sees it as a group which recognizes a world of scarcity rather than of surplus, a world of uncertainties, risks and dangers that not all of them survive. As Berger has expressed it, 'the path through the future ambushes is a continuation of the path by which survivors from the past have come … The path of that tradition is handed down by instructions, example and commentary'.[6] Popular religion played a key role in that process. Rogation processions through the fields, as portrayed in Jules Breton's painting *La bénédiction des blés en Artois* of 1857 were one means of seeking divine protection against droughts and storms.[7] Wayfare crosses (*calvaires*) erected throughout the French countryside had the same purpose. More precisely targeted was the practice of ringing church bells to provide protection against damage to crops by storms.

In his 'naturalist' portrayal of the peasantry on the Beauce plateau between Chartres and Orléans in the mid-nineteenth century, *La Terre* (1887), Emile Zola described vividly the devastation that a hailstorm could very quickly wreak upon crops. The storm's impact was

[1] F. Oberholzner, 'From an act of God to an insurable risk: the change in the perception of hailstorms and thunderstorms since the early modern period', *Environment and History* 17 (2011), pp. 133–52.

[2] F. Mauelshagen, 'Sharing the risk of hail: insurance, reinsurance and the variability of hailstorms in Switzerland, 1880–1932', *Environment and History* 17 (2011), pp. 171–91; U. Lübken and C. Mauch, 'Uncertain environments: natural hazards, risk and insurance in historical perspective', *Environment and History* 17 (2011), pp. 1–12.

[3] E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: the modernisation of rural France, 1870–1914* (1977).

[4] M. Agulhon and R. Specklin (eds), *Histoire de la France rurale,* III*, Apogée et crise de la civilization paysanne* (1976), p. 418.

[5] J. Berger, 'A class of survivors', *New Society* 42 (1977), pp. 611–3; J. Berger, *Pig Earth* (1979), p. 200.

[6] Berger, *Pig Earth,* pp. 195–213; quotation from p. 203.

[7] Musée des Beaux Arts, Arras, France.

highly localized, affecting some but not all properties in the (fictitious) commune of Rognes, nor nearby communes. Some of Zola's peasants saw the storm as an act of God, punishment for their sins; some prayed to God while the storm raged, some screamed their rage against God. Others were resigned to the hazard, seeing it as a 'senseless, haphazard calamity', no longer believing 'in an avenging Lord who sent the wind and the hail and the thunder'. Their doctor, visiting to attend a patient, solemnly but perhaps somewhat ingratiatingly and exaggeratedly declared 'What a misfortune, what a terrible misfortune. There's no greater misfortune for the farmer'.[8] In Lucien Fabre's evocative historical novel *Le Tarramagnou* (1925), set in the viticultural Midi in the early 1900s, a heavy thunderstorm made a *vigneron* acutely aware of his precarious financial plight and 'he saw the bailiff at his heels whenever a hailstorm threatened'.[9]

Judith Devlin has emphasized that popular religion in France was characterized for centuries as much by practicality and functionalism as by spirituality. Many expressions of devotion – such as pilgrimages, blessing ceremonies and offerings to the Virgin Mary and to saints – were believed to provide protection against threats to person or property. So strong were such beliefs that attempts were sometimes made to punish saints who were deemed to have ignored the requests made to them. For example, when the harvest was bad, peasants of Quercy in south-western France whipped saints' statues for having allowed hail and frost to ruin the fruits of their labour, and the peasants of Agonges in the Central Massif, having begged the Virgin Mary in vain to deflect a storm, ordered the sacristan to whip her statue. Belief that God was responsible for storms, that hailstorms were an expression of God's anger, underpinned the ringing of church bells by some villagers to assuage Him. Others rang bells in the belief that doing so frightened the Devil away, thunder and lightning being viewed as the celestial hunt, known in the middle Loire Valley as the *Chasse Macabre*.[10] A prayer had been authorised in the sixteenth century by Pope Urban VIII for use by bishops when consecrating bells: 'Grant O Lord, that the sound of this bell may drive away harmful storms, hail and strong winds, and that the evil spirits that dwell in the air may by Thy Almighty power be struck to the ground'.[11]

'Bells were supposed to preserve the space of a community from all conceivable threats', Alain Corbin has argued, because 'the formulas used in their benediction justified belief in the preservative virtue of the sacred bronze'. Corbin points out that right up until the middle of the nineteenth century the bronze of bells proclaimed their protective virtues, which were inscribed in Latin on the old ones and engraved upon the new. Their protective function thus had a theological justification. Furthermore, some thought that demons dwelling in the clouds were responsible for storms and were terrified by the sound of bells. Thus ringing bells could drive away thunder, lightning and hailstorms. Bells also had the power to summon protective angels. There is evidence from throughout France in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that bells were rung to ward off thunderstorms. In one commune in the Sologne, a *pays* with many ponds and small lakes to the south of the middle Loire, church bells were rung three

[8] E. Zola, *La Terre* (1887). I have used the following editions: *La Terre* (1965), pp. 109–13 and 264: and *The Earth* (1980), pp. 120–24 and 272.

[9] L. Fabre, *Le Tarramagnou* (1925), p. 61.

[10] J. Devlin, *The superstitious mind: French peasants and the supernatural in the nineteenth century* (1987), pp. 1–42.

[11] B. C. V. Oddie, 'The hail cannon: an early attempt at weather control', *Weather* 20 (1965), pp. 154–6.

times a day and sometimes hourly to ward off thunderstorms. Parts of the Beauce plateau, to the north of the Loire, were devastated on 17 May 1703 by massive hailstones: the villagers of Illiers were reported to have rung its bells so vigorously that the thunderstorm split into two above the parish, each part following its own path, so that this parish alone, in the midst of 30 others that did not have such good bells (or perhaps such good bell-ringers), suffered virtually no damage to its crops.[12]

Gradually, opposition developed to the ringing of bells as a way of protecting crops from storm damage. With the Enlightenment, scientific explanations came to challenge beliefs embedded in popular religion. Claims were made that bell-ringing itself was potentially dangerous, attracting lightning strikes to bell towers and initiating avalanches of snow in mountainous areas. Some bishops and priests came to oppose the practice in part because they wished to distance themselves from popular beliefs. Also, bell-ringing to ward off storms could be confused with their being rung to alert local populations to a fire or even war. At the end of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth, the ringing of bells during thunderstorms – the *carillon de tonnerre* – was banned by ecclesiastical and civil authorities. Notwithstanding this prohibition, popular belief in the efficacy of bell-ringing continued in many localities, sometimes even encouraged by those priests who viewed ringing as a form of prayer and as one form of resistance to creeping, modern, rationalism. An ecclesiastical survey of the *département* of Gers, in south-western France, in 1840, found that the *carillon de tonnerre* was still being practised in all but 14 of its 500 parishes.[13] An Episcopal survey conducted in 1850 by Mgr Dupanloup in his Orléans diocese, in and around the middle Loire Valley, showed that the practice of ringing bells during thunderstorms was still widespread and that some parish priests lent their support by reading the story of the Passion while the bells were ringing.[14] During the nineteenth century many mayors hesitated to enforce official injunctions against bell-ringing, fearful that their electors would turn against them as readily as parishioners turned against priests who tried to prevent the superstitious practice. Even in the early twentieth century there is an instance from Gascony in which a commune's council, in order to retaliate against the regular bell-ringer who had refused to ring the church bells on 14 July (Bastille Day), appointed another man specifically charged with ringing 'in case of danger from hail'. Weber has argued that 'the ringing of bells brought comfort to those who heard them, allayed anxiety, made them feel less helpless. They gave people something to do (or to think they were doing) when there was nothing they could do'.[15]

Bell-ringing might have provided a warning to farmers to protect their crops from an arriving storm but there were few defensive measures they could take apart from hastily removing harvested crops into safe storage. Philip Hamerton (1834–94), an English artist and writer who lived in Burgundy with his French wife for half of his lifetime, observed that faith was mingled with scepticism in the mind of the nineteenth-century peasant who followed a traditional practice to limit hail damage:

[12] A. Corbin, *Village bells: sound and meaning in the nineteenth-century French countryside* (1999), pp. 102–9.

[13] Weber, *Peasants*, p. 28.

[14] C. Marcilhacy, *Le Diocese d'Orléans au milieu du XIXe siècle: les hommes et leurs mentalités* (1964), pp. 264 and 390.

[15] Weber, *Peasants*, p. 28.

> When the rustic sticks a blessed hazel twig in his field to preserve it from hail, he cannot feel that it is a sure preventive, because he has often seen fields lashed with hail notwithstanding hazel twigs and benedictions. But then, on the other hand, his fields have often escaped when the blessed hazel was set up in them, and at these times it is just possible that the blessed branch may have been *pour quelque chose*. At any rate, the precaution, such as it is, is one that costs very little.[16]

But there was something more that peasants could do and increasingly did do: insure against crop damage by hail. While bell-ringing as risk management persisted in some localities, it coexisted alongside the development of its 'modern', rational and secular, alternative: formal, commercial, insurance. Transforming peasant *mentalités* was both a gradual and a complex process, not necessarily involving the replacement of one modality of thinking with another, but instead the coexistence and commingling of different cultural horizons.

I will now turn to the question of hail insurance in the *département* of Loir-et-Cher which has Blois, located on the Loire between Orléans and Tours, as its administrative centre.[17] An analysis of 6,000 storms in France between 1868 and 1928 showed that Loir-et-Cher was an average *département* in terms of storm frequency, experiencing three to five storms annually.[18] Loir-et-Cher was, notably, one of only 14 out of 87 *départements* in each of which the cost of hail damage to crops amounted to more than a million fr. in 1887 and again in 1888.[19] The first, recently produced map of hail-falls in France today shows the zone of greatest risk to stretch from the south-west to the east-central regions, passing through the Massif Central and extending to the Alps. Loir-et-Cher lies on the northern edge of that zone. Intriguingly, that map is based on insurance data.[20]

That hailstorms could do considerable damage to growing crops is made clear by the official statistics collected about them.[21] For example, in May 1907, hailstorms broke out over communes in the western-central district of the Loir-et-Cher: most damage was done at Monteaux, where all properties were affected and losses amounted to 450,000 fr., but it was also considerable at Chissay-en-Touraine (300 owners affected; losses of 280,000 fr.) and Mesland (85; 30,000 fr.). Storms at nearby Veuves, Epiais and Pray affected a further 68 owners, who sustained losses of 17,900 fr. Other storms later in the year were more scattered. In June and July storms in the Grande Sologne at Dhuizon, Mur-de-Sologne and Neung-sur-Beuvron did 3000 fr. of damage to 17 properties, but that pales beside the damage done in the Cher valley by a storm in June at Saint-Georges-sur-Cher where all of the properties were affected and the combined losses

[16] P. G. Hamerton, *Round my house: notes on rural life in France in peace and war* (1876), pp. 262–3.

[17] For maps of the location of Loir-et-Cher within France and of the *département*'s physical and administrative geography, see A. R. H. Baker, 'The infancy of France's first agricultural syndicate: the Syndicat des Agriculteurs de Loir-et-Cher, 1881–1914', *AgHR* 34 (1986), p. 47 and id., *Fraternity among the French peasantry: sociability and voluntary associations in the Loire Valley, 1815–1914* (1999), pp. 55–8 and 60.

[18] J. Regnault de Beaucaron, *L'assurance contre la grêle en France et à l'étranger* (1937), p. 54 citing M. Piron, *Les orages à grêle en France* (1931).

[19] *Statistique Générale de la France: Annuaire Statistique,* 10 (1890), pp. 334–7; 11 (1891), pp. 338–41. The other 13 *départements*, all further south than Loir-et-Cher, were: Aude, Dordogne, Isère, Jura, Loire, Lot, Lot-et-Garonne, Lozère, Pyrénées (Hautes), Rhône, Saône-et-Loire, Tarn and Savoie.

[20] F. Vinet, 'Climatology of hail in France', *Atmospheric Research* 56 (2001), pp. 309–23.

[21] Throughout this paper, values in current francs are normally rounded to the nearest one thousand.

amounted to 800,000 fr. The damage to individual properties in 1907 was very variable, from less than 200 fr. to almost 1,000 fr.[22] Study of storm damage to crops in Loir-et-Cher 1868–1928 revealed significant geographical variations at three scales: in the northern *arrondissement* of Vendôme the cost of storm damage was almost twice that in the southern *arrondissement* of Romorantin; in the central *arrondissement* of Blois, damage in the *canton* of Herbault (on the plateau between the Loire valley and the river Loir) was almost ten times greater than that in the *canton* of Saint-Aignan (on the northern side of the river Cher); and within the single *canton* of Ouzouer-le-Marché (on the Beauce plateau) storm damage in the *commune* of La Bosse was 30 times that in Moisy, less than 5 km away.[23] Hailstorms could be devastating but they were localized and the risk of damage to an individual's property was statistically not very high.

II

The idea of agricultural insurance was being actively considered in Loir-et-Cher during the opening decades of the nineteenth century.[24] A circular of 24 January 1810 from the Ministry of the Interior in Paris to the prefect of the *département* drew attention to the view of the national *Conseil d'État* about the developing role of *compagnies d'assurance mutuelle* (mutual insurance companies) in countering the damage done to crops by hailstorms and to livestock by epidemics. The usefulness of such societies had come to be appreciated in several French *départements* and the government saw them as contributing to agricultural prosperity: the concern of the *Conseil d'État* was that the establishment of such associations should be properly controlled by the authorities. The prefect wrote on 20 March 1810 to the president of the Society of Agriculture of Loir-et-Cher, inviting the Society to consider the potential of crop and livestock insurance societies, but he had also to send a reminder on 27 November before the Society replied. On 12 December the secretary of the Society responded, saying that the Society's committee had in fact considered the matter in 1807 and had then told the prefect that establishing such societies in Loir-et-Cher would pose some difficulties: firstly, because hail was not as great a problem in the department as in some other regions of France where insurance against hail damage was then being practised; secondly, because there was the dual difficulty of having to assess both the value of the property being insured and of the damage done. The secretary concluded by saying that the Society was preoccupied with the problem of how to combat damage to vines inflicted by *vrebec*, an insect causing leaf-curl.[25]

The Society's negative response highlights both the range of natural hazards faced by the farming community in the early-nineteenth century and the fact that the Society – a robust promoter of agricultural innovation and denigrator of routine – was not always immediately receptive to new ideas and practices which in due course were to prove to be of considerable benefit to the farming community. The episode also demonstrates how agricultural practices

[22] Archives Départementales [hereafter AD] Loir-et-Cher (Blois), Série 6M 1087.

[23] Regnault de Beaucaron, *L'assurance*, pp. 57–8.

[24] This section is based principally on unpublished and as yet uncatalogued documents in Série X of the Archives Départementales de Loir-et-Cher, Blois. The sources used are to be found in the *liasses* titled *Sociétés d'assurances*.

[25] AD Loir-et-Cher, Série M 267 cote 12.

in Loir-et-Cher were potentially open to influences from well beyond it even in the early nineteenth century. The idea of formal insurance came from outside, from regional (and even possibly national) government officials. Putting it effectively into practice was also, in many cases, to involve institutions based outside the department. A list compiled by the prefect for the Ministry of the Interior in October 1858 indicates that there were then 25 insurance companies or societies operating in Loir-et-Cher, with only one of them (*La Mutuelle de Loir-et-Cher*) based in the department itself at Blois; two were based in Le Mans, one each of Dijon and Lille, and the rest (20) in Paris. Eleven of them insured both moveable and fixed property (*meubles et immeubles*) against fire; six insured against hail damage; five provided life as well as property insurance; one offered life, property and hail damage insurance; one provided insurance just for moveable property, one for boats and the merchandise they contained; and one covered the drawing of an 'unlucky' number in the lottery for the selection of military conscripts.[26] A similar list compiled fifty years later, for December 1908, records more than 120 insurance companies and societies operating in the department but based outside it, predominantly (more than three-quarters) in Paris but also in some of France's major provincial cities like Bordeaux, Lyon and Toulouse, as well as in substantial towns closer to Blois, like Orléans, Chartres, Dreux, Le Mans and Tours. Thirty-three provided cover for personal accidents (at work or on the road), 28 provided fire insurance, 26 life insurance, 25 hail damage insurance, and 9 livestock insurance.[27]

In 1823 there was established in Paris a *Société d'assurance mutuelle contre la grêle* that was authorized to operate in 11 departments, including Loir-et-Cher. From that year the Society had agents in the three main towns of the *département*, Blois, Romorantin and Vendôme. The members they recruited were obliged to pay an annual insurance premium of between half and one per cent of the value of the insured crops, and it was the role of the agents to assess claims by visiting sites to inspect the damage allegedly done to growing crops during a hailstorm. This Society – which came to be called *La Cérès* after the ancient Roman goddess of agriculture – was the first such successful insurance society in France and continued to operate throughout the nineteenth century in Loir-et-Cher, despite scepticism expressed by the prefect in its early days. On 20 December 1833, in a letter to the Minister of Commerce, the prefect argued that frost was a greater general hazard (especially to vines) than localized hail and that, as most farms (and especially small farms) were fragmented, with parcels of land scattered in different locations, the risk of damage to the growing crops of any one farmer was reduced. He argued that within Loir-et-Cher such an insurance society was only likely to attract members in the *pays* of *grande culture*, like the Beauce and the Sologne, but even in such localities large properties were being increasingly subdivided among a great number of farmers:

> who always prefer to run the risk of a hailstorm, which cannot do damage at the same moment to all of the parcels of land which they own because they are scattered here and there, rather than to pay their contribution, even though it might be minimally small,

[26] AD Loir-et-Cher, Série X, *Sociétés d'assurances diverses*. Insurance companies often operated with fixed premiums, so that it was the insurer who bore the risk; in mutual societies, risk was shared by their members who were both the insured and the insurer, operating with variable premiums.

[27] AD Loir-et-Cher, Série X, *Sociétés d'assurances diverses: statistiques, correspondance, 1902–1914*.

> for damages sustained by others; such is the attitude of those rural dwellers now owning two-thirds of the lands of the department.

Nonetheless, by 1838 there were in Loir-et-Cher some 620 members of *La Cérès* insuring crops valued in total at 3,776,000 fr. The Society, with its headquarters in Paris, had 7,164 members in 16 *départements* in northern France.

By the 1830s there was also operating in the department a second such society, the *Société royale d'assurances mutuelles contre la grêle*, known as *L'Étoile*, founded in Paris in 1834. Initially authorized to operate in 14 departments (mainly in the Paris Basin), that number was increased to 20 in 1837 when it also came to include Loir-et-Cher. It seems that the local authority's earlier reticence about such insurance had by then been overcome, because on 13 January 1837 the prefect informed the Minister of Commerce and Public Works that extending that Society's operations into Loir-et-Cher would be beneficial and serve the department's agricultural interests. By June 1838 crops in Loir-et-Cher were insured with the Society to the value of 351,000 fr.; by the end of 1852 the figure had increased prodigiously to 6,165,000 fr (of which 72 per cent was located in the central *arrondissement* of Blois, 20 per cent in that of Vendôme, and 8 per cent in Romorantin). In July 1839 the agent for *L'Etoile* in Loir-et-Cher reported that there were in the *département* 29 people insured with the company against hail damage to their crops in ten communes close to Blois. The area insured by each farmer was generally in excess of 10 *arpents* and in some instances amounted to as much as 100 *arpents*, while the value of the crops insured by each farmer was estimated as being between 500 fr and 14,000 fr.[28] Almost half of the farm holdings in the *département* in the 1830s were of less than 12 *arpents* and hail insurance was mainly being taken up by farmers with larger properties.[29]

L'Etoile provided insurance against hail damage to growing crops but not to those that had been harvested. It shared the costs of hail damage suffered by any of its members among all of its members, charging an annually variable premium in proportion to the value of crops each member had insured, although no member was required to pay more than 1.25 per cent of the value of his 'first category' insured crops, such as meadow, cereals, sugar beet, potatoes, peas and beans, nor more than 2.5 per cent of the value of his 'second category' crops, such as rape, hemp, hops and herbs. (Gradually, this basic system was refined into four categories according to a crop's vulnerability to hail damage, with vines and hops being the most vulnerable and so attracting the highest premiums.) The premium to be paid each year was changed to reflect the actual cost of hail damage in a given year. Each year each member also paid in advance a sum equivalent to 0.05 per cent of his insured crops (i.e. five centimes per one hundred francs), with interest on the capital fund raised in this way being used, firstly, to pay out indemnities during the year to members whose limited resources meant that they would be in difficulties if they had to wait until the end of the year before being recompensed and, second, to build up a reserve fund which could be called upon in exceptional years when the overall cost of the damage amounted to more than the sum which could be raised by the standard procedure. Members also each paid annually 20 centimes per hundred francs of crops insured to meet the administrative costs of the Society.

[28] The *arpent* is an old French measure of area approximately equal to one acre.

[29] G. Dupeux, *Aspects de l'histoire sociale et politique du Loir-et-Cher, 1848–1914* (1962), pp. 98–9.

Members had to describe the exact location and provide their own estimated values of the crops they wished to insure. Reports of hail damage to crops and claims for indemnities had to be submitted, within ten days of a damaging storm, to the Society's agent in the member's own *canton*. It had to specify the day and duration of the hailstorm, and the exact size and locations of the areas affected by hailstones. Within ten days of a claim being submitted, the cost of the damage had to be assessed by two people, one appointed by the Society (it had an agent in each *canton* in which it operated) and one by the afflicted member (who was not permitted to nominate a relation or a close friend). If those two assessors were unable to agree, they had themselves to appoint a third, whose decision – which had to lie between the two figures already proposed – would be final. The costs of undertaking such an assessment were shared equally between the Society and the afflicted member, unless the final judgment was that no indemnity was justified, in which case all of the costs were borne by the member. If the damage to a crop had been inflicted early in its growing season and it was deemed possible that the crop might recover, then a second calculation of the cost of the damage would be undertaken later in the year. The aim of the Society was to compensate its members for hail damage to their growing crops and to do so as fully as possible by raising an annually variable premium set at an appropriate rate within agreed limits stated in the Society's statutes. The localized character of hailstorms and the wide geographical spread of the insured parcels of the Society's members, it was thought, made this a reasonable objective.[30]

Clearly, the administration of such a society required considerable sophistication. During the 1840s at least four other societies insuring crops against hail damage came to operate in Loir-et-Cher, although it is difficult to assess their impact. *La Saumuroise* began its activities in four departments (Maine-et-Loire, Loir-et-Cher, Vienne and Deux-Sèvres) in 1838, although it was not formally authorized until September 1840. On 7 August 1838 the sub-prefect at Vendôme suggested to the prefect of Loir-et-Cher that the Society's headquarters at Saumur, about 100 km from Blois down the Loire valley were too distant from the department for people living in Loir-et-Cher to attend its general meetings or to participate in running the Society, but he nonetheless recognized the considerable utility of such societies. The prefect, on 18 October 1839, declined to express to the Minister of Agriculture an opinion on the Society's draft statutes on the grounds that only five of its members came from Loir-et-Cher. The other societies working in Loir-et-Cher in the 1840s were *L'Union Générale*, authorized in June 1841 at Limoges; *L'Arc-en-Ciel*, authorized at Mulhouse in 1845; and *La Providence Agricole*, authorized in Paris in 1846.[31]

III

Arranging for formal insurance of a variety of kinds was to become increasingly common during the course of the nineteenth century. But a different form of risk management not involving monetary compensation – hail suppression – also came to be considered. On 1 June 1913 there was founded in a hamlet to the west of Blois a *Syndicat Grêlifuge des Grouéts* whose

[30] De Beaucaron, *L'assurance*, pp. 52 and 257–76; AD Loir-et-Cher, Série X, Sociétés d'assurances.

[31] AD Loir-et-Cher, Série X, Sociétés d'assurances.

aim was to protect the vines of its 60 members against damage by hail. It would do so by arranging for the use of anti-hail rockets (*fusés grêlifuges*) or of any other system which might come to be recognized as being more effective. Membership was not restricted to residents of the hamlet but open to all agriculturalists. Theoretically, this enabled the risk to be spread but in practice rockets could only be used over a limited firing field. Those joining the syndicate paid 8 fr. per hectare of vines that they had within the designated field of fire, although the committee of twelve that ran the syndicate could increase or decrease the subscription to meet different circumstances. The eight ordinary members of the committee (and so not the Society's President, Vice-President, Treasurer or Secretary) were responsible for preparing the rockets and determining the number of firing stations to be employed, to ensure that the munitions were not wasted. The syndicate explicitly disallowed use of the rockets for any purpose other than combating storms. According to the prefect of Loir-et-Cher, when this syndicate ceased functioning (some time before 1921), it had 71 members (seven of whom were women) who were no longer convinced that it provided effective protection for their vines.[32]

That experience was repeated elsewhere in France. For example, by 1907 in the Beaujolais wine producing *département* of Rhône – the *département* of France most affected by hailstorms – there were 37 local associations using 430 rocket-firing canons (*canons paragrêles*) to protect some 12,000 hectares of vines but with variable and usually poor results, so that the *vignerons* turned increasingly to the greater reliability provided by insurance societies.[33]

The opening decade of the twentieth century saw a significant flowering of interest in a number of European countries in the use of cannon to provide protection against hail (see Figure 1). The technique was based principally on belief in one of two hypotheses: that smoke particles would serve as additional condensation nuclei, leading to the formation of more water drops and preventing the stage of super-saturation and cooling that produces hailstones; or that pre-storm firing produced atmospheric shock waves that prevented or diminished hailstone formation. The technique had been developed in Austria in the late 1890s and was then adopted in Italy, Germany, Hungary and Spain as well as France. International conferences on hail suppression were held in Italy in 1899 and 1900, at Lyon, France, in 1901, and in Austria in 1902. The results obtained by cannon firing were reported as being very mixed. Several firing stations were set up in France during 1900: they included 50 cannon at Denicé (Sâone-et-Loire), 30 at Saint-Gengoux and Burnand (Saône-et-Loire), 15 at Boên (Loire), and 8 each at Liergues-près-Villefrance and Saint-Emilion (Gironde). The station at Denicé, a product of the collaboration of a number of agricultural syndicates and societies and funded by both regional and national government, was to all intents and purposes an official test site for the method. The results were judged to be perhaps encouraging but certainly inconclusive.[34] At first, enthusiasm for the use of cannon blamed failures to suppress hail on their having been improperly fired, with cannon being judged to have been wrongly located, fired only feebly or with too much delay. But as failures multiplied, so did doubts about the efficacy of the method. A report by Professor J. R. Plumadon, meteorologist of the Observatory of Puy-de-Dôme in the Massif Central of

[32] AD Loir-et-Cher, Série 10M 55, 57 and 59.

[33] G. Garrier, *Paysans du Beaujolais et du Lyonnais, 1800–1970* (1973), pp. 31–2.

[34] F. Houdaille, *Les orages à grêle et le tir des canons* (1901), pp. 31–3.

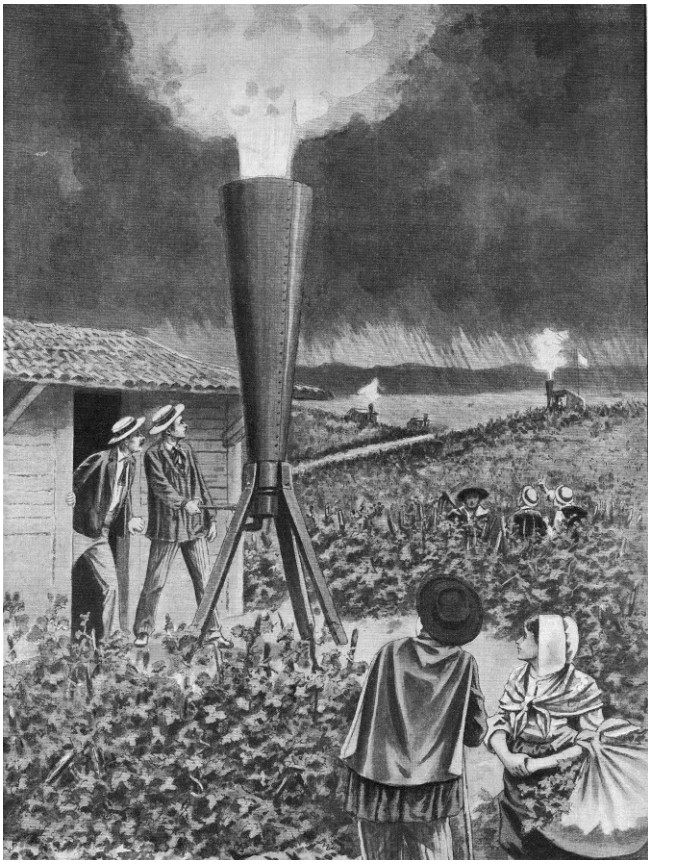


FIGURE 1. Firing hail-prevention cannon in vineyards: the 3 m-high cannon, described as 'huge champagne flutes', were placed 500 m apart, 44 of them being needed to cover an area of 25 ha. Operational costs per annum were estimated at 4 fr. per hectare.

Source: *Supplément illustré du Petit Journal* 555 (7 July 1901), p. 216.

France, to an international conference in 1901, examined the theoretical and practical evidence for the diminution of hail as a consequence of firing cannon into storm clouds, and concluded that it was far from convincing. Enthusiasm for using cannon waned almost as rapidly as it had waxed, and had virtually disappeared by 1914.[35] The failure of the cannon system to stop *all* hail led quickly to its demise – and much more rapidly than the failure of bell-ringing and prayer to stop all hail had led to their abandonment.

IV

Adjustments to the hail hazard by French peasants could theoretically have taken a variety of forms: suppressing the hail, taking measures in the field to modify the potential damage, or making provision financially to bear an actual loss.[36] In practice, only the last of these was to prove to be effective in France before 1914. To some extent, the predominance of

[35] J. R. Plumadon, 'General report on hail shooting presented to the Congress at Lyons', *Monthly Weather Rev.* 30 (1902/03), pp. 35–8; Oddie, 'Hail cannon' p. 156; S. A. Changnon and J. L. Ivens, 'History repeated: the forgotten hail cannons of Europe', *Bull. American Meteorological Society* 62 (1981), pp. 368–75.

[36] A. L. Rydant, 'Adjustments to natural hazards: factors affecting the adoption of crop-hail insurance', *Professional Geographer* 31 (1979), pp. 312–20.

non-contiguous farm holdings was a form of risk management: the scattering of the parcels farmed by an individual peasant throughout the territory of a commune and even into neighbouring communes was one means by which, given the localized character of hailstorms and their unpredictable paths, the potential risk of damage to crops could be reduced. This was, of course, just one of a number of reasons rather than the principal reason for non-contiguous farm holdings in France. A second adjustment to the hail hazard was the attempt to suppress the hail itself or at least to deflect it to another locality. Both the ringing of church bells and the firing of cannon and rockets into storm clouds came into this category but neither proved to be very successful. No doubt many peasants fatalistically accepted that they would from time to time have to bear the cost of hail damage to their crops from such reserves of cash as they had personally or could obtain from their families, friends, notaries, banks or charities. Others gradually came to see formal, commercial, insurance as the most appropriate way of managing this risk.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, religious practice in Loir-et-Cher fell by half but literacy levels doubled. Faith-based teachings of the Church were increasingly challenged by the science-based schooling provided by the state.[37] The growing secularization of society was reflected in the burgeoning of formal insurance as the best way of managing hazards both natural and cultural. As noted above, during the nineteenth century the number of insurance companies operating in the *département* increased from 25 in 1858 to 121 by 1910. Only a few of these insurance companies had their headquarters in Loir-et-Cher, at Blois and Mer; most of them were based in Paris or large provincial centres like Orléans, Bourges, Chartres and Le Mans.

But in addition to these mainly 'external' companies seeking business in Loir-et-Cher, there arose internally within the *département* a wide range of more local associations whose underpinnings lay in risk management. Some 600 work-related, 'instrumental' voluntary associations have been identified in the *département* between 1815 and 1914 involving large sections of its farming community.[38] Livestock insurance societies alone numbered more than 160 by 1912 and alongside them were mutual aid societies, volunteer fire brigades, anti-phylloxera syndicates and agricultural associations. These voluntary societies emerged in large numbers to combat a wide range of risks: livestock epidemics, illness and accidents preventing people from working, damage and destruction of property by fire, devastation of vineyards by phylloxera, and declining soil fertility and lower crop yields. Such associations had multiple purposes: they had both manifest and latent agendas, they promoted both social cohesion and social conflict, they were battle grounds for the minds of local populations fought over by representatives of the Church and of the state, and they were seedbeds for the growth of local democracy. But, fundamentally, they were 'modern' responses to risk replacing 'traditional' ways that were found increasingly wanting. Ringing church bells and firing rockets into storm clouds gave way

[37] Baker, *Fraternity among the French peasantry,* pp. 71–9 and 88–93.

[38] Ibid., pp. 284–301. 'Instrumental' societies differ from 'expressive' societies: the latter exist in order to express or satisfy specific interests which members have in relation to themselves, such as sports clubs and musical societies, while the former focus their activities upon the wider society in order to bring about specific material benefits to their members, such as agricultural cooperatives and insurance societies.

to the greater reliability of formal insurance. For example, *L'Etoile* – founded in 1834 – today provides hail protection cover for farmers throughout France.[39]

V

This paper has focused on the middle Loire Valley. Loir-et-Cher was on the northern margin of the region of France that suffers most from hail. It serves here as a window upon the landscape of hail insurance in particular and of agricultural insurance more generally in France before 1914. By the end of the nineteenth century, farmers in France were turning in increasing numbers to insurance societies to protect their crops, livestock, and buildings from a wide range of risks. Figures provided by the Ministry of Agriculture for agricultural insurance societies should not be regarded as being wholly accurate, given their compilation from information submitted by prefects of almost 100 *départements* and the fact that the prefects were reliant on data submitted by almost 40,000 mayors of communes. Some small societies no doubt went unrecorded. Nonetheless, the overall picture provided by official statistics is clear.

The Ministry of Agriculture reported that there were 1,484 agricultural insurance societies of all kinds in 1898 but 11,880 by 1910. Their very rapid growth was encouraged by the Ministry which both made it easier administratively for such societies to be established and provided them with subsidies totalling between 500,000 fr. and 1,200,000 fr. annually. During the eight years from 1898 to 1905, the state provided subsidies to 8,523 agricultural insurance societies (with some receiving more than one grant): four grants were made to societies covering personal accidents, 62 to those providing insurance against hail damage, 245 to those providing fire insurance, and 8212 to those insuring livestock.[40]

Recorded livestock insurance societies numbered 1917 in 1899 and 9511 in 1910. At this latter date, they had 441,162 members insuring animals valued at 536,403,000 fr. There were also 58 livestock reinsurance societies with a total of 3,055 members insuring animals valued at 153,901,000 fr. Insurance of fire risks was more embryonic but still significant. According to the Ministry's statistics, in 1910 there were 2252 agricultural fire insurance societies and 27 fire reinsurance societies, with memberships of 91,716 and 2194 respectively, insuring agricultural properties with capital values of 1,067,136,000 fr. and 313,468,000 fr. respectively. Recorded hail insurance societies numbered 25 in 1910, with a total of 44,677 members insuring crops valued at 28,160,000 fr. There were no hail reinsurance societies.[41]

The idea of insuring crops against hail damage had been first mooted in France at Toulouse by M. Barrau in 1799 when he established a mutual society that operated for ten years until it was suspended by the Government because its statutes were judged not to be in good order. As part of the general growth of insurance provision during the nineteenth century, a number of hail insurance societies with a regional or wider geographical reach were founded from the 1820s onwards. Most were mutual societies (like *La Cérès*, 1823 and *L'Etoile*, 1834) operated with variable premiums, a handful (like *L'Abeille*, 1856 and *La Rurale*, 1895) were companies based

[39] www.etoile-assurance.fr [accessed 10 Jan. 2011].

[40] *Journal Officiel de la République Française* (1 Apr. 1906).

[41] *Journal Officiel* (1908) Annexe 2030; (1909) Annexe 2807 and Annexe 2959; (1911) Annexe 1254; (1912) pp. 930–31.

on fixed premiums. Quite a few had short life spans, having not been established on secure financial footings.[42] Samuel Brown, one of the founders of the English insurance journal, *Assurance Magazine*, reporting in 1851 on life and property insurance on the Continent, noted the creation of 28 hail insurance companies in France between 1809 and 1846. He argued that the growth of hail insurance was being checked by the difficulty of spreading the risk over a sufficiently wide geographical area and so by the need for high premiums to meet the losses in the worst affected localities. Weak financial standing meant that hail insurance companies in France during the 1840s paid indemnities of between only 12 per cent and 60 per cent, so that many farmers withdrew from the companies, preferring to bear the risks themselves.[43] In the 1870s, Cornelius Walford reported that hail insurance companies in France had been paying indemnities of between 12 per cent and 100 per cent and that many of them were not able to conduct their business successfully.[44] But by 1890, according to Jacques Regnault de Beaucaron, deputy director of *L'Etoile*, these regional (and in some cases national) companies and societies collected premiums that totalled just over 8,000,000 fr., insuring crops valued at just under 603,000,000 fr.; by 1913 premiums amounted to just over 14,000,000 fr., insuring crops valued at just over 1,000,000,000 fr.[45] These companies and societies clearly outstripped the much slower and less significant growth of local hail insurance societies. They spread the risk over much wider geographical areas.

Local hail insurance societies based on a single commune, or on a few contiguous communes, or on a canton embracing ten or so communes, were not numerous. During the 17 years from 1898 to 1914, the state gave 18 grants to such societies being newly created and 102 grants to societies already in existence (with some such societies receiving more than one grant). During that period, subsidies amounted in total to 238,200 fr. The number of societies grew slowly, from 12 in 1898 to 28 in 1912 (with no increase on that number during the following two years). According to Regnault de Beaucaron, their overall membership rose from 16,812 in 1898 to reach a peak of 47,737 in 1909, from which it declined to 37,940 by 1914. The crop value insured rose from 8,499,000 fr. in 1898 to a peak of 30,524,000 fr. in 1913, falling to 29,536,000 fr. in 1914.[46]

There were so few local hail insurance societies, the Minister of Agriculture argued in 1906, because a hailstorm track could devastate an entire locality or region within a few hours, so that it was not possible for a society whose members came from one canton or even from a whole department to indemnify appropriately all of the victims. The risk, he argued, should be spread over a wider area, a larger territory, if not the whole country. He even envisaged local hail insurance societies being reinsured by regional societies and they perhaps in turn

[42] Regnault de Beaucaron, *L'assurance*, pp. 79–84. He lists the following three hail insurance *Compagnies par actions* with date of establishment: L'Abeille (1856), La Confiance (1895), La Rurale (1895), and the following twelve hail insurance *Sociétés mutuelles*: La Cérès (1823), La Société de Toulouse (1826), La Mutuelle de Seine-et-Marne (1829), L'Etoile (1834), La Beauceronne Vexinoise (1849), La Mutuelle de Seine-et-Oise (1854), La Garantie Agricole (1854), La Régionale du Nord (1869), La Gironde (1870), La Ferme (1887), La Ruche (1896), and La Mutuelle du Poitou (1908).

[43] S. Brown, 'Sketch of the recent progress of the assurance of life and property on the Continent', *Assurance Magazine* 1 (1851), pp. 293–307 and 2 (1851), pp. 16–32, repr. in D. T. Jenkins and Y. Yoneyama (eds), *The history of insurance* (8 vols, 2000), VI, *Life*, pp. 134–66.

[44] C. Walford, *The insurance cyclopaedia* (6 vols, 1871–80), vol. 4 (1876), pp. 285–8.

[45] Regnault de Beaucaron, *L'assurance*, pp. 79–84.

[46] Ibid., pp. 109–13.

TABLE 1. Hail damage and livestock mortalities on farms in France, 1872–87 and 1898–1913

	1872–87	*1898–1913*
Average annual number of farms affected by:		
Hail damage	235,778	226,024
Livestock mortalities	73,623	40,112
Average losses (in fr.) nationally from:		
Hail damage	86,848,215	91,365,650
Livestock mortalities	32,436,780	11,373,221
Multiple by which average cost of hail damage nationally exceeded that of livestock mortalities:	2.7	8.0

Sources: Calculations for 1872–87 based on data in Regnault de Beaucaron, *L'assurance*, pp. 528–9 and for 1898–1913 on data in *Statistique Générale de la France: Annuaire Statistique*, 20–34 (Paris, 1900–15).

being reinsured by the state.[47] In 1909, 13 *députés* argued forcefully that there should be a national scheme of agricultural insurance. They argued that local hail insurance societies could not flourish because the risk needed to be spread over a very wide geographical area. Moreover, small farmers hesitated to take out hail protection policies with private insurance companies because they considered premiums to be too expensive and submitting insurance claims too complex. These *deputés* also dismissed the alternative – firing cannon into storm clouds – because installing the cannon was difficult, the results were not impressive and this method was not applicable to regions where the value of the crops was low and where the area of cultivation was extensive.[48] Views thus expressed by the Minister of Agriculture and by some *députés* were significantly confirmed in 1913 by Monsieur V. Vermorel, Senator for the Rhône *département,* long-serving President of the agricultural and viticultural committee of Beaujolais and Vice-President of the *Commission Météorologie agricole de France*. He argued forcefully for insurance as the best way of managing the hail risk and for regional reinsurance funds, and even a national fund similar to that then in existence for livestock insurance, to guarantee a wide geographical spread of the risk.[49]

For the country as whole, hail inflicted greater financial damage on French farmers and on more of them than did contagious livestock diseases (Table 1). From 1905 to 1913, the cost of hail damage nationally amounted to just over 782 million fr. or about 6.5 per cent of the overall value of agricultural production in that period as calculated by J-C. Toutain. The cost of livestock mortalities was much less, at just over 100 million fr., representing only 0.8 per cent of the calculated overall value of French agricultural production.[50] Nationally, hail was

[47] *Journal Officiel* (1 Apr. 1906).

[48] *Journal Officiel* (1909) Annexe 2807.

[49] V. Vermorel, *L'assurance contre la grêle* (1913).

[50] *Annuaire Statistique* 26 (1906), p. 345; 27 (1907), p. 300; 28 (1908), p. 283; 29 (1909), p. 305; 30 (1910), p. 271; 31 (1911), p. 279; 32 (1912), p. 274; 33 (1913), p. 260; 34 (1914–1915), p. 319. J-C. Toutain, *La production agricole de la France de 1810 à 1990: départements et regions,* I, (Paris, 1992), p. 298. For a detailed account of livestock insurance in Loir-et-Cher, see Baker, *Fraternity among the French peasantry*, pp. 106–41.

TABLE 2. Hail damage and livestock mortality costs (fr.) incurred per farm affected 1872–1887 and 1898–13

	Hail damage	*Livestock mortalities*		*Hail damage*	*Livestock mortalities*
1872	310.7	562.4	1898	343.8	257.8
1873	327.7	495.1	1899	368.3	247.4
1874	432.9	609.5	1900	441.4	250.7
1875	359.5	684.4	1901	369.5	251.8
1876	279.4	448.0	1902	415.9	205.7
1877	352.3	435.9	1903	368.6	351.1
1878	337.8	416.2	1904	359.2	312.5
1879	353.4	408.3	1905	403.3	296.2
1880	400.6	425.2	1906	362.5	233.4
1881	361.5	473.6	1907	392.6	314.3
1882	528.5	436.3	1908	447.3	334.3
1883	297.9	422.0	1909	408.7	327.7
1884	277.7	392.6	1910	467.3	368.2
1885	466.2	413.0	1911	477.7	342.3
1886	412.2	358.3	1912	380.1	328.8
1887	343.3	369.4	1913	486.0	259.7
Mean	368.3	440.6	Mean	404.3	283.5

Sources: Calculations for 1872–87 based on data in Regnault de Beaucaron, *L'assurance,* pp. 528–9 and for 1898–1913 on data in *Statistique Générale de la France: Annuaire Statistique,* 20–34 (Paris, 1900–15).

a more costly hazard than livestock mortalities. But for individual farmers the picture is less clear. During the 1870s, the costs of hail damage per farm affected were lower than those from livestock mortalities; during the 1880s they sometimes exceeded them; and from at least the late 1890s they consistently did so through to 1913 (Table 2). Nonetheless, insuring crops against hail damage was adopted much more slowly than livestock insurance.

Hail damage, especially to highly valuable crops like vines, hops and tobacco, was a serious hazard for more farmers than livestock mortality. When hail fell, it could be at great cost to a farmer. But the fact that hailstorms were always unpredictable and often localized led farmers to adopt hail insurance only gradually. The proportion of those whose properties were afflicted by hail, who were also insured with a local society or with a regional or national insurance company or society rose from 3.1 per cent in 1898 to 9.5 per cent in 1913 (the three-years' moving average increased during that period from 4.4 per cent in 1898–1900 to 8.7 per cent in 1911–13). Farmers who were slow to adopt hail insurance turned more readily to livestock insurance. The proportion of those who suffered livestock mortalities *and* who were insured with a local society or with a regional or national insurance company or society rose from 3.4 per cent in 1898 to 20.8 per cent in 1913 (the three-years' moving average increased during that period from

5.8 per cent in 1898–1900 to 23.5 per cent in 1911–13).[51] Compensation by the government in grants from 1872 to 1887 covered only 1.7 per cent of the cost of farmers' losses from livestock mortalities and only 2.3 per cent of their crop losses from hail damage. In relation to both afflictions, there remained a massive proportion of the losses to be met from the farmers' own savings or from insurance indemnities.[52]

The differential rate of adoption of hail insurance and livestock insurance reflected peasants' attitudes to risk assessment and farm management. Hail damage to specific parcels of land was less predictable, less common and less preventable by good husbandry than was the risk of disease to livestock. Some animals were valued not only for their products but also as vital sources of power on farms. Furthermore, hail insurance was more complex and more costly than livestock insurance. Premiums varied not only according to the vulnerability of the crops being insured but also from year to year to take into account the cost of indemnities being paid. The indemnity pay-out was also variable from year to year, taking into account the scale of the hail damage and the cash reserves of a society or company. Assessing the risk of hail damage and the benefits of insurance was no easy task for the peasant farmer. By the early twentieth century, hail insurance was coming widely to be seen as being expensive and claims for indemnities as being complex and inadequate. Indemnity levels for hail damage, at around 20–40 per cent, were much lower than for livestock mortalities, at around 50–80 per cent. Monsieur Vermorel, in his account of hail insurance, argued that premiums could be as high as 17 per cent while indemnities could be 'derisory'. Nor did hail insurance have the benefit of reinsurance schemes of the kind that underpinned livestock insurance.[53] And no doubt some peasants took to any form of insurance hesitantly because it was known that some self-announced 'insurance agents' touring the countryside were fraudsters selling worthless policies.[54]

VI

But by the early twentieth century, for many farmers in France, insurance against environmental hazards was, and for others it was becoming, a new religion. Insurance was an increasingly important tool in the peasants' survival kit. This appears to contrast with the position of farmers across the Channel, although surprisingly little attention has been paid to insurance in farming in Britain either by historians of insurance or by agricultural historians. In the massive and authoritative six volumes of Cornelius Walford's *The Insurance Cyclopaedia* (1871–80), only a dozen pages addressed hail insurance and they were concerned as much with its practice on the continent of Europe as in the British Isles. Walford noted that the business of hail insurance in England started in the 1840s, some twenty years after it had taken off France. Just a few commercial companies were selling hail insurance in the British Isles by the 1870s,

[51] *Annuaire Statistique* 20 (1900), p. 356; 21 (1901), p. 357; 22 (1902), p. 295; 23 (1903), p. 340; 24 (1904), p. 286; 25 (1905), p. 307; 26 (1906), p. 345; 27 (1907), p. 300; 28 (1908), p. 283; 29 (1909), p. 305; 30 (1910), p. 271; 31 (1911), p. 279; 32 (1912), p. 274; 33 (1913), p. 260; 34 (1914–1915), p. 319.

[52] *Annuaire Statistique* 10 (1890), pp. 528–9.

[53] *Journal Officiel* (1908) Annexe 2030; (1909) Annexe 2807; Vermorel, *L'assurance*, pp. 9–10.

[54] J-M. Déguignet, *Mémoires d'un paysan bas-breton, 1834–1905* (1998; English trans., 2004), pp. 353–60.

with cover being provided mainly for cereals, the acreage of which was steadily decreasing. He observed that on the continent hail insurance was much more general than in England and that the practice had not penetrated to Wales, Scotland or Ireland.[55]

The history of hail insurance in England has received scant attention. W. A. Dinsdale, in his *History of accident insurance in Great Britain* (1954), merely noted, in just eight of 350 pages, the slow and limited development of hailstorm insurance in England during the nineteenth century (although two of those pages were addressed interestingly to hailstorm glass, rather than crop, insurance).[56] An authoritative, indeed massive, survey of the agrarian history of England and Wales between 1850 and 1914 published in 2000 made no reference to any form of agricultural insurance. The only references to insurance were related to farmers arranging loans from insurance companies.[57] And a massive history of insurance published in eight volumes in 2000 says nothing about hail or livestock insurance in England.[58]

There are signs now of a nascent interest by historians in agricultural insurance in England. A recent paper by David R. Stead on risk management in English agriculture *c*.1750–1850 noted that some commercial companies began to offer insurance policies against hail damage from the 1840s but their take-up 'appears to have been low'. The same seems to have been the case with the livestock insurance offered by some companies from that time. The cow clubs operating on a mutual basis at the local level seem to have grown in numbers from the second quarter of the nineteenth century but they had only limited success.[59] The late Stephen Matthews has shown that some tenant farmers in England, especially those with limited (if any) capital reserves, in effect had mortalities among their livestock during epidemics underwritten by landlords displaying a sense of responsibility, not only to their tenants, but also to the landscape of their estates.[60] In 1912, only 135 co-operative cow insurance societies were known to the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries in all of England and Wales.[61] By contrast, in France in 1899 there were 1,917 livestock insurance societies and André Gueslin has estimated that by 1914 about one in four of its rural communes had such a society.[62] If insurance against damage to crops by hail and against loss of livestock by accident or epidemics was not a very significant feature of English agriculture during the nineteenth century – as seems to have been the case – then this would constitute an important contrast with French agriculture, with the latter in this regard being surprisingly more innovative. While a recent collection of essays has emphasised parallels between the histories of British and French agriculture, the relative roles of insurance in those two countries in the nineteenth century draws attention to a significant and as yet unexplained divergence.[63]

[55] Walford, *Insurance cyclopaedia,* V, pp. 586–97.

[56] W. A. Dinsdale, *History of accident insurance in Great Britain* (1954), pp. 227–34.

[57] E. J. T. Collins (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales,* VII, *1850–1914* (2 vols, 2000), I, pp. 753–6.

[58] Jenkins and Yoneyama (eds), *History of insurance*.

[59] D. R. Stead, 'Risk and risk management in English agriculture, *c*.1750–1850', *EcHR* 57 (2004), pp. 334–61.

[60] S. Matthews, 'Cattle clubs, insurance and plague in the mid-nineteenth century', *AgHR* 53 (2005), pp. 192–211 and 'Underwriting disaster: risk and the management of agricultural crisis in mid-nineteenth century Cheshire', *AgHR* 58 (2010), pp. 217–35.

[61] J. Wilson, 'The co-operative insurance of livestock in England and Wales', *J. Royal Statistical Society* 77 (1914), pp. 145–56.

[62] A. Gueslin, *L'invention de l'économie social: le XIXe siècle français* (1987), pp. 285–7.

[63] J. Broad (ed.), *A common agricultural heritage? Revising French and British rural divergence* (2009).

Putting on a show: the Royal Agricultural Society of England and the Victorian town, *c*.1840–1876*

by Louise Miskell

Abstract

This is a study of the annual shows of the Royal Agricultural Society of England from the perspective of the towns in which they were staged. Driven by the commercial and civic ambitions of the host towns, the shows escalated well beyond their original remit of knowledge dissemination to the farming population over the course of the study period. This both benefited and burdened the RASE, by delivering increased revenues but also escalating costs and provoking debate over the real purpose of the shows. It prompted the Society to reassess its approach to a number of aspects of show management by the mid-1870s.

> We have always regarded these agricultural meetings as highly useful … Landowners, farmers, scientific men, and amateurs come together, and compare their respective experience, as to agricultural implements, soils, manures, modes of cultivation, draining, kinds of stock, food of cattle, seeds, weeds, roots, grains, grasses, size and laying out of farms, plantations, roads, fences, etc. Great numbers and variety of animals are exhibited, of the best and most useful breeds … Lectures and speeches are delivered, generally of a very practical kind. Prizes are given for the most perfect animals, the best cultivated farms, the most skilful ploughmen, and the most improved implements … the obvious tendency of all this is to raise the intellectual, moral, and social condition of all the classes engaged in agriculture.[1]

This description of agricultural meetings was written by the editors of the *Leeds Mercury* as their town was preparing to host the Yorkshire Agricultural Society's annual show in July 1849. As well as anticipating the forthcoming county event, the account was a reflection on another, more auspicious meeting, that of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, which was taking place in Norwich. The 'English Agricultural Society', to give it its original designation, was established in 1837 and quickly gained the prestige of royal patronage to become the Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE). It came into being, in the words of one historian, 'to provide links between the manufacturers and scientists on the one hand and the farmers and

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[1] *Leeds Mercury*, 21 July 1849.

landowners on the other'.[2] The creation of RASE as an over-arching national institution for better agricultural education and practice was an attempt to capitalize on the flowering of local farmers' clubs and agricultural societies in the first half of the nineteenth century. The annual shows, dinners and meetings held by these organizations in their localities were an important feature of community life in the Victorian countryside.[3] From the outset, though, the annual shows of the Royal were of a different magnitude, being held over a week every summer. These were national agricultural celebrations, visited on a selected locality but attracting participants and generating press attention well beyond the immediate region.

The interest shown in industrial towns like Leeds in the annual gatherings of the major agricultural institutions of the day might, at first, seem incongruous. The mission of the Royal Agricultural Society was to disseminate knowledge and good practice to the farming population, yet during RASE show week agricultural life took centre stage in some of the largest towns and cities in England and Wales whose economies were developing along quite different trajectories. *The Times* commented on the paradox of staging the 1864 show in Newcastle upon Tyne, 'A land of coals – where vegetation above ground is of slight value compared with the vast geological forests fossilized in seams and mains beneath'.[4] In a society in which rural and urban appeared to be becoming increasingly polarized, trade, retail and manufactures had been pulled in to the urban world, leaving rural areas with diminishing populations and increasingly dependent on agriculture as their sole economic activity.[5] Yet urban and industrial growth also had the effect of stimulating interest in all aspects of the countryside.[6] The 1871 Census General Report recognized that 'England is in this age still a great agricultural country, but its cities are extending beyond their ancient borders'.[7] For the Society, the annual show was about taking its message of agricultural improvement to the widest possible audience: the largest centres of population were an obvious draw. But the shows were also highly prized by provincial towns. The sentiments expressed by members of Swansea Town Council in 1851, that 'no doubt could be entertained that great advantages would accrue to the town and district from the visit of so influential a body as the Royal Agricultural Society',[8] typified the feelings of town leaders up and down the country who were prepared to compete tenaciously with rival towns for the right to host one of these events. A climate of inter-urban competition infused towns and cities in the Victorian period. Levels of urban rivalry had been on the rise since the middle of the eighteenth century, as many of the country's older county towns were being overtaken in population size and commercial importance by newer industrial and manufacturing centres.[9] In this atmosphere of shifting urban hierarchies, the country's flagship

[2] K. Hudson, *Patriotism with profit. British agricultural societies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries* (1972), p. xi.

[3] N. Goddard, 'Agricultural Societies', in G. E. Mingay (ed.), *The Victorian countryside* (2 vols, 1981), II, p. 246.

[4] *The Times*, 18 July 1864.

[5] B. A. Holderness, 'Agriculture and industrialization in the Victorian economy', in Mingay (ed.), *Victorian Countryside,* I, pp. 179–99.

[6] G. E. Cherry, 'The urban impact on the countryside', in E. J. T. Collins (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales,* VII, *1850–1914* (2 vols, 2000) (ii), p. 1515.

[7] Census of England and Wales 1871. General Report, IV (1873), p. xxxi.

[8] *The Cambrian*, 20 June 1851.

[9] See, for example, J. Ellis, '"For the honour of the town": comparison, competition and civic identity in eighteenth-century England', *Urban Hist.* 30 (2003), pp. 325–37.

agricultural show, along with annual mass gatherings of other national organizations, became an important marker by which towns could assert their status.

This article explores the phenomenon of the Royal's show from the point of view of the towns that hosted them in the mid-Victorian period. The evidence deployed is drawn from two main sources. The first is the archive of RASE, whose members debated and deliberated on the structure and operation of the shows in their monthly councils and the meetings of their finance and country meetings committees. The second, and arguably more important source for the purposes of the town-based perspective adopted in this study, is the contemporary press, which carried detailed reports of the local planning and running of the shows in their various locations around the country. Many provincial weekly papers sent a correspondent to provide on-location reports during show week. The more specialized agricultural newspapers went even further. The *Agricultural Gazette*, for example, claimed to have 'six gentlemen engaged in the daily trudge … in the endeavour to describe the show to readers, every one of whom is recognised as an authority in the department of his work'.[10] The volume of information generated by these press reports was extensive, especially with the expansion of newspaper titles and circulation from the 1840s,[11] and thanks to recent digitization projects, much of this can now be rigorously scrutinized and searched in a manner not possible for previous generations of researchers.As with all historical evidence, some caution is needed in the use of this material. The town-based newspapers of the period represented the urban settings in which they were produced as communities based on common knowledge and shared identity.[12] There was great potential for partiality as editors and correspondents flaunted their own political prejudices, but also for exaggeration and 'boosterism' as major public events were conveyed as expressions of civic identity.[13] But the level of detail furnished in their regular columns and special supplements makes the newspapers an indispensable fund of material for any serious examination of the subject.

The town-focused perspective adopted here is, naturally, quite different from the way in which scholars of agriculture and rural life have examined the phenomenon of the RASE's show. Some historians of RASE have emphasized the importance of the show as the Society's main tool for promoting and disseminating agricultural improvement.[14] Others have debated its significance compared to other RASE activities. Kenneth Hudson suggested that it occupied 'a comparatively lowly place in the list of objects of the society' and was only one of many means employed by the RASE to spread its message of agricultural improvement.[15] The

[10] *Agricultural Gazette*, 7 July 1879.

[11] J. Raven, 'The promotion and constraints of knowledge: the changing structure of publishing in Victorian Britain', in M. Daunton (ed.), *The organisation of knowledge in Victorian Britain* (2005), pp. 282–3.

[12] P. Joyce, *The rule of freedom: Liberalism and the modern city* (2003), p. 125; R. J. Morris, 'Structure, culture and society in British towns', in M. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge urban history of Britain,* III, *1840–1950* (2001), p. 423.

[13] J. Stobart, 'Building an urban identity. Cultural space and civic boosterism in a new industrial town: Burslem, 1761–1911, *Social Hist.*, 29 (2004), pp. 485–98.

[14] J. A. Scott Watson, *The history of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, 1839–1939* (1939); N. Goddard, *Harvests of change. The Royal Agricultural Society of England, 1838–1988* (1981); N. Goddard, 'The Royal Agricultural Society of England and agricultural progress, 1838–80' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Kent, 1981), ch. 4; N. Goddard, 'Agricultural institutions: societies, associations and the press', in Collins (ed.), *Agrarian History*, VII (i), pp. 650–90.

[15] Hudson, *Patriotism with profit*, p. 59.

adoption of the motto, 'Practice with Science', and the establishment of a journal which published prize essays and many of the scientific lectures delivered at the Society's meetings were also important signals of the Society's scientific intent.[16] Nevertheless the annual show was the event that brought RASE the most publicity and raised awareness of its activities most effectively among the public at large.[17] This was the case not just in Britain. Elsewhere in the Empire, agricultural shows with their displays of cattle, implements and the finest produce symbolized the march of modernity and the triumph of man over nature.[18] In this study, Royal shows are viewed as part of a calendar of high profile events, which towns used as tools of place promotion and urban status enhancement. By the 1850s, the annual Royal Agricultural Society show arguably ranked alongside a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science or a royal visit as an event which had the potential to place a town in the spotlight and give it an elevated sense of importance over its neighbours.[19] This had a number of consequences for the way the shows developed in the second half of the nineteenth century. Host towns, eager to maximize the advantages presented by the influx of visitors and the press attention generated by the shows, shaped the events according to their own commercial motives and status-enhancing agendas. This helped increase attendance and boost income from the events, both developments that were welcomed by RASE, but in other respects the Society was less comfortable. In the view of some members, their message of agricultural improvement risked being diluted by the peripheral activities grafted onto the show. Moreover, the urban rivalries that fuelled competition to host the shows also drove them to become ever larger and more commercialized spectacles, beyond the means of all but the largest urban centres to undertake. For some towns, the RASE show became a less attractive prize as the likely burdens of hosting such an event became more apparent than the possible benefits. The costs incurred by the Society in staging the shows were also driven upwards to a level that some within RASE began to view as unsustainable. In response, in the mid-1870s RASE took a number of decisions designed to counter these problems. It looked for ways to cut the costs associated with staging the shows without reducing their appeal to the general public. It revised its venue selection methods to try to ensure that urban advancement and commercial opportunity did not always have the upper hand over the educational benefit to the farming population. At the same time it took measures to ensure that the incentives to towns to put themselves forward as hosts were not diminished, and thereby underlined its own reliance on the main population centres of urban Britain as partners in the process of agricultural improvement.

[16] Scott Watson, *History*, p. 162.

[17] Goddard, *Harvests of change*, p. 27.

[18] K. Anderson, 'White natures: Sydney's Royal Agricultural Show in post-humanist perspective', *Trans. Institute of British Geographers*, new ser., 28, (2003), pp. 422–41; K. Darian-Smith, 'Histories of agricultural shows and rural festivals in Australia', in C. Gibson and J. Connell (eds), *Festival Places. Revitalising rural Australia* (2011), pp. 25–43.

[19] For an analysis of the effect of British Association meetings on towns see P. Lowe, 'The British Association and the provincial public', in R. MacLeod and P. Collins (eds), *Parliament of Science. The British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1831–1981* (1981), pp. 118–44.

I

By any measure, peripatetic annual agricultural shows were not easy events to stage. The more traditional fixed shows of livestock used by local and some regional agricultural societies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were both less costly and simpler to organize, with a regular site adapted for the purpose. With moving shows, the expense and time involved in identifying and equipping a temporary showground was on a different scale. In 1841 the RASE Council drew up a list of requirements, or 'queries' which had to be satisfied by any town aspiring to stage an annual show. Prime among these was proximity to the centre of a town and the accessibility of that town by rail. The ability of associations like the RASE to gather their members together in one place was increasingly facilitated by the spread of railway communication which reduced journey times and improved communication between urban centres and between town and country.[20] Other requirements included a supply of water, proximity to neighbouring market towns, facilities to cater for and accommodate the attendees and, perhaps most crucially of all, sufficient space for an outdoor showground. This last demand presented aspiring host towns with a significant challenge. In many rapidly growing urban centres, open space was at a premium by the middle of the nineteenth century as population pressure and urban expansion led to the building over of common or waste lands.[21] It was a tall order to find a site sufficiently large and level for use as a showground, which was also in close proximity to the centre of town and the railway station. But such were the ambitions of Victorian towns to host these kinds of events as part of a repertoire of status-enhancing cultural and civic activities, that there was no shortage of prospective urban venues for the RASE to choose from.

The locations of the first four shows were selected by the RASE without a formal contest. Oxford, as the venue for the inaugural show in 1839, was chosen because of its centrality. An invitation by Cambridgeshire farmers led to the choice of Cambridge for the following show and the selection of Liverpool a year later was prompted by the desire to try a larger urban centre.[22] Although the comparative advantages of various locations for 1842 were 'maturely considered' by the Council at its June meeting in 1841, the choice of Bristol was also reached without any apparent contest between rival claimants.[23] All of this changed from 1842 onwards, when the Royal put into operation a system of geographical rotation whereby England and Wales were divided up into nine districts, each of which would take a turn at staging the annual show by providing the host town.[24] The aim was to ensure that the Society achieved wide geographical coverage, but the effect of making known in advance the region which would host the show each year was to encourage competition between different towns in that region. Thus in its May meeting in 1842, RASE found itself considering rival invitations from Leicester, Nottingham and Derby for the 1843 meeting.[25] All three towns sent in plans and replies to the 'queries', which were considered by the RASE council. No town wanted to be judged inferior to its

[20] J. Armstrong, 'Transport and the urban environment', in Daunton (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History*, III, pp. 232–35.

[21] See for example, N. MacMaster, 'The battle for Mousehold Heath, 1857–84: "Popular Politics" and the Victorian public park', *Past and Present* 127 (1990), pp. 117–54.

[22] Goddard, *Harvests of change*, p. 31.

[23] *North Wales Chronicle*, 1 June 1841.

[24] An explanation of this system can be found in Goddard, *Harvests of change*, pp. 31–2.

[25] *Derby Mercury*, 18 May 1842.

near neighbour, but during deliberations council members made direct comparisons between the public rooms, railway facilities and the availability of showground space in each venue, before coming down in favour of Derby on account of its superior railway connections.[26] The precedent was thus set for a competitive and intensely fought annual selection process.

By the mid-1840s the RASE council meeting in early May had become established as the occasion when representations would be heard and decisions made about the venue for the following year's annual show. Moreover, from 1843, when the mayor of Southampton attended in person to read a memorial of invitation to RASE members, the practice of sending a delegation of representatives to make their case in person to the council became the norm for any town with serious aspirations to play host.[27] Representations from three or four delegations were typically heard each year before a decision was made. It was a bruising experience, during which the relative merits of accommodation, railway facilities and indoor and outdoor venues were held up for comparison. A 'statement of remuneration' was also required to assure the Society that there was sufficient financial support from the locality and especially from the municipal authorities, who were expected to co-operate and put some of their resources at its disposal.[28] Competing towns tried to send the most powerful delegation they could muster and to offer the most generous terms possible in order to present the Society with a more enticing package of support than their rivals. On behalf of Lincoln's claim to host the 1854 show, a delegation including 'the Right Worshipful the Mayor and the Town-clerk … the Hon. A. Leslie Melville, and Mr Torr, the well-known agriculturalist of that district' represented, respectively, 'the city, the gentry and the farmers of the district'. Their claims were supported by the Earl of Yarborough as president of the North Lincolnshire Agricultural Society.[29] Their bid was successful and the extent of the Society's Lincoln showground can be seen in Figure 1. In 1860, meanwhile, when the RASE was considering rival bids from the Yorkshire district, council members found themselves facing delegations from York, Doncaster, Harrogate, Hull, Wakefield and Leeds. At its monthly council meeting that year, 'great interest was excited by the numerous and influential body of noblemen and gentlemen attending to advocate the interests of the various places with which they were connected'.[30] The case for Leeds was made by the town's mayor, William Kelsall, the iron master and locomotive builder James Kitson, and Sir Peter Fairbairn, the eminent engineer and proprietor of the town's Wellington Foundry.[31] They were joined by the town's two MPs, George Beecroft and Edward Baines, whose newspaper, the *Leeds Mercury*, as we saw at the beginning of this article, had advocated the benefits of agricultural meetings over a decade earlier. The delegation brought with it promises of suitable accommodation and railway facilities, along with assurances that a £3,000 subscription had already been raised to support a RASE show in the town.[32]

[26] Museum of English Rural Life [MERL], SR RASE, BI – 1, Minutes of Council, 1840–42 (rough copy), 4 May and 11 May 1842.

[27] MERL, RASE SR BI – 2, Minutes of Council 1842–44 (rough copy), 3 May 1843.

[28] For further information about the 'country meeting queries', see Goddard, *Harvests of change*, pp. 32–33.

[29] *Morning Chronicle*, 17 May 1853.

[30] *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 7 May 1860.

[31] G. W. Carpenter, 'Kitson, James (1807–1885)' and G. Cookson, 'Fairbairn, Sir Peter (1799–1861)', both in *ODNB*.

[32] MERL, SR RASE BI – 6 Minutes of Council, 1858–68 (rough copy), 2 May 1860.

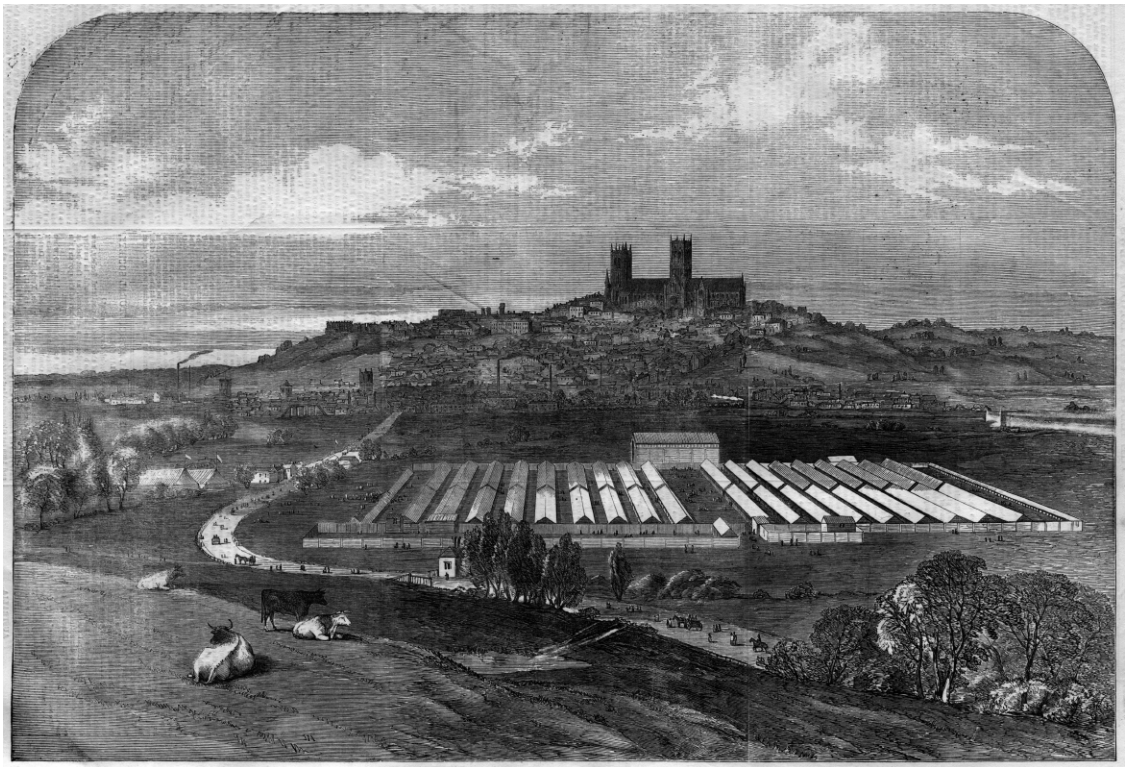


FIGURE 1. The meeting of the Royal Agricultural Society at Lincoln, taken from *The Illustrated London News*, 22 July 1854 (author's collection).

Selection by the Society's council members, however, was just the first part of a long process. Once chosen, the town charged with the task of hosting the annual show faced a protracted and potentially costly period of preparation, during which representatives from the Society would conduct inspection visits to ensure that arrangements were progressing satisfactorily. Reports of the work undertaken in Worcester to prepare the site for the show give a flavour of the task:

> Worcester, indeed, has for two years, struggled with wonderful energy for the honour that has now fallen to her lot. The donation to the Society, raised by subscription, amounts to the munificent sum of £1,500 … Worcester was not so well provided with a vast natural plain for the purposes of such an exhibition as some towns, but the want was supplied by laying two or three fields…into one large enclosure extending half a mile in length … In addition to the show-yard, a large breadth of land was required for the use of implements in action, and altogether one hundred and forty acres of land had been put to into the Society's possession … The ground has been in preparation since March last, and the Society's contractors have occupied it since that time to the 11th of July.[33]

Occasionally, towns had to meet unforeseen demands for ground preparation, which placed an additional cost burden on the local organizing committee. At Leicester in 1868, for example,

[33] *Ipswich Journal*, 23 July 1863.

the town clerk received a request from the Society's secretary for a further 23 acres of parkland to be levelled at a cost of around £20 per acre.[34] Members of the organizing committee at Cardiff in 1872, meanwhile, found themselves reprimanded for the 'unsatisfactory state of the preparation for supply of water to the showground' and had to give an undertaking that the problem would be remedied 'without delay'.[35] In order to satisfy RASE's demands for good access to their showground, towns sometimes had to undertake the erection of bridges or the improvement of roads, such at Bristol in 1878, when the stretch of road from 'Black Boy' to the showground was upgraded.[36]

The total financial cost incurred by towns hosting the Royal show varied from year to year, but the financial statement published by the local organizing committee for the 1864 meeting at Newcastle-upon-Tyne may be taken as representative. It included a payment of £2,000 to the Society from the town, and expenses included £1,807 for the levelling of the showground and £313 in expenses for members of deputations and other officials.[37]

Notwithstanding this level of commitment, there were plenty of towns willing to put themselves forward as hosts of the Society. They did so because the rewards accruing to the host location were potentially great. As a national association, the RASE had greater potential than county or regional agricultural societies to attract visitor numbers, press attention and income generation for local businesses during show week. But it was status enhancement over, or at least on a par with, one's neighbours that aspiring host towns prized most highly. In Leicester, an application to host the 1868 show was made 'to recognize the claims of this truly national institution on their hospitality, and to place the borough on an equal footing with other centres of manufacturing industry where the meetings of the Society had already been held'.[38] Similarly, in Gloucestershire, in March 1871, it was resolved at a meeting of county dignitaries that Cheltenham should offer to host the Royal the following year, to give that town the opportunity of 'enjoying an honour which Gloucester enjoyed eighteen years ago'.[39] For Wolverhampton, meanwhile, the hosting of a RASE show in 1871 can be seen as part of a wider campaign by the Corporation to elevate the standing of the town in its locality. The *Birmingham Daily Post* reported that,

> The forthcoming visit of the Royal Agricultural Society will materially add to the growing renown of the borough. The meeting is prominently set forth by the Royal Agricultural Society as that for the district of North Wales, and the counties of Cheshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire. This fact should not be forgotten by those who desire to regard the show as conferring distinction upon Wolverhampton, for the meeting is not merely for Staffordshire.[40]

For industrial towns with ambitions to usurp the regional capital status of older market and county towns, the ability to emphasize connections with the countryside was an essential part of positioning oneself as a trading centre serving a wider agricultural hinterland. The strategies employed to achieve this consisted not just of overtures to the Royal Agricultural

[34] *Leicester Chronicle*, 4 Jan. 1868.
[35] MERL, SR RASE BIII – 3 Agenda of Country Committees, 1864–76, 5 June 1872.
[36] MERL, SR RASE BIII – 4, Agenda of Country Committees, 1876–87, 3 Apr. 1878.
[37] *Newcastle Courant*, 3 Mar. 1865.
[38] *Leicester Chronicle*, 11 July 1868.
[39] *Bristol Mercury*, 11 Mar. 1871.
[40] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 23 June 1871.

Society, but of more physical developments too. The building of lavish new corn exchanges in places like Sheffield, Leeds, Hull and Dundee in the 1850s and 1860s further demonstrated the effort and money which growing manufacturing centres and ports were willing to expend on this cause. In Hull, where increasing imports of corn necessitated an enlarged building for traders, the new accommodation, opened in 1856, was given a prominent location on the town's High Street and the fine views from its upper storey of 'the Humber and of Holderness … and the Lincolnshire coast' brought into view the area over which ambitious townsmen hoped to extend their sphere of influence.[41] Connections with the countryside and the 'rurality' of even the most populous and industrial towns fed into all sorts of aspects of urban life. Studies of the civic water works schemes of the late Victorian period reveal perhaps most clearly the uses of rural imagery in civic celebrations as municipal leaders sought to emphasize the purity of water piped into the towns direct from remote rural mountains and valleys.[42] The bringing of the countryside into the town during RASE show week was, in a similar way, a statement of close rural–urban connections and a way of demonstrating the extension of town influence well beyond its municipal boundaries.

The sense of rivalry between old county towns and newer centres of industry and commerce with growing regional influence intensified in the second half of the nineteenth century as transport networks developed to serve the new centres of trade and manufacture and administrative and political boundaries were re-drawn to take account of demographic shifts. The RASE unwittingly fanned the flames of these regional rivalries not just through the competitive nature of its shows but through its system of selecting venues. By considering several towns each year in its quest for the ideal show venue, it not only made known the merits of the successful town, but also the deficiencies of places which were not favoured, inevitably resulting in some bruised urban egos. Losing out in the selection process was an embittering experience for some unsuccessful applicant venues. When York was preferred to Leeds as the choice for the 1848 show, the decision prompted much soul searching in the unsuccessful town and a resolve to remedy the deficiencies identified:

> The lack of hotel accommodation had considerable weight with the committee in deciding against Leeds. This is another proof of the want of public spirit in our townsmen, in not having buildings suitable for the entertainment and accommodation of such societies as the above. It is high time buildings commensurate with the importance and growing interests of the town – such as the public buildings in Manchester and other places – should be erected.[43]

Elsewhere, successive failures to obtain selection led to a sense of resignation and withdrawal. Hereford, having lost out in 1852 to Gloucester and in 1862 to Worcester, did not send a deputation to compete for the 1872 show, leaving the Council to reflect that in some regions the favouring of particular towns over others was being seen as a foregone conclusion.[44] When

[41] For a description of the building see William Shepherdson, *The New Hull Guide: a modern picture of Hull and Visitor's handbook to the various objects of interest in Hull and neighbourhood* (1875), p. 107; *Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 11 Jan. 1856.

[42] See, for example, O. G. Roberts, 'Waterworks and commemoration: purity, rurality and civic identity in Britain, 1880–1921', *Continuity and Change* 22 (2009), pp. 305–25.

[43] *Leeds Mercury*, 8 May 1847.

[44] MERL, SR RASE, BI – 7, Minutes of Council, 1869–81 (rough copy), 7 Dec. 1870.

Exeter was overlooked in favour of Plymouth in 1865 it was a snub that still rankled, even ten years later when it was recalled that the decision had been arrived at, 'notwithstanding all that could be urged in favour of the unmistakable and unchallengeable claims of the Cathedral city of the Diocese'.[45]

Given the hopes and aspirations that towns pinned on these events, it was no wonder that, once selected, every opportunity was seized by vigorous local organizing committees to use the show as a backdrop to promote the local town and region. This could be done quite naturally through the special focus on animals native to the region in which the show was being held each year. In this way, the annual change of locality gave 'variety to the Royal Shows by illustrating the diversity of British farming'.[46] Channel Island cattle were shown at the Southampton show in 1844 and Sussex cattle at the Lewes show eight years later.[47] When the show was held in Cardiff in 1872, the first time the Royal had visited Wales, it was an opportunity to showcase Welsh breeds, although one writer anticipated that:

> We do not believe their mountain sheep will ever cut a good figure as show animals … The classes of ponies and cobs will we hope be well filled. The gay, wiry, muscular Welsh pony is known everywhere, and the Cardiganshire cobs are almost a type of their own. Then again the Black cattle of the Pembroke and Anglesea [*sic*] breeds should form a good class.[48]

In the show yard, the reputation of the locality and region was at stake as local breeders went up against competitors from far and wide. At the Plymouth show in 1865, the performance of the Cornish exhibitors was a matter of considerable pride:

> The exhibitors at the Royal, as did those at the Bath and West of England Society, discovered that they had very formidable antagonists in the Cornish competitors. Not only have the second and third prizes for shorthorn bulls been awarded to Cornishmen – Mr E. Bolitho of Penzance and Colonel Coryton of Pentillie – but the first prizes in two classes of Devon bulls have been taken from the most celebrated Devon breeders, by Mr Sobey of Trewolland and by Viscount Falmouth.[49]

But beyond the implement trials and exhibitions of livestock, there were numerous other ways in which host towns could put their own stamp on the proceedings. The historic, cultural and municipal attractions of host venues were also enthusiastically promoted. The *Leicester Chronicle* printed a 'Historical Summary' of the origins of the town in anticipation that visitors to the 1868 show, 'will take an interest in walking about the place and entering its ancient buildings'.[50] The aim was to convey the culture and refinement of the town and its inhabitants to visitors and outsiders and, in the months leading up to show week, the prospect of the arrival of RASE concentrated the minds of town leaders in this way on all manner of local business. Discussions in Leicester six months before the RASE show, when local councillors met to consider designs for a new clock tower in the Haymarket revealed the influence of the forthcoming event. It was noted by one council member that:

[45] *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 14 July 1875.
[46] Scott Watson, *History*, p. 56.
[47] Goddard, 'Royal Agricultural Society of England', p. 350.
[48] Extract from *The Milk Journal*, in *The Cambrian*, 13 Oct. 1871.
[49] *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 28 July 1865.
[50] *Leicester Chronicle*, 11 July 1868.

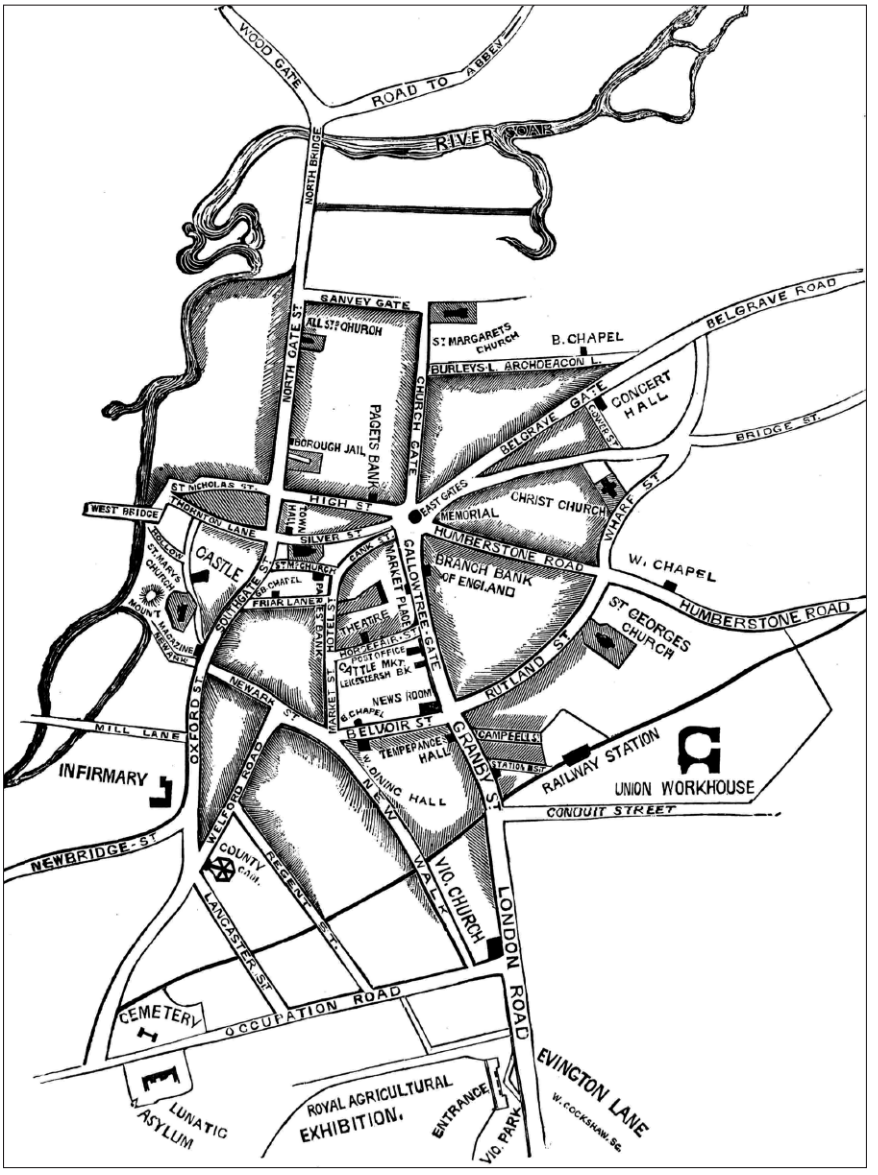


FIGURE 2.
Thoroughfare plan of Leicester produced for the RASE show, 1868, taken from the *Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury*, 18 July 1868, reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

> At the meeting of the Royal Agricultural Society, they would have some of the most cultivated and educated intellects of the day among them; and he thought, in courtesy to them, they ought to erect a monument that should commend itself to their refined and cultivated taste, and be an honour to the town and county'.[51]

During show week, the *Leicester Chronicle* printed a 'thoroughfare plan' of the town showing the location of the exhibition ground in relation to the main streets and the railway station (Figure 2).[52] It was a map designed not just to help show-goers to pin-point the kind of facilities

[51] *Leicester Chronicle*, 4 Jan. 1868.

[52] *Leicester Chronicle*, 18 July 1868.

they might need to access during the week, such as banks, the post office, newsroom and the theatre. It also highlighted the locations of the town's key Victorian institutions including the lunatic asylum, county gaol, workhouse and infirmary. This was a town taking the opportunity presented by the RASE visit to show off its best assets to visitors.

Local authorities went into a kind of festive overdrive when the Royal was in town. The scene at Exeter during the visit of RASE in July 1850 was one such spectacle, described in hyperbolic terms in the *Morning Chronicle*:

> Already the announcements of numberless extraneous attractions are glittering in many-hued placards from every corner and wall … there is as much animation, as much bustle, ten times as many flags and twenty times as many triumphal arches in many one of its gay and French-like streets as was exhibited last year throughout the … city of Norwich.[53]

Such was the display of flags, banners and triumphal arches on show that it stood comparison with 'those periods in ancient history when the people of Greece and Rome honoured with a triumphal entry into the metropolis some citizen, who by noble deeds of arms had successfully indicated the honour of his country'.[54] Many towns decorated their public buildings and streets with festive ornamentation for the occasion. At Chester a 'Decoration Committee' was formed to oversee street adornments for the duration of the show.[55] Their work was admired by a visiting reporter in the days before the event who noted that, there were 'five triumphal arches in course of erection over prominent portions of the leading streets; and the four principal gates themselves are already decorated with emblems and devices, on the top of each the royal standard floating in the breeze'.[56] At Carlisle in 1855, 'floral designs were fitted up at the chief hotels and places of public resort', and 'balls, concerts and other festivities and amusements were announced on all hands'.[57] All of this helped ensure that the festival mood extended well beyond the showground to encompass the streets and businesses of the town itself. Catering, too, could be a measure of the wealth, hospitality and taste of the host venue. At Chelmsford, the Pavilion Dinner served to the hierarchy of the Society and invited guests at the end of the show week was a lavish occasion with a 'liberal bill of fare' served up to diners. The menu consisted of a total of 1,375 dishes containing 1,900 lbs of meat and 750 lbs of poultry. Desserts included 125 fruit tarts, 100 marrow puddings and 75 jellies and blancmanges. The allocation of wine per guest was one pint, and the whole was served up by an army of 125 waiters.[58]

High levels of newspaper coverage meant that these aspects of the shows were subject to press scrutiny and the pressure to put on a good show was intense. Commentators did not hold back in their criticism if arrangements fell short of expectations. One newspaper reporter at the members' dinner during the RASE meeting at Norwich in 1849 wrote scathingly of the 'meagre, coarse and ill-served' meal offered to the 900 assembled noblemen and gentlemen.[59] At Lincoln in 1854, meanwhile, one visitor expressed disappointment at the lack of bunting put out to welcome the Society, concluding that, 'had I been stranger to what was going on,

[53] *Morning Chronicle*, 16 July 1850.
[54] *Mark Lane Express*, 22 July 1850.
[55] *Chester Observer and General Advertiser*, 17 July 1858.
[56] *Liverpool Mercury*, 15 July 1858.
[57] *Derby Mercury*, 25 July 1855.
[58] *Essex Standard*, 18 July 1856.
[59] *Essex Standard*, 27 July 1849.

I should indeed have been slow to believe anything out of the ordinary course was taking place'.[60]

Elsewhere, local events could be dovetailed with the programme of the Show to maximize attendance and draw the widest possible public admiration. Many towns incorporated horticultural exhibitions such as that at Wolverhampton in 1871, where a Midland Counties exhibition of flowers was planned for the last three days of the Show week.[61] These kinds of allied events were also often supplemented by activities designed purely for entertainment. At Chester, a programme of 'amusements' was laid on:

> At the Linen Hall, a large marquee has been erected, and arrangements completed for giving a series of promenade concerts of a superior character, at which the celebrated band of the Coldstream Guards will perform every evening. Mr Archibald Mann, the tenor singer … Mr W. G. Ross of Cremorne Gardens, London, whose comical vocal powers are well known, and Mr Inglis, the Ventriloquist are also engaged.[62]

At Oxford in 1870, meanwhile, entertainments for the week included afternoon and evening performances at 'Bell's Circus', visits to 'Manders's Menagerie' which was conveniently located just opposite the showground, and a balloon ascent by 'the celebrated aeronaut', Mr Youens.[63] By billing these events as 'amusements for the week', and by locating them outside the perimeter of the showground, there was no attempt to pretend that such attractions had anything to do with the agricultural aims of RASE.

Nevertheless, in laying on these peripheral events, host towns caused debate and sometimes attracted criticism from both inside and beyond the agricultural community. At Exeter in 1850, for example, the organization of a 'political and Protectionist dinner' during show week invoked disapproval in the liberal London press. The *Morning Chronicle*'s correspondent noted that, 'Any event which would have the effect of mixing up a purely agricultural society with party politics is, in the opinion of the principal members of the Royal Agricultural Society, much to be deplored'.[64] The editors of the *Mark Lane Express*, in contrast, gave generous coverage to the 'Grand Protectionist Banquet at Exeter' and to the anti-Free Trade rhetoric of the speakers in its special supplement, published to cover the events of the Exeter show.[65] The staging a horse jumping event at the Manchester show for the first time, for which a separate admission fee was charged by the local organizing committee, drew adverse comment. The initiative was roundly condemned by agricultural journalists who considered it a sign that RASE had ceded control of the event to the Manchester organizers who staged, 'exhibitions within exhibitions, and overlaid the show itself with absurdities, only to get more crowns, half-crowns and shillings out of the unfortunate public'.[66] The horse jumping clearly diverted attention away from the implement trials, which attracted the interest of only 'a few enthusiasts', while large crowds were drawn to the jumping for which 'no fee will be more cheerfully paid'.[67]

[60] *Morning Post*, 19 July 1854.
[61] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 12 June 1871.
[62] *Cheshire Observer and General Advertiser*, 17 July 1858.
[63] *Oxford Journal*, 20 July 1870.
[64] *Morning Chronicle*, 16 July 1850.
[65] *Mark Lane Express*, 22 July 1850.
[66] *Mark Lane Express*, 26 July 1869.
[67] *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 16 July 1869; *Daily News*, 21 July 1869.



FIGURE 3. The Royal Agricultural Society's exhibition at Chelmsford, taken from *The Illustrated London News*, 26 July 1856 (author's collection).

Such debates underlined the extent to which the shows had become a platform for competing objectives as they attempted to serve the interests of both rural and urban interest groups by bringing town and countryside together in one location. Inevitably, as the shows were held in populous towns and industrial districts, large numbers of attendees were not farming people at all, but day-trippers or curious locals (Figure 3). *The Times's* correspondent commented on the phenomenon in Newcastle in 1864, of shipbuilders, coalminers, craftsmen and gentry, all 'criticizing the points of prize animals and the performances of machinery'.[68] *Punch*, ever alert to the potential for ridicule, purported to offer advice to its 'non-farming readers' on how to behave if visiting a RASE show. 'On going up to a beast', it advised, 'Feel in a knowing way about the root of the animal's tail, and while doing so, glance along its back, and if that back presents a broad flat surface, look round at the bystanders and exclaim in notes of admiration, "level as a table"'.[69]

Many of the supplementary activities laid on for the purposes of entertaining show-goers from both farming and non-farming backgrounds were also the principal opportunities for local businesses to generate income from the event, and the larger the crowds that could be

[68] *The Times*, 18 July 1864.

[69] *Punch*, 8 Aug. 1863.

attracted, the more revenue they were likely to accrue. It became an important measure of the success of a show if a town could demonstrate that visitor numbers and receipts compared favourably with money generated at previous shows. The *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, for instance, took pride in the success of Plymouth in hosting RASE in 1865 noting that:

> in pecuniary results and in the number of attendants it ranks fourth, compared with all the meetings which the society has hitherto held. This is the more remarkable when we consider that the meetings of the society have frequently been held in the midst of the densest populations in the country'.[70]

For local businesses and institutions, the income-generating potential of a RASE show, with its influx of visitors all in need of accommodation, entertainment and sustenance, was the primary benefit of the event and the main reason why it was eagerly anticipated and enthusiastically welcomed. In Derby in 1843, publicans and brewers flocked to the site of the showground to sell their wares to the show-going crowds. The *Leicester Chronicle* reported somewhat sniffily that, 'the victuallers of Derby and the neighbourhood, licensed and unlicensed, have erected refreshment-booths in great abundance in the immediate vicinity of the Pavilion'.[71] Likewise an attempt was made to use the event to boost the funds of the town and county museum by staging an exhibition. It was noted disapprovingly that, 'The Committee availed themselves of the excitement of the occasion to charge their visitors one shilling instead of sixpence'.[72] Innkeepers and proprietors of lodgings, it was claimed, also saw the occasion of a RASE show as an opportunity to raise their prices. One visiting newspaper reporter, a veteran of several RASE events, arriving in Lincoln ahead of the 1854 show, claimed that, 'it appears to be a settled principle that the Royal Agricultural Society carries with it charges of from 10s. to £1 a night for comparatively ordinary lodging, and the conviction that the farming interest are so burthened with cash that they know not what to do with it'.[73]

II

The host towns, arguably, had always viewed the shows as a commercial and promotional undertaking but there was every incentive on the part of RASE, too, to embrace this approach. By the 1850s there were concerns in the Society about its annual revenue. Members' subscriptions formed an important source of RASE income, but after the enthusiasm of the Society's early years, membership levels had declined from a highpoint of 7,000 in 1843 to a plateau around the low 5,000s for much of the 1850s. Correspondingly, revenue from subscriptions also fell, exacerbated by the fact that many members were in arrears with their payments.[74] Income from subscriptions reached a low of £3,027 in 1859.[75] In these financial circumstances, the potential of the annual show as a vehicle to generate income was becoming more important.

[70] *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 28 July 1865.
[71] *Leicester Chronicle*, 15 July 1843.
[72] Ibid.
[73] *Morning Post*, 19 July 1854.
[74] See for example, MERL, SR RASE BII – 3, Finance Committee Minutes 1854–69, 1 June 1860.
[75] For full details of membership and subscriptions, 1841–77, see *Bristol Mercury*, 9 July 1878.

The County meeting 'receipts' shown in Table 1 include the financial contributions of the host towns, admissions paid for entry to the showground, as well as receipts from catalogue sales and fees paid by exhibitors. The Worcester receipts in 1863, for instance, included £408 from livestock entry fees, £509 from catalogue sales, £5,485 from admissions to the showgrounds and a subvention of £1,800 from the host town.[76]

The greater the appeal of the show to a broad cross-section of the public, the more likely it was that high numbers of fee-paying visitors would attend. The watershed year in this regard was probably 1858 when the annual show was held at Chester. As Table 1 reveals, up to that point, the shows had always generated a loss, but at Chester, for the first time, receipts exceeded expenditure by a considerable margin. There were a number of reasons for the success of the Chester show. The district was closely associated with dairying and, in particular, cheese, which was 'considered the staple commodity'. As such, the show of dairy products and the related 'instruction and practical intelligence' on offer was a novel attraction.[77] Most important of all, the advantageous location of Chester, within easy reach of the 'teeming and busy hives' of Manchester and Liverpool, coupled with favourable timetabling and pricing arrangements put in place by local rail companies during the week, meant that unprecedented numbers flocked to the Show from a wide geographical area.[78] The resulting gate receipts from over 60,000 attendees made a real difference to show revenues; no previous RASE event had attracted more than 40,000 visitors (Table 2). The financial results demonstrated the clear money-spinning potential of the annual shows if a large attendance could be achieved. Once inside the showground, further revenue could be generated by adopting a commercial approach to some of the more practical arrangements. In 1869, for example, the Manchester organizing committee instituted a charge for refreshment providers to ply their wares in the showground. The income derived amounted to £725 which was passed on to a grateful RASE who described the sum as 'quite unprecedented' and rewarded the local organizer, Mr Whitworth, with a gift of 150 guineas.[79]

Once this precedent was set, there was always a temptation to locate the shows in large, populous towns where high attendance figures could be almost guaranteed. At their general meeting in 1870, after a relatively unprofitable show at Oxford, it was noted that, 'when their resources fell short they must try a manufacturing district to get their coffers replenished'.[80] This priority was already evident in RASE's selection of show venues in the 1860s. Of the nine shows held in that decade, four were located in places which ranked among the top tier of most populous urban centres in England and Wales: London, Manchester, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Leeds.[81] Places like Shrewsbury, Carlisle, York and Gloucester, all of whom had hosted the Society in the 1840s and '50s, were finding it harder to compete. The impact on attendance

[76] *Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Herald*, 12 July 1864.

[77] *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 19 July 1858.

[78] *Morning Post*, 24 July 1858; Bell's Weekly Messenger, 19 July 1858.

[79] MERL, SR RASE BIII – 3, Agenda of Country Meetings Committee, 3 Aug. 1869.

[80] *The Standard*, 9 Dec. 1870.

[81] No show was held in 1866 due to an outbreak of cattle plague. In 1871 there were thirteen towns in England and Wales with populations exceeding 100,000. These were London, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Salford, Sheffield, Oldham, Bradford, Portsmouth, Hull, Bristol and Newcastle-upon-Tyne. See *Census of England and Wales, 1871. General Report,* IV (1873), p. xxxi.

TABLE 1. Finances of RASE country meetings, 1841–76 (£)

Year	*Town*	*Expenditure*	*Receipts*	*Surplus*	*Loss*
1841	Liverpool	6,272	4,106		2,166
1842	Bristol	6,008	4,202		1,806
1843	Derby	6,554	3,390		3,164
1844	Southampton	7,071	4,929		2,142
1845	Shrewsbury	6,665	3,670		2,995
1846	Newcastle	6,257	4,119		2,138
1847	Northampton	6,291	4,565		1,636
1848	York	7,657	4,831		2,826
1849	Norwich	6,303	4,345		1,958
1850	Exeter	6,570	4,941		1,629
1851	Windsor	6,902	5,608		1,294
1852	Lewes	6,703	3,485		3,218
1853	Gloucester	7,576	5,493		2,083
1854	Lincoln	7,366	6,364		1,002
1855	Carlisle	6,889	6,029		860
1856	Chelmsford	7,328	5,346		1,982
1857	Salisbury	6,488	6,142		346
1858	Chester	9,131	10,312	1,181	
1859	Warwick	7,468	8,902	1,434	
1860	Canterbury	7,885	5,879		2,006
1861	Leeds	9,071	13,542	4,471	
1862	Battersea	15,794	12,160		3,634
1863	Worcester	11,112	9,833		1,279
1864	Newcastle	11,028	12,370	1,342	
1865	Plymouth	10,701	9,958		743
1866					
1867	Bury St Edmunds	10,439	8,399		2,040
1868	Leicester	10,045	10,899	448	
1869	Manchester	15,497	24,650	9,153	
1870	Oxford	14,396	11,892		2,504
1871	Wolverhampton	15,854	12,697		3,175
1872	Cardiff	13,753	13,150		603
1873	Hull	15,636	15,223		413
1874	Bedford	16,215	12,498		3,717
1875	Taunton	13,850	9,274		4,576
1876	Birmingham	17,363	20,787	3,424	

Note: The 1866 show, which was to have been held in Bury St Edmunds, was deferred to the following year due to the outbreak of cattle plague.
Source: *Newcastle Courant*, 22 July 1864; *York Herald*, 25 July 1868; *Cheshire Observer*, 14 July 1877.

TABLE 2. Exhibits and attendance at RASE country meetings, 1841–76

Year	*Town*	*Number of implements exhibited*	*Number of livestock exhibited*	*Number of persons admitted*
1841	Liverpool	312		
1842	Bristol	455		
1843	Derby	604	617	
1844	Southampton	948		
1845	Shrewsbury	942		
1846	Newcastle	735		
1847	Northampton	1,321		
1848	York	1,508		
1849	Norwich	1,882		
1850	Exeter	1,223	619	
1851	Windsor		988	
1852	Lewes	1,722	655	
1853	Gloucester	1,803	737	36,245
1854	Lincoln	1,897	735	37,635
1855	Carlisle	1,314	808	37,533
1856	Chelmsford	2,702	752	32,982
1857	Salisbury	2,496	1,027	37,342
1858	Chester	3,648	1,026	62,539
1859	Warwick	4,618	1,159	55,577
1860	Canterbury	3,947	891	42,304
1861	Leeds	5,488	1,027	145,738
1862	Battersea	5,064	1,986	124,328
1863	Worcester	5,839	1,219	45,064
1864	Newcastle	4,024	1,099	114,683
1865	Plymouth	4,023	934	88,036
1866				
1867	Bury St Edmunds	4,804	719	61,837
1868	Leicester	6,369	934	91,138
1869	Manchester	7,724	1,315	200,733
1870	Oxford	7,851	1,377	75,749
1871	Wolverhampton	7,650	1,267	108,213
1872	Cardiff	5,843	1,293	87,047
1873	Hull	5,634	1,145	104,722
1874	Bedford	5,931	1,527	71,987
1875	Taunton	4,214	1,096	47,768
1876	Birmingham	6,414	1,499	163,413

Note: 1866 as Table 1.
Source: *Derby Mercury*, 13 July 1881.

figures was dramatic. An unprecedented 145,738 attended the show in Leeds in 1861. In parallel, the quantity of machinery and implement exhibits all increased over time. In Bristol in 1852, fewer than 500 implements were exhibited (see Table 2) although space had been provided for 700.[82] Twenty years later, when the show was held in the metropolis for the first time, at Battersea, there were more than ten times this number of implements on show.[83] The 1876 Birmingham meeting was pronounced 'one of the most successful that the Society had ever held, alike in the number and excellence of the entries of livestock and implements, in the attendance of the public, and in the result to the Society's finances'.[84] In the towns, awareness of the increasing scale of the shows was heightened whenever there was a repeat visit. When RASE returned to Newcastle for its 1864 show, for example, comparisons were drawn with its previous visit to the town 18 years earlier. It was noted that the showground had grown in size from 12 to 45 acres, with twice the number of cattle and sheep and five times the number of implements and machines, everything being arranged in 'interminable rows of shedding'.[85]

But bigger shows did not necessarily generate more income. Not surprisingly, the increasing size and attendance levels at shows had an escalating effect on the costs of staging these events, and the bulk of these costs had to be met by the Society. The host town was responsible for providing a secure and level showground space, making available any indoor venues required for dinners or other meetings, providing catering, the cost of which could be recouped from the ticket price for dinners, and also contributing to RASE's general show fund by providing a sum raised locally from subscriptions, such as the £1,500 provided by the authorities in Lincoln when the show was held there in 1854.[86] The remainder of the expenses, including the fitting out of the show yard, the cost of advertising, the employment of police from the Metropolitan force, animal feed, prizes and judging, were met by the Society and were offset against money raised from admission to the show. But these costs increased incrementally as the scale of the shows grew. As Table 1 reveals, expenditure on the shows topped £16,000 for the first time in 1874. Of this, some £6,000 was spent on the show yard, £2,000 on implement trials and £5,000 on the exhibition, judging and awarding of prizes for stock.[87] This scale of spending would have been acceptable if the monster shows could be guaranteed to turn a profit but, as the figures make clear, this was far from the case. With a few notable exceptions such as the shows at Leeds, Newcastle, Leicester and Manchester, in 1861, 1864, 1868 and 1869 respectively, RASE's country meetings in the 1860s continued to be loss-making. The trend seemed set to continue the following decade. With the Bedford show yielding a deficit of £3,717 in 1874, the Society's finance committee decided to act. They pleaded with the RASE Council to find ways of reducing the 'heavy and increasing expenditure' on country meetings. Among the ideas they proposed were less frequent and more restricted implement trials so that the costs of judging could be reduced. Later they also proposed that a cap of £3,000 should be set on the fund available for prizes, a sum which could be supplemented if required by donations from local

[82] MERL, SR RASE BI – 1, Minutes of Council 1840–42 (rough copy), 24 Feb. 1841.

[83] *Derby Mercury*, 13 July 1881.

[84] *Morning Post*, 8 Dec. 1876.

[85] *The Times*, 20 July 1864.

[86] MERL, SR RASE BII – 3, Finance Committee Minutes, 1854–69, half-yearly accounts ending 31 Dec. 1853.

[87] MERL, SR RASE BII – 4, Finance Committee Minutes, 1870–87, 4 Nov. 1874.

agricultural societies or augmented by contributions from the local organising committee.[88] There was much soul searching among Council members over these issues in the 1870s before they finally took the decision to scale back the implement trials. Some questioned whether the country meetings should really be expected to make a profit and others warned of the potential loss of status for the show if trials were limited. Lord Vernon suggested that without the implement trials there would be little to distinguish a RASE country meeting from 'the level of ordinary stock shows of the country', while Lord Cathcart, doubtless mindful of the commercializing trend of the meetings over recent years, predicted that the show without its implement trials would resemble a 'mere bazaar'.[89]

When looked at in the round, the reduction of the machinery trials combined with the growing commercial influences on the shows and the move towards larger manufacturing towns as venues, seemed to signal a shift in the role of the country meeting away from its original function as a tool to disseminate agricultural improvement among the farming population. The favouritism shown towards larger centres of population in the selection of show venues came at the expense of the Society's more traditional base in the county towns and criticism was levelled at the Society for moving away from its agricultural heartlands. The choice of Manchester over Preston for the 1869 show, for example, prompted indignation from the defeated town on the grounds that 'whilst Preston embraces the best part of Lancashire in an agricultural sense, Manchester has very little of it'.[90] The extent to which shows in industrial locations actually met the requirements of the farming community was occasionally questioned in the agricultural press. The lack of space in the Birmingham showground and the cramped arrangement of the implement sheds was identified by one agricultural correspondent as potentially problematic for any readers 'who may have business among the machinery or may wish to inspect the cattle in comfort'. It advised that they 'had better make their visit before the miners in their thousands are expected to arrive'.[91] But, increasingly, care was taken over the choice of location for the shows to ensure that the promise of financial gain did not always take precedence over educational advantage in selecting a venue. This kind of cautionary note was voiced in council meetings when show venues were deliberated, and especially when smaller market towns went up against larger ports or manufacturing centres. Mr Bowley, commenting on the contest between Cardiff and Cheltenham in 1872 for example, warned fellow council members not to 'get into [the] habit to go about to collect shillings'.[92] On this occasion, his caution was not heeded and the larger venue of Cardiff won out by a sizeable majority.[93] However, other show venues in the 1870s included Bedford and Taunton, where critics of the lucrative metropolitan shows could be assured of a more traditional 'country meeting'. It was perhaps partly in response to suggestions that commercialism and entertainment were gaining the upper hand over the aim of improving agricultural knowledge that the Society stepped up its efforts to further its educational and scientific objectives. In 1865, for example,

[88] MERL, SR RASE BII – 4 Finance Committee Minutes, 1870–87, 4 Nov. 1874; 13 July 1880.

[89] MERL, SR RASE/B/I/7, Minutes of Council, 1869–81 (rough copy), 10 Dec. 1874.

[90] *Preston Guardian*, 9 May 1868.

[91] *Agricultural Gazette*, 17 July 1876.

[92] From the 1840s show week traditionally included one or more designated days when admission to the showground was charged at 1*s*. instead of the usual fee of 2*s*. 6*d*. See, for example, the report on the Southampton show, *Morning Post*, 27 July 1844.

it inaugurated a new scheme of prizes for middle-class education, to assist 'those who depend for their support upon the cultivation of the soil'. The prizes were to be awarded to candidates for Oxford and Cambridge examinations in Mathematics, Mechanics, Chemistry, Zoology and Botany.[94] In 1871 a 'consulting botanist' was appointed so that members had access to expert advice on seed cultivation, pest prevention and other matters.[95]

Attempts were also made to help the towns cope with various pressures associated with hosting the Society. The growing sense that hosting a show was a burdensome undertaking was proving a deterrent to towns to compete for RASE events by the 1870s. The level of escalation of livestock, implements and attendance seen when RASE visited industrial towns such as Manchester in 1869 (see Table 2) took the shows past a tipping point beyond which the burdens of hosting the Society began to outweigh the benefits for some towns. Compared to the 1840s, when ten or fewer acres were needed for the showground, by the 1860s and 1870s towns were required to provide between 40 and 70 acres to accommodate all of the additional implements and stock.[96] When it was the turn of the south-western counties to host the Society's 1875 meeting, the competition between prospective locations was described as 'by no means keen', with the majority of towns in the region 'either unwilling or unable to make the necessary exertion'.[97] It was a warning signal which the RASE hierarchy could not afford to ignore. In October 1876 a Special Country Meeting Districts Committee was convened. It regretted that 'there are important towns at which it would be greatly to the advantage of the Society to hold meetings, which will not enter into a rival competition, whilst there are others which from having before incurred the expense and trouble of competing, and having been unsuccessful, will not again come forward'.[98] The revised plans that were drawn up placed more responsibility on RASE itself for investigating the suitability for potential venues, rather than requiring rival towns to make representations. Members of its council, residing in the districts, would be expected to make enquiries with the relevant town authorities about whether the proposal of a show would be well received. The changes meant that, from 1876, delegations of urban worthies no longer lined up before the RASE council to plead their case, thus relieving interested towns from considerable anxiety and expense, and removing the element of head-to-head contest from the annual selection process. Instead, the May council meeting did little more than confirm the show location for the coming year based on information gathered and recommendations made beforehand.[99]

A further reform implemented by RASE was that the boundaries of the districts which took it in turns to host the Society were revised. The main difference under the new scheme was that the divisions in the southern and western parts of the country were enlarged. The south-western counties, for example no longer formed a district of their own, but were combined with Hampshire, Berkshire, Surrey, Sussex and Kent. The aim of such a reconfiguration was to

[93] MERL, SR RASE BI – 7, Minutes of Council, 1869–81 (rough copy), 3 May 1871.

[94] *Derby Mercury*, 23 Aug. 1865.

[95] *Agricultural Gazette*, 7 July 1879 (review of the history of the Royal Agricultural Society on the occasion of its 41st anniversary).

[96] Goddard, 'Royal Agricultural Society of England ', p. 316.

[97] *Bristol Mercury*, 10 July 1875.

[98] MERL, SR RASE BXIII – 4, Miscellaneous, Special Country Meetings Districts Committee, 1 Oct. 1876.

[99] See for example, MERL, SR RASE BI – 7, Minutes of Council, 1869–81 (rough copy), 2 May 1877.

ensure that there was 'in each district a sufficient number of large towns capable of accommodating the Society'.[100] Under these new arrangements, the scenario that had left Taunton as the only option for the 1875 show would henceforth be avoided. It was also an acknowledgment of the Society's need for the big urban centres, and saw their support for its shows as essential for the future.

IV

The changing dynamic of the RASE show over three decades reveals much about the evolving relationship between rural and urban, agricultural and industrial in Victorian Britain. As the foregoing analysis has shown, growing urban metropolises recognized both the commercial and civic gains to be made from positioning themselves as centres well connected to the surrounding countryside. Likewise, the associational world of English agriculture relied heavily on the major provincial urban centres in the mid-Victorian years. Through the instrument of its flagship annual show, the Society used its host towns as a base from which to disseminate agricultural knowledge to the widest possible audience. Its choice of show venues from the 1840s to the 1870s mirrored the changes in the urban hierarchy in the period, with the emergence of a new stratum of manufacturing and commercial metropolises overshadowing the influence of some of the country's older, county and regional centres. The RASE adapted its regional rotation system of town selection in part to keep up with this changing urban map of Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century, but also to harness the potential of the large towns to deliver big crowds and rich rewards for the Society's coffers.

But the Society's reliance on the towns for the staging of its show was something of a double-edged sword. It was, arguably, the towns' agendas that loomed largest in the show's boom years in the 1860s and '70s, encouraged by the Society's venue-selection system, which tapped into the competitive urban culture of the mid-Victorian period. In the course of the show week, the agricultural improvement agenda of the Society had to sit alongside each town's aims of income generation for local businesses, civic, commercial and cultural place promotion. The ambition of towns to be bigger, bolder and better than their neighbours, which was manifest in such things as the building of lavish town halls and the staging of municipal ceremony,[101] was easily extendable to the hosting of events and meetings of major national associations like the Royal Agricultural Society. Thus RASE shows grew in scale, driven by the ambition of the towns to ever more spectacular feats of event staging. This set the shows on a trajectory of escalation which, for the RASE, was not altogether unwelcome. Bigger shows had the potential to generate greater funds for the Society, albeit subject to increasing costs and regular diversions from its traditional heartlands in the county towns with their large agricultural hinterlands. It is important to note, however, that this was not a one-way, linear journey. Looking beyond the chronological scope of this study into the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the county towns continued to supply show venues for RASE, not least because the largest centres could

[100] Report of monthly meeting of the Royal Agricultural Society in *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 10 Nov. 1876.

[101] See for example, C. Cunningham, *Victorian and Edwardian Town Halls* (1981); S. Gunn, *The public culture of the Victorian middle class. Ritual and authority in the English industrial city, 1840–1914* (2000).

not be visited every year. The editors of the *Preston Herald*, still smarting from their town's defeat by Manchester in the contest for the 1869 show, warned that:

> It would be easy to select a dozen of the largest towns in England for their visits in succession. This policy may succeed for a time, but we think … their round of visits will come to an end by the withdrawal of the support … from those for whom these meetings were originally designed.[102]

Equally, RASE's attempt to defuse the element of competition in its system of selecting show venues in the 1870s by making the bidding process less onerous and risky for participating towns, also proved to be only a temporary fix. Ultimately, the increasing scale and expense of the shows prompted the Society, in 1900, to begin the process of seeking a permanent location for a showground where its show could be held every year.[103]

By undertaking an examination of the RASE shows of the mid-Victorian period which is centred on the host towns, rather than on the Society itself, some new perspectives become apparent. Viewed not just as an agricultural show, but as a key event in the repertoire of civic and cultural life in the provinces, the appeal of the RASE show comes more sharply into focus. The shows were not just vehicles for agricultural improvement and knowledge dissemination, but also for 'cultural capital' and urban advancement. This explains why both the host towns and the visiting Society had such a sense of shared investment in the success of the shows. The more place-centred approach to the shows adopted here reveals how readily RASE meetings could be adapted and shaped to reflect the character and the ambitions of their host town, not just in terms of the cattle breeds and equipment makers who exhibited, but in a much more forthright promotion of the urban setting, the public buildings, the attractions and facilities of the host town. The latter could be regarded as just as much 'on show' as the livestock and implements which filled the exhibition grounds. From this perspective, an urban analysis is not only valid, but essential in understanding the nature and development of the Royal's agricultural shows.

[102] *Preston Herald*, quoted in the *Lancaster Gazette*, 16 May 1868. The Royal show came to Preston in 1885.

[103] Goddard, *Harvests of change*, p. 140.

The spread of cassava (*manioc*) in Igboland, south-east Nigeria: a reappraisal of the evidence*

by Obi Iwuagwu

Abstract

That cassava has over the years become the pre-eminent food crop of the Igbo of south-east Nigeria is not in doubt. What is surprising is how this crop, an introduction to the area, now competes with the yam, which according to popular tradition is indigenous. At the same time, the source of cassava and reasons for its adoption by the Igbo both remain subjects of controversy. This work argues that any objective conclusion on the origin and spread of cassava among the Igbo, must take into consideration the period of its introduction, the people's socio-economic conditions at the time and more importantly, the peculiarities of the crop that made it attractive to the Igbo.

Perhaps no other statement illustrates the importance of cassava as a major food crop among the Igbo more than that expressed in the popular Igbo saying: *Ji akpu gara ogu gara igwe alaghi ala* ('cassava that came to sustain life and ended up becoming the number one crop').[1] Among the 'Wawa' Igbo (Enugu and its environs) cassava is called *mbacha agadamgbo, obiara igbo ogu buru isi ya* ('the crop, which came as a hunger buster but eventually out-fought others'). It is important not only for the Igbo, but several other Nigerian communities too, and it is known by different names in the various ethnic groups. Among the Yoruba of the south-west, it is called *gbaguda* or *ege*. The Hausa of northern Nigeria call it *rogo*, *karaza*, or *doyar kudu*, the Igbo who reside in the south-east refer to it as *akpu*, *abacha* or *jigbo*, the Benin of the south call it *igari,* while the Efik and Urhobo of the Niger Delta refer to it as *iwa unene* and *imidaka*[2] respectively.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has found that cassava ranks as the seventh-largest food staple in the world. Many therefore call it the 'tropical staff of life' given that it is a major source of nourishment in large areas of the tropics. The crop is especially valued for its outstanding ecological adaptation, low labour requirements, ease of cultivation and high productivity. Indeed, cassava's success, particularly in the tropics, could be attributed

* I am particularly grateful to Professor Hoyle for his advice and encouragement and to the anonymous referees for their constructive comments, which helped to sharpen both the arguments and focus of this paper.

[1] Mrs. Rosita Duru (farmer, aged *c.*70, Onuimo), in a discussion with the author, 16 Aug. 2008.

[2] E. Etejere and R. Bhat, 'Traditional preparation and uses of cassava in Nigeria', *Economic Botany* 39 (1985), pp. 157–64.



FIGURE 1. A cassava farm about to be harvested (photograph, author, 2012)

to the fact that it can be grown successfully on poor soils and under conditions of marginal rainfalls.[3]

Nevertheless, although it is the primary source of carbohydrates particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, cassava is also known to contain little protein. In much of the world, where severe malnutrition and even starvation exist, people suffer from both protein and carbohydrate deficiencies. The production of cassava using traditional methods of preparation thus goes far to alleviate the problem. It is equally instructive that in areas where cassava is extensively grown, severe famines seldom occur.[4] Cassava is:

> a perennial shrub, ranging in height from 1–5m, with branching stems, green, pale or dark grey or brown in colour. The leaves are palmate, divided into 3–9 lobes. Flowers are borne in auxiliary racemes near the ends of branches, male and female flowers occurring in the same inflorescence. The fruit is a dry, dehiscent capsule containing 3 seeds. Tubers, usually 5–10 in number, develop radially around the base of the plant by a process of secondary thickening of some of the initially fibrous roots. They are cylindrical or tapering and normally 15–100 cm long and 3–15 cm in diameter. The tubers consist of an outer skin or periderm, which may be white, brown or pink in colour; a thin rind or cortex; and a core or pith rich in starch. The core is most often white but is sometimes yellow or tinged with red.[5]

This description can be supplemented by Figures 1 and 2, both recent photographs, the first

[3] Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), *Agricultural development in Nigeria, 1965–1980* (1965), p. 5.

[4] P. Lancaster *et al.*, 'Traditional cassava-based foods: survey of processing techniques', *Economic Botany* 36 (1982), pp. 12–45.



FIGURE 2. A pile of cassava tubers at the market (photo courtesy IITA image library, 2009).

showing cassava growing as the tall-stemmed plant on each side of the track, and the second showing the the tuber, which has just been being harvested.

Aside from Africa, where cassava seems to be dominant, the crop is also an important staple in several other parts of the world, where it is known by different names. For instance, in Brazil, cassava is called *mandioca* or *macacheria*. It is *manioc* among French-speaking peoples.[6] Jones opines that Americans who encounter the crop in Brazil know it as *mandioca* or *aipim* and many fail to recognize it when it is referred to by students of Spanish America as *yucca*. To anthropologists, it is likely to be most familiar as *manioc,* while in the English-speaking parts of Africa it is usually called *cassava* or sometimes *cassada* (although 50 years ago it was *manioc*). In English-speaking Malaya (Malaysia), Sri Lanka and India, the crop is called *tapioca*.[7]

I

First domesticated in South or Central America, where it has been cultivated for several centuries, cassava has not been known to occur in the wild in Africa. Cobley states that the crop was taken to west Africa by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, but its spread throughout all the tropical lands has been a relatively recent event.[8] Records show that the crop was introduced to Africa by the Portuguese who may have brought it from Brazil to their stations extending along the African coast from El Mina in present Ghana to Mogadishu in Somalia. According to these sources:

> The earliest successful introduction was made in the area around the mouth of the Congo River and it was from here that manioc spread over all of Central Africa. Manioc was probably brought to the Upper Guinea Coast at the same time it was brought to the Congo,

[5] Ibid., p. 13.

[6] B. I. Odoemelam, 'Origin and domestication of cassava', *Cassava Production Training Course* (1975), p. 1.

[7] W. O. Jones, *Manioc in Africa* (1959), p. 3.

[8] L. Cobley, *An introduction to the botany of tropical crops* (1976), p. 116.

> but it became established in native agriculture much more slowly. It was almost certainly introduced to the Portuguese stations in East Africa at a later time than in West.[9]

Coursey and Booth suggest that cassava was first introduced into west Africa via the Gulf of Benin and the Congo River during the second half of the sixteenth century and into east Africa via the Islands of Reunion, Madagascar and Zanzibar towards the end of the eighteenth century. They also attribute the spread of the crop throughout Africa to the Portuguese. What is evident in all accounts is that cassava, by the end of the nineteenth century, was already present in most of the Portuguese forts, trading posts and settlements on the mainland. However, cassava did not become an established staple in Africa until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[10]

It is also believed that the main species, found in Africa, *manihot esculenta,* may have had two centres of diversity in the New World – Brazil and Mexico. On Onwueme's account, Brazil remains the world's largest producer of cassava, producing more than double the amount from any other country. Indonesia, Zaire, Nigeria, Thailand, India, Columbia, Uganda and Angola, follow in that order. According to him, each of these countries has a smaller acreage devoted to cassava and a larger yield per hectare than does Brazil.[11]

It is Murdock's view that all the cultivated plants of New World origins found in Africa have arrived during the course of the last four and a half centuries.[12] According to him, the introduction of the Atlantic slave trade led to great exchanges between the areas involved, since the ships engaged in the human commerce were naturally provisioned on either side of the Atlantic with locally available goods and foods. The stores remaining were traded or even purposely planted on the opposite shore. The similarity in the environmental conditions of tropical Africa and tropical America made it all the more possible for the products from each continent to be readily established on the other. Thus, native African plants are today common in Brazil and the West Indies while American plants gained early footholds on the coasts of Africa.[13] Plants like tobacco, banana, pineapple, Irish potato, coconuts, cashew, maize, coffee, rubber and, most importantly, manioc are among the various crops said to have been introduced to Africa from Brazil and the Americas through the aid of Brazilians. So much so that Orlando Ribeiro, writing on the relationship between Brazil and Africa, noted that this relationship was essentially complementary:

> for it is true that Africa helped to build Brazil or rather to build America from the southern states of the USA to the River Plate, by means of the black slaves she provided; it is also true that the products introduced from America, particularly maize and manioc, alleviated the traditional hunger of the African continent.[14]

Having said that, it is also doubtful that Africans could possibly have been dying of hunger

[9] Jones, *Manioc*, p. 60.

[10] D. G. Coursey and R. H. Booth, 'Root and tuber crops' in C. L. Leakey and J. B. Wills (eds), *Food crops of the lowland tropics* (1977), p. 77.

[11] I. C. Onwueme, *The tropical tuber crops: yams, cassava, sweet potato, cocoyam* (1978), p. 155.

[12] G. P. Murdock, *Africa: its people and their culture history* (1959), p. 234.

[13] Ibid., p. 234.

[14] J. H. Rodrigues, 'The influence of Africa on Brazil and of Brazil on Africa', *J. African History* 13 (1962), pp. 49–67.

prior to the introductions from Brazil, since available records indicate that the continent was not only rich in root crops like yam and cocoyam but also took the pumpkin, ginger, banana (early chroniclers in Brazil called it *placoba*) and cows to Brazil. Be that as it may, it is obvious that the slave trade between the Brazilian and African coasts generated a process of intercommunication and transculturation between the various African and Luso-Brazilian races.[15]

II

The diffusion of cassava into west Africa was slow and took place mainly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Carter and others[16] suggest that this was principally due to the human geography and the political organization of the west African kingdoms. According to them, the humid coastal belt was essentially uninhabited and formed a peripheral zone around capitals further inland. With minimal contacts between the coast and the hinterland, the acceptance of any new crop first introduced at the coast by the hinterland population had to take some time. Jones disagrees. He argues that the spread of cassava in Africa was inhibited by neither geography nor the level of African farming skills. According to him, when its adoption was postponed, the reasons were to be sought elsewhere, in the difficulties attendant on reducing its toxicity, in the relations between the native people and the Europeans, in the hostility between the ethnic groups, or in the character of competing crops.[17]

Johnston, while admitting that the spread of manioc appears to have been influenced significantly by the spread of knowledge of its processing techniques, also holds that, by 1700, the crop had become important in a few areas in Africa, including the islands of São Tomé, Príncipe, Fernando Pó and at Owerri.[18] Several other scholars confirm that it was the arrival of freed slaves from Brazil in west Africa from the nineteenth century, who brought with them many practices learnt in the New World, including knowledge of the preparation of cassava, products that led to the spread of cassava in west Africa.[19] Morgan and Pugh hold that cassava did not become popular in west Africa until its reintroduction by former slaves from Brazil, who also imported the culinary techniques necessary for its preparation as a foodstuff. Thus, cassava spread as the knowledge of removing its prussic acid content and making cassava meal spread.[20] In other words, it was knowledge of proper methods of cassava processing which facilitated the process of its adoption in west Africa.

In western Nigeria, for instance, it was the arrival of returnee slaves from Brazil, the West Indies and Sierra Leone from the 1850s onwards which was the major catalyst for the spread of cassava in the area. Many of them were said to have settled in large numbers among the local people in Lagos, Badagry, Abeokuta and Ijebu, to whom they imparted their knowledge. Likewise, in eastern Nigeria, knowledge of cassava cultivation and processing was first

[15] Ibid., p. 50.

[16] S. E. Carter, *Introduction and diffusion of cassava in Africa* (IITA Research Guide, 49, 1993), p. 15.

[17] Jones, *Manioc*, p. 37.

[18] B. F. Johnson, *The staple food economies of western tropical Africa* (1958), p. 179.

[19] FAO, *Agricultural development in Nigeria*, p. 12.

[20] W. B. Morgan and J. C. Pugh, *West Africa* (1969), p. 87.

introduced to the towns along the coast, such as Yenagoa and Calabar, where consumption of the products was initially well established.[21]

Cassava may have been introduced into northern Nigeria through central Africa:

> Cassava was known in Northern Nigeria in 1850. In 1825, it had not been recorded by early European travelers, suggesting the entrance of cassava to about 1830–1840. It may well be that cassava reached northern Nigeria via central Africa, through the migrations of the Fulani, rather than from coastal west Africa. In any case, cassava was unimportant north of the Niger–Benue confluence until after World War I.[22]

Based on the foregoing, all we can say is that the history of cassava in Africa dates back to the seventeenth century. These were the years of Portuguese exploration, which facilitated the trade in slaves. Such contacts eventually led to exchange of culture, including borrowing of crops on both sides. Hence, towards the end of the nineteenth century and especially by the first decade of the twentieth, cassava was already found in several parts of Africa including Nigeria. It is now left for us to show how the crop came into Igboland, when and from where, the initial challenges it faced, and why the people finally adopted it.

III

The evidence indicates the prominent role played by migrants, especially towards the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in the introduction and diffusion of cassava in Igboland (Map 1). Going by the records cited above, it is likely that some parts of Igboland may have been cultivating cassava since the seventeenth century especially after its introduction at Owerri.[23] In fact, once it was introduced into the coastal areas of Yenagoa, Warri and Calabar, the crop gradually found its way into the Igbo hinterland, via the activities of long-distance traders, especially through the coastal regions and the Igala territories. In this process, Aro traders, who were particularly prominent in the business of long-distance trading at the time, played a dominant role. This may have happened at different periods in Igboland, beginning in the early twentieth century, through the First World War, and up to the 1960s.

A source in Ohafia interviewed in the early 1980s categorically stated that cassava was first introduced into the area of Akanu Ohafia about three years before the First World War by one Isong of Calabar who was then Headmaster of Akanu Primary School.[24] However, many more people in the area suggest that it was the Aro traders who, in the course of their long-distance trading, brought cassava to Ohafia. Once introduced, it was also through the efforts of these traders that many learnt how to prepare it as food. Among the Ngwa (southern Igboland), cassava was probably introduced by the Kalabari traders in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It spread rapidly with the construction of the eastern railway, which passed through the area in 1913.[25] In the same vein, Chuku identifies the Igala territory as another source of

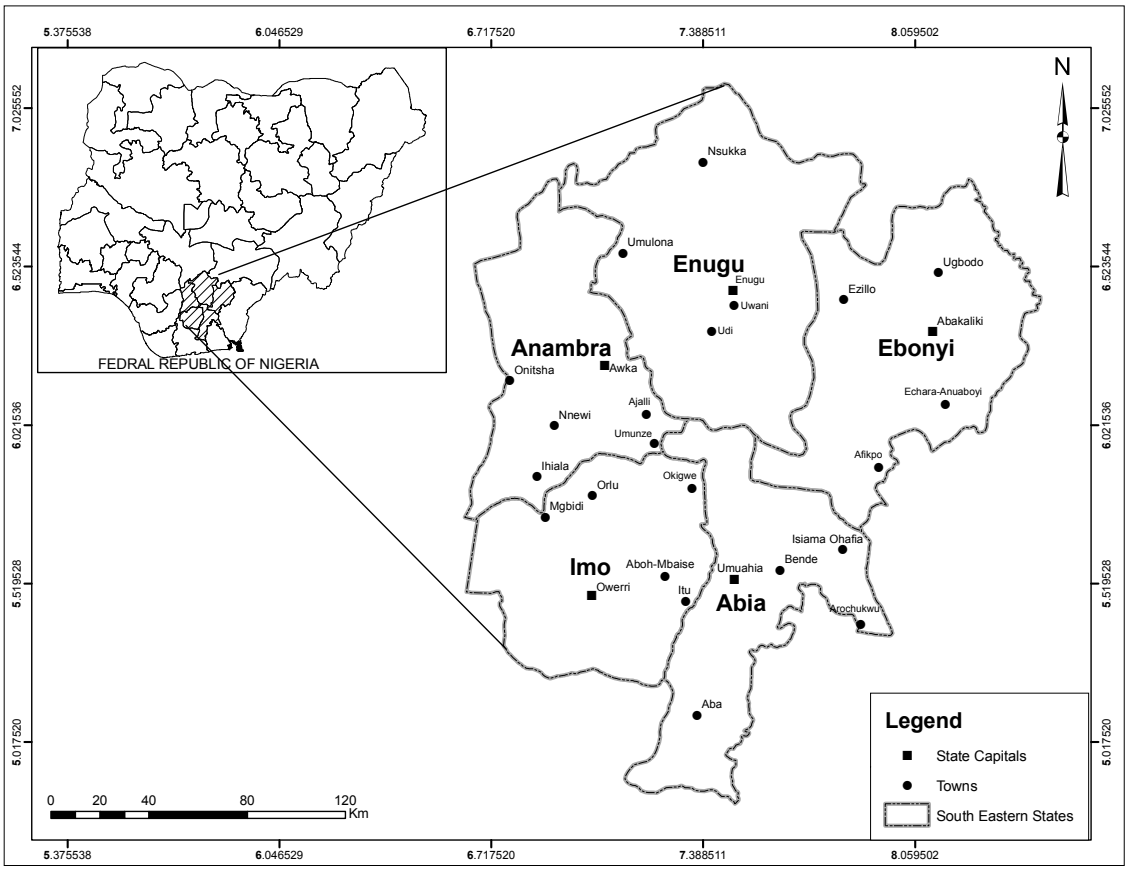
[21] S. A. Agboola, *An agricultural atlas of Nigeria* (1979), p. 60.

[22] Carter, *Cassava*, p. 18.

[23] Ibid., p. 16.

[24] P. Amogu, 'The penetration and influence of cassava in Ohafia economy to 1960' (unpubl. BA Long Essay, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1982), p. 15.

[25] G. I. Chuku, 'The changing role of women in Igbo economy, 1929 to 1985' (unpubl. PhD thesis, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1995), p. 77.



MAP 1. Map of Nigeria showing the south-east (Igboland) where cassava production is dominant

the introduction of cassava into parts of Igboland. For instance, it was said that the crop came into Aguleri/Otuocha in the Anambra flood plains from there. The first species of cassava that came into the area were *akpuji* (cassava that looks like yam) and *Ogbanku*, which was peeled and put in the sun to dry, pounded and filtered to produce cassava flour. Oral sources claim that the women of the area started practising this method of cassava processing from the beginning of the twentieth century.[26]

Okoroji Ine, interviewed about 1980, recalled that he was already ten years old when cassava was introduced into Uturu Okigwe mainly through the Aro traders. This was before the women's demonstration at Abangwa (the Aba women's riots which took place in 1928 or 1929).[27] Similarly, the initial species of cassava introduced into Ohuhu Umuahia, was called *acham*. Many say it was quite harmful to both human beings and domestic animals. The crop had entered the area through long-distance traders who brought specimen stems to the market at Abagwu in Uzuakoli. (Abagwu market was notorious in the late nineteenth century

[26] Ibid., p. 76.

[27] A. E. Udueze, 'The economy of Uturu in the nineteenth century' (unpubl. BA Long Essay, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1982), p. 49.

as a slave market.) What is likely is that the middlemen who operated between the coast and the interior brought cassava to this market from the European explorers and traders of the nineteenth century.[28] Once adopted in Ohuhu, the knowledge of cassava quickly spread to the neighbouring communities in Umuahia including Ibeku, especially once they learnt how to ferment it to get rid of the prussic acid content. Aro traders also brought cassava to Akaeze in Ohaozara, and most of Afikpo.[29] According to Mr Raphael Oko-Aja, interviewed in 2008, cassava came from Panya (Fernando Pó) through the Calabar and the Ibibio areas mainly through Aro traders and then to Afikpo. He claimed that the crop originally came from Potokiri (Portugal) before it found its way into west Africa.[30]

Whilst there is greater consensus on the issue of source and routes of entry of cassava into Igboland, the issue of the timing remains controversial. It is evident that the crop had made serious inroads into Igboland at different times between the beginning of the twentieth century and the end of the Second World War. In fact, Onigbo Ibeji (b. *c.*1916) admitted that he was older than the cassava crop in Umudike Umuahia. According to him, cassava was brought to his village by Dee Onuoha, who had taken it from Ubani (Bonny) in about 1910. The crop, which the people called *jigbo*, had to overcome resistance, before it was finally adopted.[31] Another informant testified that he was already married by 1915 when the white man came to Umunze in Idemili. At that time cassava was unknown in the area. He said the crop was introduced in the early 1900s as a supplement to the yam.[32] It is also said that cassava may have been introduced to Isuikwuato Okigwe via Ugwueke and Ezeukwu in Bende. But, it began to make an impact only from 1946, when soldiers returned to the area from the Second World War. It was principally the hunger in the area during the period that forced people to explore alternatives to the yam as a source of food.[33]

However, an important contribution to the argument over the period during which cassava was introduced into Igboland is that by Ohadike. According to him, the crop made its entry towards the end of the second decade of the twentieth century. He insists that the shift from yam to cassava was a direct consequence of British imperial presence on the lower Niger as marked by the punitive expeditions of the first fifteen years of the twentieth century, the First World War and more importantly, the influenza pandemic of 1918–19. The major effect of these developments, he argued, was the disruption of agricultural activities. Many people were displaced; while farmland and several crops suffered neglect.[34] The result was hunger, which led to a search for viable alternatives.

Archival records also support Ohadike's thesis that the influenza pandemic of 1918–19 seriously affected the socio-economic life of the Igbo. For instance, in the Awka Division

[28] S. Okpara, 'Agriculture in Ohuhu during the colonial era, 1900–1960' (unpubl. BA Long Essay, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1983), p. 19.

[29] J. C. Chukwu, 'Economic activities in Ohaozara area of Imo State up to 1970' (unpubl. MA thesis, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1987), p. 31.

[30] Mr Raphael Oko-aja (farmer, aged *c.*58, Amankwo Afikpo) in discussion with the author, 11 Sept. 2008.

[31] Mazi Onigbo Ibeji (farmer, aged *c.*92, Umudike Umuahia), in discussion with the author, 24 Aug. 2008.

[32] Mr Ebenezer Iloka (farmer, aged *c.*102, Amuda Umunze), in discussion with the author, 9 Sept. 2008.

[33] B. E. Ogboo, 'Agriculture in Isuikwuato, 1900–1980' (unpubl. BA Long Essay, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1982), p. 70.

[34] D. C. Ohadike, 'The influenza pandemic of 1918–19 and the spread of cassava cultivation on the Lower Niger: a study in historical linkages', *J. African History*, 22 (1981), pp. 379–91.

of Onitsha Province alone, about 10,365 people were said to have died from the influenza in 1918 and 1919,[35] an increase of more than 70 per cent over the normal death rate. Its impact is appropriately captured in a memorandum by the District Officer, Awka Division to the Resident, Onitsha Province at the time:

> The toll has been a heavy one. As far as I can gather, the deaths have occurred chiefly amongst the younger men and women … also, women in pregnant condition. The elderly people in most cases seem to have recovered. The epidemic has had a very unsettling effect on the native generally, simply because, it was something new that he could not understand. The rapidity with which the deaths occurred (practically all in the month of November) made him think they were all going to be wiped out.[36]

Ohadike's argument therefore, is that the cassava crop made its debut in the Igbo territory towards the end of the second decade of the twentieth century, following the influenza pandemic of 1918–19, which ravaged the vital working population of the area at the time, and which made cassava an attractive alternative to the yam. More so, as the yam crop, which demanded considerable manual work was adversely affected by the consequent withdrawal of labour from the farms. In any case, although the issue of why cassava was accepted in Igboland will be revisited later, it is evident, as Ohadike concedes, that even before 1920 cassava was already present in the area, suggesting that factors other than the influenza pandemic may have contributed to its acceptance by the Igbo.

Available evidence from Abakiliki suggests that cassava did not become a major staple until the end of the Second World War. An informant even insisted that cassava cultivation was not popular in Ikwo until the end of the Nigerian Civil War; even then, it was planted in areas usually considered unsuitable for the yam.[37] Mr Ikechukwu Ochere insisted that he was born about the end of the Second World War, before his people knew cassava. The crop, according to him, was constantly being brought from Afikpo. But his townsmen rejected it initially because of its odour.[38] Also in nearby Ezzeagu, it was said that cassava first featured in the food basket of the people during the colonial period. However, it was hardly ever used for ceremonial occasions since it was considered strictly as food for the less privileged. These claims that cassava was not immediately popular in the Abakiliki area are supported by an Agricultural Officer, who said that the crop only became widely accepted in the area from the late 1970s. Before then, the crop was only being planted by non-indigenes.[39]

Most informants, however, agree that the crop was popularized in the area by the officials of the Norwegian Church Agricultural Project (NORCAP), who arrived Ikwo in 1962. They introduced improved methods of agriculture, new species of cassava and rice, as well as fertilizer on palm plantations. The evidence from Abakiliki also shows that cassava may have arrived earlier to some parts of Igboland than others. This is understandable considering that

[35] National Archives Enugu, Nigeria (hereafter NAE), AW B5, Influenza Epidemic, AWDIST 2/1/38.

[36] NAE, AW B5, 'D.O. Awka to Resident Onitsha Province, 7 Jan. 1919, Influenza Epidemic', AWDIST 2/1/38.

[37] Mr Ikechukwu Ochere (farmer, aged 65, Ikwo Abakiliki), in discussion with the author, 5 Sept. 2008.

[38] Mr Pius Nwuguru (farmer, aged *c.*68, Ikwo Abakiliki), in discussion with the author, 5 Sept. 2008.

[39] Mr M. O. Adumike (Extension Officer, Enugu State Agricultural Development Project, aged 65), in a discussion with the author, 7 Sept. 2008.

Abakiliki ranks as the foremost area of yam production in Igboland. In an economy such as this, it would be expected that there would be manifest resistance to the introduction of a new crop. Similar experiences were also recorded in places like Ohaji and indeed other major yam producing areas of Igboland.

Yet another issue in the introduction and diffusion of cassava among the Igbo is the resistance that the crop faced before it was accepted as an important food crop. To say that there were complaints, difficulties and bitter controversies over the adoption of the crop would be to state the obvious. The Igbo initially viewed cassava with suspicion. Even the people who first agreed to experiment with the crop did so with caution. Considering that cassava was being introduced into an area where the yam culture had for ages reigned supreme, one can appreciate why many shied away from it. So serious was the problem that even today some informants are unwilling to comment when asked to compare the importance of yam and cassava in their agricultural economy. They fear that this will amount to sacrilege against the yam god, *Ahiajoku*.

Furthermore, devising a proper method for the preparation of the new crop was also a major challenge, and the failure to do so resulted in an initial loss of lives for both man and animals. And this obviously scared more people away from the new crop. In some areas, the many deaths even led to outright banning of cassava for periods. At this early period, the proper method of fermenting the cassava tuber (Figure 3), as well as the technique of *gari* production, was still unknown.[40] Indeed, cassava can cause acute cyanide poisoning if the roots are eaten raw or without being properly processed. It is equally a known fact that long-term ingestion of low levels of cyanide from cassava is associated with goitre, cretinism, tropical ataxic neuropathy and tropical diabetes.[41]

It is possible that the initial species of cassava introduced into Igboland may have had a high percentage of hydrocyanic acid, which is harmful to both man and animals, as a result of which many died. The testimony of Mrs Oyidiya Uka of Ohafia gathered in the early 1980s illustrates this possibility. She had gone to Nne Nkwo's house to collect fire to cook on a particular day (in about 1920, when cassava was still relatively new to this community). There, she found that everybody in the house was vomiting to the point of unconsciousness:

> I therefore raised alarm which attracted other neighbours. Before the first person arrived, all of them had died except Udonsi, their last son. We took him to my house, where he recovered the following morning. People then gathered around him and asked him: 'What did you eat?' 'We ate nothing but the cassava, which we took in the afternoon', he answered.[42]

There were similar incidents throughout the whole of Ohafia about this time (1918–21), resulting in severe loss of life including those of domestic animals (especially sheep, goats and pigs) that were fed with the cassava meal or its chaff, so much so that men of prestige and high social status subsequently refused to experiment with the new crop, regarding it as an inferior food beneath the dignity of man. A few even abandoned the crop completely. An indication

[40] *Gari* is processed from raw cassava and eaten either raw or with soup. It is especially popular among urban communities.

[41] J. H. Cock, 'Cassava: a basic energy source in the tropics', *Science*, 218, 19 (1982), pp. 755–62.

[42] Amogu, 'Influence of cassava in Ohafia' p. 18.



FIGURE 3. Cassava tuber being sifted into *fufu* after undergoing fermentation (photograph, author, 2012)

of its inferior status was that it was now left in the hands of women as the main propagators or cultivators.[43] Dimgba Iko, one of the first to adopt the cassava cultivation in Ohafia, had a particularly bitter experience around this time. The elders of his village accused him of having brought poison to his people. Amidst the heavy sanctions and restrictions imposed on him, he was forced by the village elders to swear before the various shrines in the villages of Ohafia to prove his innocence.[44] So great was the fear that even the colonial administration in the area proposed to phase out the inadequate processing technique of the crop and subsequently sent sanitary inspectors to the villages to teach the people better methods of cassava processing.

In Owerri District, too, there were widespread reports, particularly in 1939, of food poisoning resulting from the consumption of cassava. A medical officer noted that the cases were common between April and August, by which time, he observed, more people ate mostly cassava, as yams were just being planted. He identified the people's inadequate method of processing as a likely reason for its toxicity. According to him, the people did not know that cassava contained some form of poison:

[43] Ibid., p. 19.

[44] N. C. Kalu, 'Cassava revolution in Ohafia up to 1990: a historical analysis of economic change' (unpubl. BA Long Essay, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1991), p. 14.

> The general belief had been that some enemy in the neighbourhood managed to drop poison into their food. Great enmity (poison combat) existed between the families of those suspected to have taken part in this diabolical act and of course the families of the diseased ones were always ready to retaliate. But a close study of the frequency of the occurrence of the cases and the nature of their history and symptom tended to dismiss the idea that the administration of any poison was done by someone.[45]

It was even reported that those sent to hospital early enough recovered, while others died after three or four days. From the records, five of the eleven persons admitted to the hospital for cassava poisoning in the District in 1939 died.[46]

In spite of these problems, people still adopted the crop, albeit gradually and cautiously. Owing essentially to the acute food shortages occasioned by the First World War and the influenza pandemic, highlighted earlier, a gradual reappraisal of the viability of the crop seems to have taken place among the Igbo. Moreover, the Great Depression of the late 1920s and 1930s made the production of more food expedient. For both reasons, cassava was to benefit tremendously. Hopkins has observed, that, where new plants and seeds were adopted, it was not because they caught the fancy of a primitive people, but because they were seen as useful additions to the existing range of foods, being worth more than the extra cost of producing them or, alternatively, because they were regarded as good substitutes, yielding a higher return for the same input than the crops they displaced.[47] This was obviously the case with the adoption of cassava in Igboland.

Against the backdrop of Ohadike's thesis on the introduction and diffusion of cassava among the Igbo, which emphasized the influenza pandemic of 1918–19 as the primary factor, several scholars have identified the obvious economic advantage of cassava over and above the yam as the primary reason for its domestication. They argue that once the people realized that the labour requirements of cassava were merely half that of yam, they readily embraced it. Also, the crop yielded more, as the entire crop (tuber, stem and leaves) could be put to use. Equally, they found out that cassava was less choosy in terms of soil. In fact, it grew remarkably well on poor soils. Many believe that cassava was quickly adopted by the Igbo because of its adaptability to traditional farming and food systems; relative ease of cultivation and processing; year-round availability as insurance against crop failure; low input of resource requirements; and its relatively high yield of food energy (calories) per calorie of labour input.[48] In view of these obvious advantages and the fact that the depleted male population could conveniently leave cassava to women and children, while they concentrated on yam production and house roofing,[49] it was easy for the population to embrace the new crop.

These early consumers of cassava were probably eating it as *fufu* (cassava food). Here, once the cassava tuber had been harvested, a process of fermentation usually took place essentially to prepare it for cooking. The tuber was washed to remove sand and soaked in water for three days. On the fourth day, the fermented tuber was sifted to remove its veins. In more recent

[45] NAE 41, IV, 'Annual Report 1939', OWDIST 10/1/4.
[46] Ibid.
[47] A. G. Hopkins, *An economic history of West Africa* (1973), p. 31.
[48] S. K. Hahn, 'Cassava and African food crisis', in S. K. Hahn *et al* (eds), *Tropical root crops: root crops and the Africa food crisis* (1989), p. 24.
[49] Ohadike, 'Influenza pandemic', p. 379.

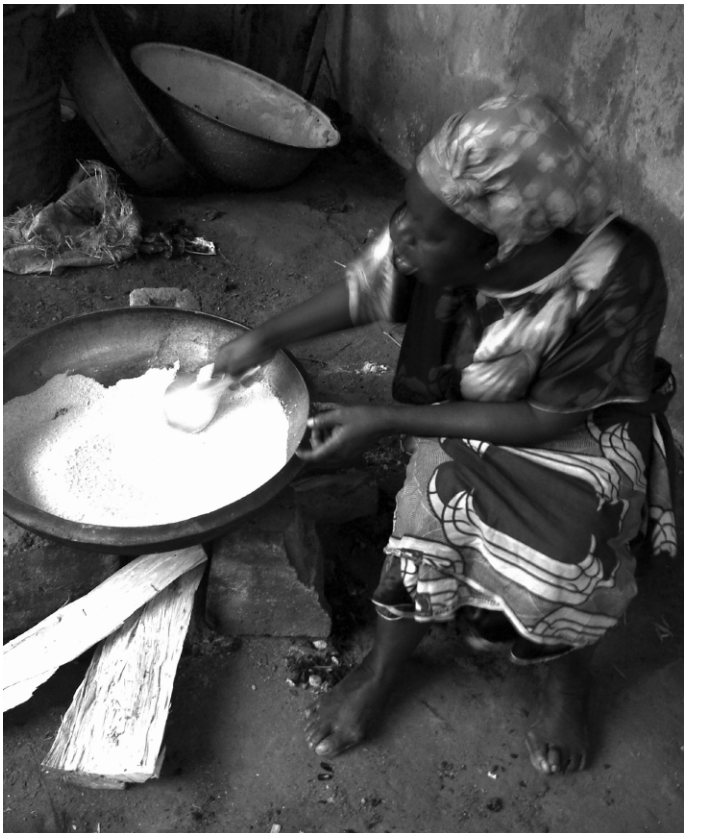


FIGURE 4. Frying cassava paste to produce *gari* (photograph, author, 2012)

times, some people removed the outer scales of the tuber before soaking in water, just to ensure that the end product was completely white. What was produced after the sifting was introduced into boiling water and allowed to cook for 20 minutes. Subsequently, it was removed and pounded in a mortar. A second round of cooking usually took place for another 15 to 20 minutes, even as it was pounded again. This was now the *fufu*, which was then used to scoop up any local soup. It is likely that the initial deaths resulting from cassava consumption may have occurred from lack of proper preparation, especially from either not cooking it well or from cooking longer than necessary. These processes are not required in *gari* processing, hence the argument that the introduction of *gari* processing revolutionized the spread of cassava among the Igbo (Figures 3 and 4).

A new phase in the diffusion of cassava among the Igbo opened with the introduction of new methods for its processing in the 1920s. For instance, once a more efficient technique of processing was introduced in parts of Ohafia, by a woman (Orie Kalu) who had copied it while staying in Bonny with her husband, many people adopted the crop.[50] But, it could be argued that it was the introduction of *gari* processing machines that revolutionized cassava cultivation in Igboland. This was particularly the case in Amiyi-Obilohia in Isuikwuato Okigwe, where the people initially prepared cassava by mixing it with cocoyam or unripe banana. By this time,

[50] Amogu, 'Influence of cassava in Ohafia', p. 17.

fufu was prepared in a very rough way. Later, the people learnt how to sift fermented cassava as well as *gari* making. *Gari* making was not very popular until machines were introduced into the villages of Isuikwuato.[51] Also, whereas knowledge of *gari* making came about 1910 to Aguleri/Otuocha in the Anambra flood plains from Benin,[52] it was not until about 1928, that the technique was adopted in Orlu.[53]

The initial *gari* processing machines were laborious and operated by hand. Indeed they were used mainly to grind cassava tubers, which was the first stage in the process of *gari* production. Recent developments however, have seen the introduction of electric machines (Figure 5). The point still remains that the introduction of these machines made the production process much easier, providing an alternative to the local fermentation process that occasionally led to loss of life through the consumption of *fufu*, but more importantly enhanced the already growing demand for *gari* especially in the new towns. Arguably, the early recognition of cassava, especially *gari*, as the food of the urban masses and as a profitable crop, removed any further cultural barriers to its acceptance.

> To prepare *gari*, the cassava roots are peeled with a cutlass and washed in several changes of clean water to remove the earth particles. They are then coarsely grated with the help of a locally made tin grater. The grated cassava is collected in cotton or raffia sacks and pressed by means of heavy stones or logs. Sometimes the necks of the sacks are tied around strong sticks in such a way that by twisting the sticks, the sacks are gradually tightened. Alternatively, the sacks are sandwiched between 4 wooden planks that are strongly tied together with ropes. These sacks are left for 3–4 days during which the starch solution, if required for edible starch, is squeezed out and collected in a container. The ropes are tightened frequently resulting in the extraction of the maximum amount of starch solution. The grated cassava becomes fermented and develops a sour taste. The moist grated cassava is then taken out of the sacks and sieved to remove the fibres by means of a sieve made of bamboo. The sieved, grated cassava is now heated with constant stirring in wide, shallow, nonsticky metal pans till it becomes light or crisp *gari*. The *gari* is thoroughly sundried before storing and marketing.[54]

Gari is consumed in various forms such as cooked *gari* or *eba*. Here, the dried *gari* is added to boiling water to cook and soften it. It now assumes a partially sticky and solid mass, which is taken with fish, meat, vegetable soup or stew. There is also the *gari* gruel, in which the dried *gari* is soaked directly in cold water to make gruel to which milk and sugar or table salt is added to taste.[55] It is evident that the processing of cassava into *gari* particularly made cassava production popular not only among the Igbo but among other Nigerian communities too.

Similarly, the movement of population between the coast and the interior as well as improvement in communications also helped the spread of the crop inland.[56] In fact, the establishment of railway stations led to the growth of urban centres, which required lots of foodstuffs. *Gari*, especially, was found to be very effective in meeting this demand. Although

[51] Ogboo, 'Agriculture', p. 63.
[52] Chuku, 'Changing role of women', p. 76.
[53] Ibid., p. 78.
[54] Etejere and Bhat, 'Traditional preparation', p. 159.
[55] Ibid., p. 159.
[56] Agboola, *Agricultural atlas*, p. 60.



FIGURE 5. A *Gari* processing machine (photograph, author, 2012)

cassava could be found throughout Aba and Bende Districts by 1928, Martin states that its importance grew slowly in the 1920s. It was still a minor crop, planted on yam farms during or after the yam season itself. With the introduction of *gari* grating machines, however, a full-blown trade started between the Ngwa and neighbouring towns of Aba and Umuahia. So lucrative was this trade that by the eve of the Second World War even men were actively involved in it.[57]

The spread of cassava among the Igbo perhaps received its greatest boost once the colonial government, to encourage the war effort and to meet local demand for foodstuffs, began to advocate an increase in the cultivation of the crop. To this end, in 1940, the colonial government initiated the 'Plant more cassava this year' campaign.[58] According to an instruction from the Agricultural Officer to District Officers in Owerri Province, the campaign was to be given the widest publicity as early as possible and by whatever means were available. Personal explanation through local authorities was recommended. This was to be done by circulating a leaflet or its Igbo translation to local authorities and native courts and posting the translation in public places, such as markets.[59] The campaign stressed the need for local supplies, while emphasizing the peculiar advantages of cassava over yam and cocoyams. The campaign was to be primarily addressed at women given that, among the Igbo, cassava was considered a woman's crop.

[57] S. Martin, *Palm oil and protest: an economic history of the Ngwa Region, south-eastern Nigeria, 1800–1980* (1988).

[58] NAE, OW 4481, 'Plant more cassava this year campaign', RIVPROF 9/1/917.

[59] Ibid.

The argument was that, since women were responsible for feeding the family all year round, the onus was therefore on them to ensure that there was no hunger. To this end, the Health Department commenced a programme of sending trainees to the newly established National Root Crop Research Institute (NRCRI), Umudike Umuahia, to learn modern techniques of cassava propagation and processing. The result was tremendous. As the District Officer for Okigwe noted in his Annual Report for 1941, the 'Plant more cassava' campaign resulted in a great increase in cassava planting. He observed that in many areas where the soil had become so impoverished by exhaustive cropping and good yams could no longer be grown, cassava became the chief alternative.[60] By 1942, he could confidently assert that, because of their unrelenting effort in the campaign, there was an increase in cultivation and the district could then boast of an adequate area under cassava cultivation. The difficulties that arose from the Second World War made acceptance of cassava even more imperative. As a result, throughout the late 1940s and into the 1950s, many more people naturally took to cassava cultivation.

The Agricultural Officer for the Eastern Region attributed this rise to the popularity of *gari* and fermented cassava, the low cost of production and the absence of storage problems, all of which encouraged more farmers to take up the cultivation of the crop. From his calculations, cassava grating machines in use in the region increased in number from 304 in 1962/63 to 381 in 1963/64.[61] Similarly, numerous bags of *gari* were now being exported from the region. The high demand, especially from the northern region, was also met using railway transportation. Henceforth, the *gari* business became a booming trade.

After this, cassava gradually began to challenge the dominant position of yam as the major food crop of the Igbo. So much that by the 1950s and 1960s, it had become the main food crop in Ngwa District, although yams, cocoyams and maize were equally important.[62] For many in the Ngwa region, therefore, *onye adighi ima akpu aguru egbue ya* ('whoever refuses to plant cassava would die of hunger').[63] Furthermore, although the crop made a late arrival in the Abakiliki area, the situation there was not entirely different.

Among the communities in Ohaji, what took place could be described as a revolution. Once cassava was adopted, it became the most important crop. It was immediately integrated into the farming and dietary habits of the people, to the extent that many even began to see it as one of the indigenous food crops of the area.[64] In fact, the displacement of yam, in an economy which was hitherto monocultural, is accepted as the first victory of cassava in Ohaji. This sudden change had major consequences on the socio-economic life of the people. For women in particular, it brought liberation. It was a ready solution to their numerous economic problems and in particular signified an end to the dominance of a yam economy, which had tied them to their husbands' purses. With cassava, therefore, the picture changed automatically from an economy dominated and controlled by men to one in which women were more active. Cassava in Ohaji offered hope to widows, although it also led to

[60] NAE, 1100, 'Annual Report 1941–2', OKDIST 11/1/454.

[61] NAE, Box 79, 'Eastern Region: Annual Report, Agricultural Division, 1963–64', AR/EN/A2.

[62] Martin, *Palm oil and protest*, p. 124.

[63] Mrs. Beatrice Nwala (farmer, aged *c.*68, Ovokwu Isiala Ngwa), in a discussion with the author, 13 Sept. 2008.

[64] Kalu, 'Cassava revolution', p. 11.

the commercialization of the people's land and the introduction of foreign elements to the community.[65]

IV

Any discussion of the evolution of food crops and in particular of cassava among the Igbo, must take a holistic look at the people's socio-economic and cultural history. Whereas some crops like yam and, to some extent, species of cocoyam and several other crops like the oil palm and breadfruit are believed to be indigenous, having been in the area for so long that neither oral nor written histories can demonstrate their introduction, a wide range of others, including cassava and some species of the yam and cocoyam were introduced, since the voyages of discovery, from the New World by the Portuguese explorers. The introduction of new crops or species of crops was however multi-directional. It was a mutual process in which both Africa and the New World benefited.

That any particular crop was adopted was not because of a single factor, as Ohadike's thesis of the influenza pandemic of 1918–19 tends to suggest, but for a variety of reasons, especially those relating to the socio-economic and cultural life of the people, as well as the willingness of the people to adapt to changing economic conditions. In the case of cassava, it was obvious that it came at a time when circumstances made its acceptance imperative. Its multiple uses, the fact that it was easier to cultivate, easily adaptable to different soil conditions and less demanding in terms of labour requirements were all factors that ensured that the crop was adopted by the Igbo.

[65] C. N. Alua, 'Cassava industry and its socio-economic impact on Umuokanne-Ohaji from 1900 to the present' (unpubl. BA Long Essay, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1996), p. 74.

Cautionary notes on linking the National Farm Survey with other records for investigating the agrarian history of Second World War Britain*

by Katherine J. Taylor, Nigel Walford, Brian Short and Richard Armitage

Abstract

This paper explores the feasibility of using National Farm Survey (NFS) data in conjunction with a contemporary aerial photograph to reconstruct farm sizes, shapes and land use in the parish of Hamsey, East Sussex. A detailed analysis based on linking these documents demonstrates that there are difficulties with the consistency of the data, with only 12 out of 19 farms having a complete set of NFS forms, and with some ambiguities discovered in the NFS maps. The areas of arable and grassland for each farm were identified from the 1940 aerial photograph and captured in a GIS. The total acreages were then compared with the totals for crops and grass as shown in the June 1941 Agricultural Census. These were found to diverge by more than 20 per cent in over a third of cases. Attempts were made to adjust for the effects of the wartime plough-up campaign in order to improve levels of agreement but these were largely unsuccessful due to the high numbers of 'part' fields. The study yields some useful information at the micro-scale but provides salutary warnings about any attempt to reconstruct farms on a larger geographical scale due to the complex and time-consuming nature of the task.

It has been argued that the period since the early 1930s has had more profound consequences for British agriculture than any other since the agricultural revolution of the eighteenth century.[1] The inter-war years may be characterized as a mixture of decline and regeneration. On the one hand the agricultural area in the United Kingdom fell by some 2.5 million acres to just over 31.5 million acres, of which only 9 million acres were under crops other than grass, and this was coupled with increasing pressure to develop and build over the countryside.[2] On the other hand, a more scientific approach was being adopted towards farming, and

* We are grateful to Claire Ivison, Kingston University, for drawing Figures 1 to 5, to Evelyn Dodds, University of Sussex, for assistance with the Luftwaffe aerial photograph, and to the anonymous reviewers who commented on an earlier draft of this paper.

[1] J. Martin, *The development of modern agriculture: British farming since 1931* (2000), p. 1.

[2] K. J. Taylor, N. S. Walford and B. M. Short, 'Assessing the land use of inter-war Britain: a comparison of the First Land Utilisation Survey field sheets and 1:63,360 scale maps', *J. Applied Geography* 30 (2010), p. 50.

innovations such as bail milking were adopted by some farmers.[3] There was also a growing interest in regional survey work and a broader 'culture of landscape' in inter-war Britain as exemplified by the Scouting and Guiding movements, easier access to the countryside and the upsurge in rambling.[4]

Stamp's Land Utilisation Survey, conducted during the 1930s, was the first attempt to undertake a comprehensive and standardized national survey of land use in Britain. Such surveys comprised a large part of the answer to governmental needs to control from Whitehall, and the 1930s were characterized by a dramatic shift in policy as the free market era of the 1920s gave way to increased state intervention, surveillance and control via a series of agriculture acts and marketing schemes. With the outbreak of war in 1939, the Minister of Agriculture was further empowered under the Defence of the Realm Act to preserve, maintain and control farmland for maximum food production; to terminate tenancies where neglect or poor cultivation was demonstrable; and to destroy vermin and pests.[5]

This paved the way for an extensive state-directed plough-up campaign designed to maximize arable production which, within the space of five years, transformed British agriculture from 'a predominantly pastoral system of low input, low output farming to a "national farm" dominated by intensive arable farming, heavily dependent on inputs such as fertilizers and machinery acquired from outside the agricultural sector'.[6] The National Farm Survey (NFS) was undertaken between 1941 and 1943 as a means of assisting with this plough-up campaign, as well as with a view to post-war land use planning and as an historical record of the main features of every farm.

The mid-twentieth century represents a period of transition, not to say revolution, in British agricultural history, and understanding the structure, layout and conditions of a group of individual farms provides a starting point for assessing factors, such as variation in land character and quality, that might have influenced the survivability of farms in the post-war decades. Related research has explored continuity of occupation by families on farms in parishes across the extent of the South Downs.[7] This paper presents the detailed results of a study undertaken to investigate the feasibility of reconstructing all the farms in a single parish in south-east England in wartime, using the NFS records in conjunction with a 1940 aerial photograph and other contemporary Ministry of Agriculture data. As a methodological paper, it is not designed to present an empirical survey of agriculture at this period, although certain aspects of farming structure and process will be touched upon.

Table 1 identifies the specific data sources employed for this purpose. Superficially, we now

[3] P. Brassley, 'British farming between the wars', in P. Brassley, J. Burchardt and L. Thompson (eds), *The English countryside between the wars: regeneration or decline?* (2006), p. 198.

[4] D. Matless, 'Regional surveys and local knowledges: the geographical imagination in Britain, 1918–39', *Trans. Inst. British Geographers* 17 (1992), pp. 464–80; P. Brandon, *The discovery of Sussex* (2010).

[5] J. Martin, 'The wild rabbit: plague, policies and pestilence in England and Wales, 1931–1955', *AgHR* 58 (2010), p. 267.

[6] B. Short, C. Watkins and J. Martin, '"The front line of freedom": state-led agricultural revolution in Britain, 1939–45', in B. Short, C. Watkins and J. Martin (eds), *The front line of freedom: British farming in the Second World War* (2006), p. 1.

[7] N. Walford, 'The National Farm Survey and the tracing of post-war farmers' movements on the South Downs', in Short *et al.* (eds), *Front line of freedom,* pp. 217–29.

TABLE 1. Primary sources used in the study

Data Source	*Location of archive/reference*
Second and third County Series 1:10560 Ordnance Survey maps	
NFS forms for Hamsey June–Nov 1942	TNA, MAF 32/101.
NFS maps for Hamsey	TNA, MAF 73/41/40, MAF 73/41/54 and MAF 73/41/53
June 1941 Agricultural Census summary for Hamsey	TNA, MAF 68/3994
Luftwaffe aerial photograph August 1940, no. 40	University of Sussex collection

have an enormous amount of information from which to undertake such work. A project very similar in nature was carried out by Riley and Watkins, who used NFS data and RAF aerial photographs dating from 1946 and 1947 to reconstruct three case-study farms on a field-by-field basis. They concluded that the detailed interpretations provided by these case studies yielded valuable insights on field-by-field data on land use, cropping and farming systems. However, they achieved mixed results and concluded that it was rather difficult to relate the crops and land uses to individual fields.[8] One aim of the present study is to determine whether the use of a more nearly contemporary aerial photograph, dating from 1940, yields more positive results in terms of reconstructing land use on a field-by-field basis. Furthermore this study extends beyond single case-study farms to consider an entire parish unit, which brings into focus such familiar but potentially knotty issues as land being located in one parish but returned in another, and the fragmented nature of some holdings.

The parish of Hamsey in East Sussex (Figure 1) lies at the foot of the South Downs, just to the north-west of the county town, Lewes, and stretches onto the clay of the Low Weald to the north, whilst the south-west corner of the parish is chalk downland. The parish therefore includes a variety of landscape types. According to the NFS Primary Return the majority of the farmers were tenants with just two farms part-owned and part-tenanted, and one owned outright by Lady Monkbretton. The June 1941 agricultural census shows that around 1200 acres of the parish were given over to permanent grass with a further 183.5 acres of rough grazing. Livestock consisted mainly of cattle and calves, with just 26 sheep and lambs recorded for the parish, although significant numbers of poultry were also kept, including 1,105 fowls at Conyborough Poultry Farm. The main arable crop was barley with 308 acres recorded in 1941. There were also 122 acres of oats together with 62 acres of mixed corn and 72 acres of temporary grass. Small acreages of other miscellaneous crops such as beans, peas, potatoes and so on complete the picture.

Short *et al.*, in conducting an extensive assessment of the NFS material, included a national sample of some 3,000 farms and two regional samples. Their Sussex sample included 1,200 holdings covering large areas of the South Downs and parts of the Sussex Weald and they found the NFS records to be reasonably complete and the maps to be in good or very good

[8] M. Riley and C. Watkins, 'The value of the National Farm Survey and contemporary aerial photographs for environmental history', in Short *et al.* (eds), *Front line of freedom*, p. 215.

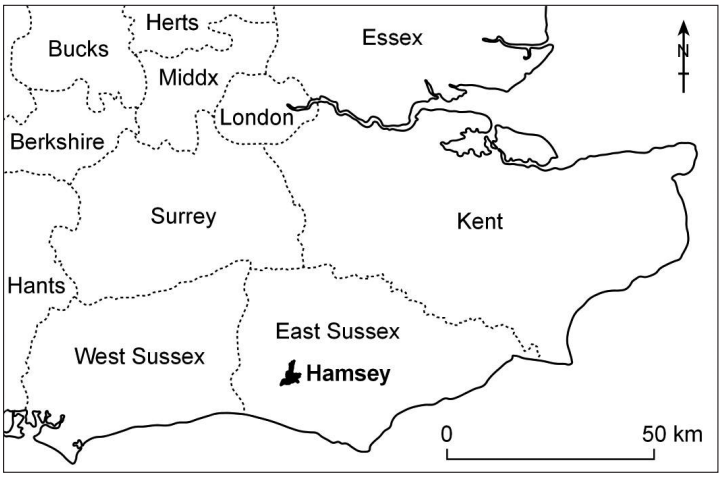


FIGURE 1. Location of the parish of Hamsey, East Sussex

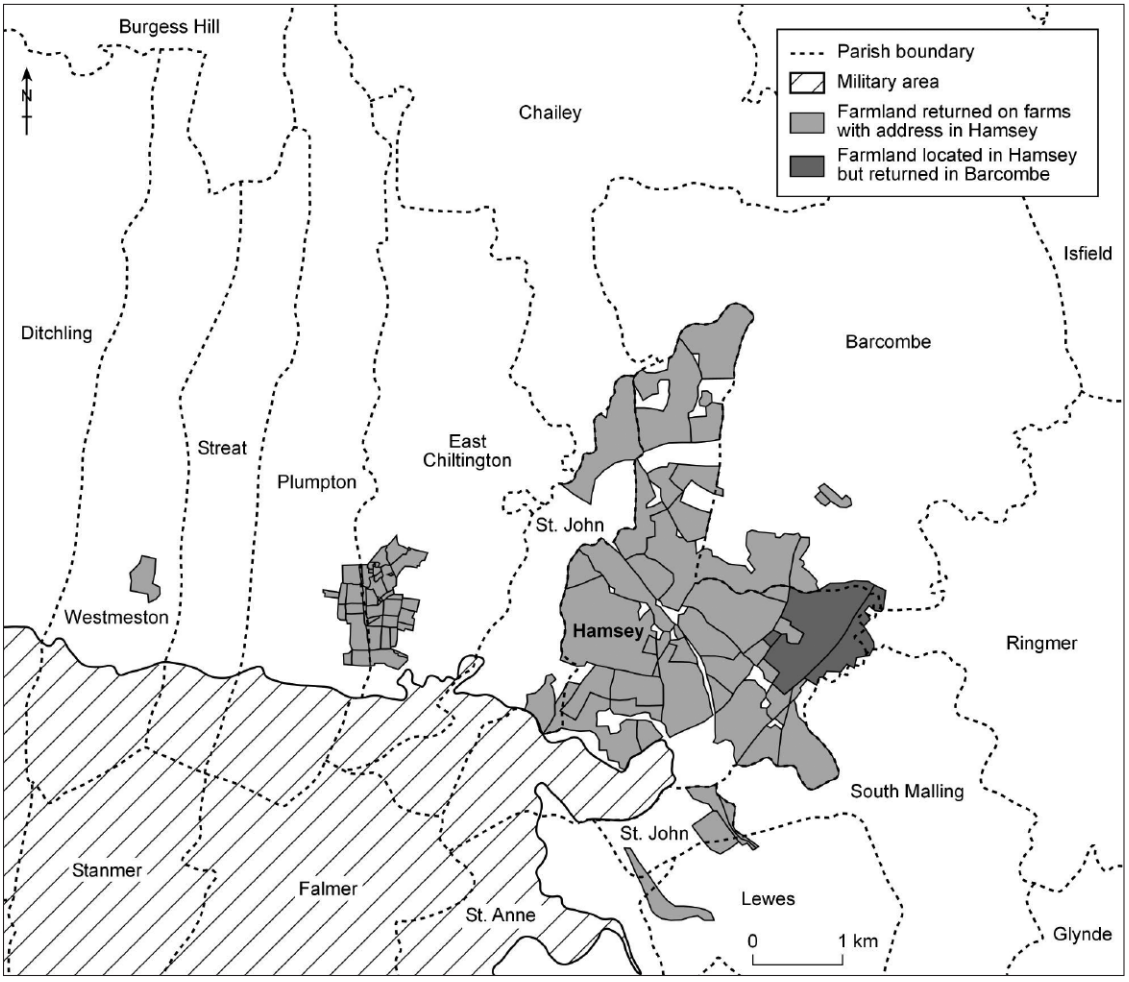


FIGURE 2. Farms in the parish of Hamsey in 1941

condition.[9] Importantly, the Luftwaffe aerial photograph, which was used here in conjunction with the NFS material, provided complete coverage of the parish of Hamsey, which was vital for the purposes of interpreting its land use on a field-by-field basis.

The June Agricultural Census, taken annually in England since 1866 and normally available as parish summaries, was also inspected for Hamsey. Uniquely, the NFS records include the original returns for each farm in the parish for this one year, 1941, from which its parish summary was aggregated. According to the 4 June 1941 return, there were 16 holdings of over five acres in Hamsey, ranging in size from 9 to 329.5 acres.[10] Until 1948 the farmer's place of residence was used to determine in which parish his or her farmland was allocated.[11] This meant that a farm could be recorded in one parish although the bulk of its land was in another, and thus Hamsey also includes just over 260 acres of land belonging to farms recorded in the neighbouring parish of Barcombe (Figure 2). It is also the case that some land recorded in Hamsey lies in still other parishes, such as the field on the west side of Figure 2, which falls within the neighbouring parish of Plumpton. Farm XE 218/109/13 is included on the same NFS Primary Return as two farms returned in Hamsey (discussed in more detail below), and so this is also shown in Figure 2 although it actually lies outside the parish boundary. Finally, there was a large military training area, precluding normal farming operations, which covered much of the central South Downs, and this also impinged on the southern part of the parish of Hamsey.

I

The methods employed in this investigation were based upon a combination of Second and Third Series Ordnance Survey maps as a base from which to digitize a polygon layer representing the parish of Hamsey. The NFS maps were photographed and imported into the GIS and displayed as a backdrop to allow information such as the NFS farm reference number, OS parcel number and acreage (as given on the maps) to be transcribed into an associated attribute table. The aim was to reconstruct Hamsey's farms, and so each farm extent was also captured in a separate layer where this was possible. This will also be discussed in more detail below.

The aerial photograph used in conjunction with the NFS material was taken by the Luftwaffe on 12 August 1940 from around 20,000 feet and is centred on Lewes.[12] The Luftwaffe had been secretly compiling images of towns and cities in Britain taken from German civilian and military aircraft in the pre-war period, and these were supplemented by images taken by photo-reconnaissance flights during the war itself. Aircrew carried these images on subsequent bombing raids on towns, cities, ports, airfields and similar strategic targets.[13] There is therefore

[9] B. Short, C. Watkins, W. Foot and P. Kinsman, *The National Farm Survey, 1941–43: state surveillance and the countryside in England and Wales in the Second World War* (2000), pp. 145.

[10] TNA, MAF 32/1008/101. The June Returns, available for other war years, are catalogued under MAF 68.

[11] G. Clark, *The Agricultural Census – United Kingdom and United States* (1982), p. 18.

[12] UK Aerial photos, *Historic UK aerial photography*. http://www.ukaerialphotos.com/historic-aerial-photos.asp [accessed 15 Jan. 2008].

[13] http://germaninvasion.co.uk/luftwaffe/aboutluftwaffe.htm [accessed 27 Sept. 2011]

little coverage of more rural areas. Riley and Watkins found that the aerial photograph most nearly contemporary to the NFS for their own study area dated from 11 July 1946.[14]

The aerial photograph was geo-corrected and orthorectified to correct differences in scale across the image and to enable it to be displayed with the other data layers, and the photograph was then also imported into the GIS. This allowed each polygon to be examined and classified on a field-by-field basis. Seven broad land use categories were identified, based on those used in Stamp's Land Utilisation Survey. These categories were: Forest and Woodland; Meadowland and Permanent Grass; Arable including Temporary Grass; Heath and Rough Grazing; Gardens, Allotments, Orchards etc.; Water; and Land Agriculturally Unproductive. This paper concentrates on the two key and crucial wartime categories of Arable and Meadowland and Permanent Grass (hereafter referred to as Grassland).

The NFS forms include a Primary Return completed by surveyors from the East Sussex County War Agricultural Executive Committee (CWAEC) who visited each holding over five acres and recorded information on tenure; the conditions of the farm; water and electricity supplies; the management of the farm, together with some general comments (Section E) and information on the plough-up campaigns conducted so far on each farm in 1940 and 1941. The individual Census records for each farm were also used to provide information on the acreage of arable and grassland on each holding. The published 1941 parish summary of the Agricultural Census data for Hamsey was also used in an attempt to reconstruct missing information and additionally as a double check on the individual forms.

The results of the study are presented in three sections. First, the quality and internal consistency of the NFS data, including the 4 June 1941 Census material, is assessed. These data are then compared with the information captured in the GIS from the NFS maps. Finally the attempts to reconstruct the land use of individual farms, and especially to identify and quantify areas of arable and grassland, are considered.

II

Some issues have previously been identified with the quality and internal consistency of the NFS records and so an important early step in the course of the data processing was to carry out a series of checks on the NFS data themselves in order to assess their suitability as a basis for this reconstruction.[15] In this instance the data proved to be somewhat patchy, with some forms missing and some returns being amalgamated where several holdings were being run together as one business unit, and this is summarized in Table 2. Farm XE 218/109/013, as noted above, is not located in the parish of Hamsey but rather has the bulk of its land in Plumpton, hence the different parish number (109). However this farm has been included on an amalgamated NFS Primary Return with farms XE 218/101/003 and 020 and was therefore presumably run as one unit with them, hence its inclusion here. It is clearly a

[14] Riley and Watkins, 'The value of the National Farm Survey', In Short *et al*. (eds), *Front line of freedom*, p. 207.

[15] Short *et al., National Farm Survey*, pp. 113–60; K. J. Taylor, 'A GIS-based approach to reconstructing mid-twentieth century agricultural land use around Lewes, East Sussex' (unpubl. PhD thesis, Kingston University, 2009).

TABLE 2. Summary of data availability for farms in Hamsey

Farm no	*Individual Primary Return Form*	*Amalgamated Primary Return Form*	*Individual 4 June Census form*	*Individual farm identifiable on NFS map*	*Amalgamated farm identifiable on NFS map*
XE 218/101/001	Yes		Yes	Yes	
XE 218/101/002	No	Yes	Yes	Query – numbered as 2 but may include 10	Query – appears to include farm 10 but unnumbered on map
XE 218/101/003	No	Yes	Yes	No	Query – incomplete outlining on map
XE 218/101/004	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
XE 218/101/005	Yes		Yes	Yes	
XE 218/101/006	Yes		Yes	Yes	
XE 218/101/007	No	Yes	Yes	No	Query – appears to be included with 04 and 08 but unnumbered on map
XE 218/101/008	Yes		Yes	Yes	
XE 218/101/009	Yes		Yes	Yes	
XE 218/101/011	Yes		Yes	Yes	
XE 218/101/010	No	Yes	Yes	No	Query – appears to be included with 02 but unnumbered on map
XE 218/101/012	Yes		Yes	Yes	
XE 218/101/013	Yes		Yes	Yes	
XE 218/101/015	Yes		Yes	Yes	
XE 218/101/016	Yes		No	Yes	
XE 218/101/017	Yes		Yes	Yes	
XE 218/101/018	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
XE 218/101/020	No	Yes	Yes		Query – incomplete outlining on map
XE 218/109/013	Yes	Yes	Yes	Query – incorrectly numbered on NFS map?	Query – due to incomplete outlining of farm 03

Source: TNA, MAF 32/101; 73/41/40; 73/41/54 and 73/41/53.

prerequisite of any such analysis as the present one to establish from the outset the precise farm holdings to be included, since the overlap of farm and parish boundaries obviate any neat solution.

It is also worthwhile noting that the farm numbers for Hamsey parish do not form a complete sequence – there are some missing, such as XE 218/101/014 and XE 218/101/019. It is possible that these may be holdings of less than five acres – the 1941 Census summary for Hamsey shows three holdings of less than five acres and as such would have been excluded from the NFS. Alternatively they may have been purchased by another farm and have been incorporated into its acreage and thus be lost as an individual holding. Walford comments that 'In some parishes the sequence of farm numbers is discontinuous, which implies that the NFS record was lost, never collected because of small size, or because the holding had ceased to exist as a separate unit, since the CPH [County/Parish/Holding] numbers are not reassigned'.[16] The farms will hereafter be referred to simply by the last two digits of the number, which denotes their number within the parish.

The internal consistency of the 4 June Census records was checked by examining the forms for each individual farm in Hamsey and comparing these to the totals shown in the Parish Summary. Since no individual forms were available for holdings of less than five acres, this left 16 farms of over five acres listed in the Parish Summary which also had individual Census forms available, and the frequency distribution of the acreages for these farms agreed exactly with the parish summary. But two farms with Primary Return forms, 16 and 18, had no individual Census forms. As the total number of farms was correct without farms 16 and 18, this suggests that these two holdings could already have ceased to exist as separate units, and this is borne out by a note on the Primary Return for farm 16 to the effect that it was 'all let off to a neighbouring farmer – so no 4 June returns'. The general comments, to be found in Section E of the Primary Return for farm 16 also note that '15 acres of good pasture formerly used for grazing one cow and horses is now let off on grazing tenancy to a neighbouring farmer.' The immediately adjoining farm, 101/20, does not appear to have any grazing rights or to occupy any other land according to the Primary Return, so it is unclear which neighbouring farm is being referred to, since it could lie within another parish.

The total acreage shown in the 4 June 1941 Parish Summary is 2,008.5, although the total of the summary entries for questions 1–32 is actually 2,007.25.[17] If the individual forms included with the NFS are then totalled, this gives a figure of 2,002.35 acres using the totals given by the farmer, but 2,004.6 using the actual figures, as two of the forms are also added up incorrectly. These figures are remarkably comparable and the individual forms for Hamsey in general are completed with a considerable degree of precision, and with three-quarters of the farmers' returns including fractions of an acre. However, the Parish Summary sheet has been heavily corrected, which may be grounds for some lack of confidence in the totals shown therein. Furthermore, Short *et al.* note that the completion of the June 1941 Census was nationally particularly difficult with, at one stage, an estimated half a million errors to correct, although

[16] Walford, 'National Farm Survey' in Short *et al.* (eds), *Front line of freedom,* p.222.

[17] TNA, MAF 68/3994.

TABLE 3. Level of agreement between the acreage shown on the Primary Return and 4 June Census

	Farms in Hamsey		*Short* et al. *Sussex Sample*	*Short* et al. *National Sample*
	Number	*%*	*%*	*%*
Holdings with a Primary return form (either individual or amalgamated)	14 out of 19			
Holdings with a 4 June Census Return	17 out of 19			
Holdings with both a 4 June Return and a Primary Return	12 out of 19	63.2	91.6	90.8
Holdings where Primary Return and 4 June Census acreage agrees	3 out of 12	25.0	30.2	33.9
Holdings where Census acreage is within 10% of Primary Return acreage	11 out of 12	91.7	56.0	60.2
Holdings where Census acreage is within 20% of Primary Return acreage	12 out of 12	100.0	67.5	71.0

Source: TNA, MAF 32/101; 68/3994.

this could be attributed to the addition of an unfamiliar Supplementary Return asking extra questions specifically for NFS purposes.[18]

Secondly the acreages shown on the 4 June Census returns at question 33 (total acreage of Crops and Grass), as completed by the farmer, were checked against those shown on the NFS Primary Return Form, completed by an external surveyor, in this case normally J. Halliday but in one case G. Wibberley (later Principal of Wye College and a noted agricultural commentator), to see how far these agreed. Where farms had no individual forms but amalgamated Primary Returns were available, these were included in the analysis and compared with the sum of the relevant Census forms. Farm 109/13 was also included in this analysis as it was included on an amalgamated form with farms from Hamsey. Where this exercise has been attempted before some significant discrepancies have been found, as in Westmorland by Crowe; and the levels of agreement were also compared with those found by Short *et al.* in their Sussex and National samples as shown in Table 3.[19]

Hamsey had poorer data availability compared with both the National and Sussex samples, but where the forms were available, the levels of agreement at 10 and 20 per cent were better than had been found by Short *et al.* To some extent the agreement can be related to farm size (Figure 3). Farms of under 100 acres generally appear to have the smallest difference in acreage between the two forms. However in farms above 100 acres the differences in acreage appear to be more randomly distributed.

[18] Short *et al.*, *National Farm Survey,* p. 95.

[19] H. Crowe, 'Farming the margins: upland agriculture in Westmorland, 1910–1947' (unpubl. DPhil thesis, University of Sussex, 2010), p. 39; Short *et al.*, *National Farm Survey,* p. 172.

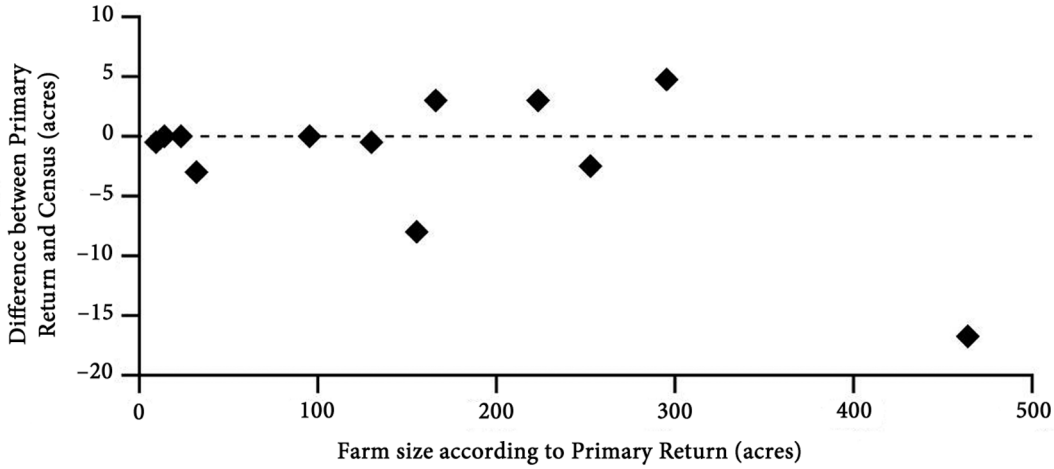


FIGURE 3. Farm size related to difference between Primary Return and Census acreages

III

Next, the farm acreages as calculated from the extents captured in the GIS were compared with the acreage shown on the Primary Return for each farm (Figure 4). Again there is some evidence that the smallest farms appear to have a lower difference in acreage than larger farms. However, the differences for larger farms are, again, fairly randomly distributed. The OS parcel numbers and acreages were transcribed onto 6-inch map sheets by the East Sussex War Agricultural Executive Committee staff from 25-inch base maps. But some sheets reveal that this transcription was less than perfect, with acreages illegible or even missing altogether, leading to fewer farms and smaller areas when the parcels making up a farm are added together, in comparison with the digitized farm areas. The results of comparing these figures with the Primary Return acreage are shown in Table 4. Whilst the Primary Return and GIS acreages showed a reasonably good level of agreement, adding up the acreages of the parcels as annotated on the Ordnance Survey sheets proved less satisfactory and so these were not used for further analysis.

It has already been noted that the GIS polygon layer was created by digitizing over a base layer comprising Ordnance Survey County Series maps. This process has been found to be a 'dominant source of error creation in digital data sets', and it was therefore possible that some of the differences between the GIS and Primary Return acreages had arisen due to errors in digitizing.[20] This was checked by selecting a random 20 per cent of all polygons (63 polygons) classed as arable or grassland and falling within a farm boundary. These were redigitized twice, being referred to as checks 1 and 2, and the acreage totals compared with the original captured acreage. For check 1, the mean percentage difference was 0.48 per cent and for check 2 this had increased slightly to 0.57. The largest difference was 0.81 acres and the mean difference was

[20] J. C. Walsby, 'The causes and effects of manual digitizing on error creation in data input to GIS', in P. F. Fisher (ed.), *Innovations in GIS 2: selected papers from the Second National Conference on GIS Research UK* (1995), p. 113.

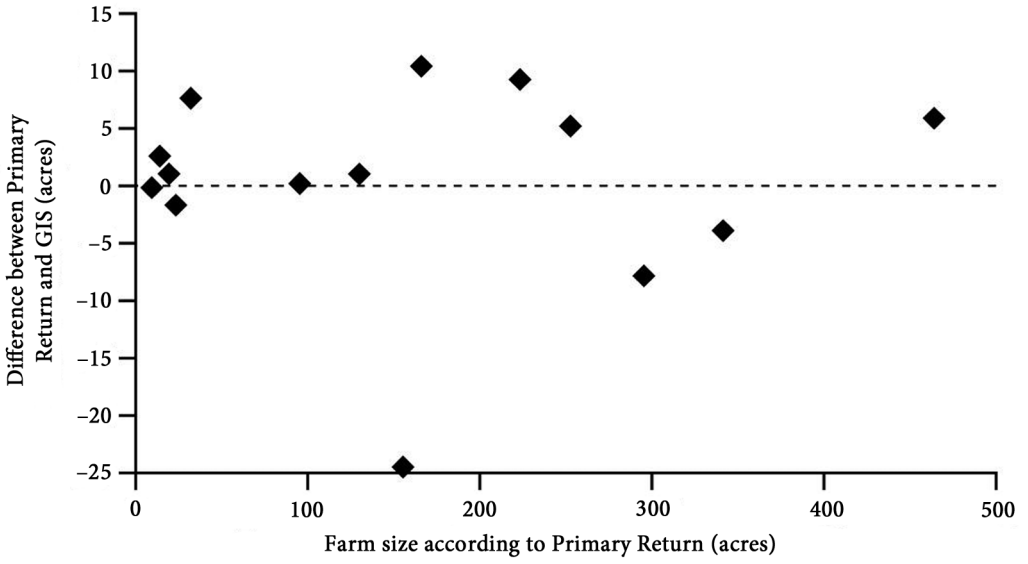


FIGURE 4. Farm size related to difference between Primary Return and GIS acreages

TABLE 4. Level of agreement between the Primary Return acreage, the GIS acreage and the total of OS parcels (per cent)

	Primary Return and GIS	*Primary Return and OS parcels*
Within 10 per cent	78.6 (11 farms)	60.0 (6 farms)
Within 20 per cent	100.0 (14 farms)	90.0 (10 farms)
Over 20 per cent difference	0	10.0 (1 farm)
No data available	3 farms	6 farms

Source: TNA, MAF 32/101; Second and Third County Series 1:10560 Ordnance Survey maps.

0.08 acres for both Check 1 and Check 2. The polygon with the largest acreage difference was an area of over 40 acres with a partially curved boundary. Curved lines tended to cause more problems in digitizing than straight lines, which arise because of operator choice over where the direction of a curved line changes and no two operators digitizing such a boundary would ever digitize exactly the same points to describe it.[21] In Check 1, there were 28 polygons that were smaller than the original, two were identical and 33 were larger. For Check 2, 24 polygons were found to be smaller, four identical and 35 larger than the original. It seems therefore that the differences did not lie in any particular direction, and the original digitized dataset can be regarded as reasonably reliable and accurate.

[21] I. N. Gregory, *A place in history: a guide to using GIS in historical research* (sec. edn, 2005), p. 37.

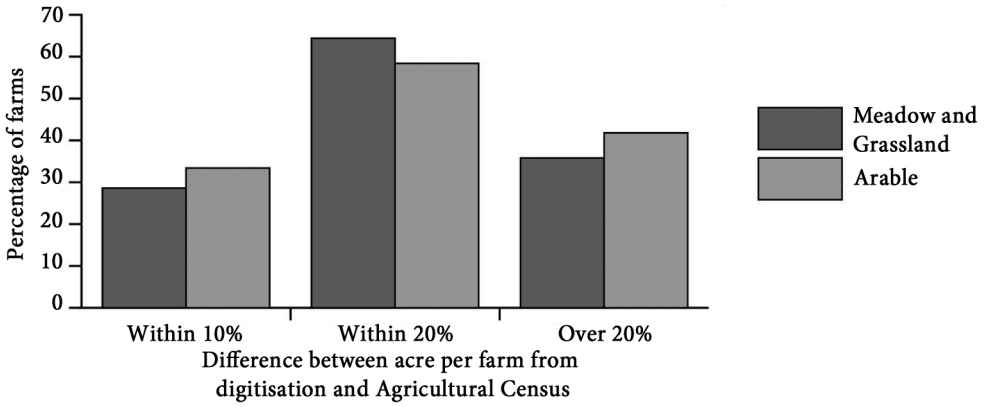


FIGURE 5. Percentage agreement between acreage totals for grassland and arable

IV

Once the accuracy of the farm extents had been assessed, the next step was to evaluate the success of reconstructing individual farms. The land use for each polygon had been classified from the aerial photograph and also through referring to the Primary Return form for information relating to the fields scheduled to be ploughed up and the general comments in Section E. The acreage totals for the two categories of grassland (meadowland and permanent grass) and arable were now compared with the totals for these two classes from the 4 June Census returns. Although it might be imagined that the Census was an accurate survey of agricultural land use, other commentators have acknowledged some of its shortcomings, such as the habit of some farmers in carrying forward figures written on the schedule from one year to the next and to round figures to an unspecified level (e.g. 1, 5 or even 10 acres).[22] The results of this comparison are shown in Figure 5.

As much as one third of the grassland totals and over 40 per cent of the arable totals are widely divergent. One potential difficulty is that the category for gardens etc., which has not been discussed in detail here, includes allotments, orchards and nurseries, broadly based on the classifications used in Stamp's Land Utilisation Survey.[23] These could be interpreted as arable from the aerial photograph, and equally some arable land could be mis-classified as gardens etc. However there is a further difficulty with using the land use classes as interpreted from the aerial photograph. This was taken in August 1940, whereas the Census forms were submitted in June 1941 and the Primary Return forms were not completed for Hamsey parish until 1942. Whilst the aerial photograph could be expected to show land that had been ploughed up in early 1940, it would obviously not show land which was the subject of ploughing orders later than this. Of the twelve farms represented in Figure 2, two had no land ploughed up in 1941

[22] Clark, *Agricultural Census.* (third edn, 1964), p. 22.
[23] L. D. Stamp, *The land of Britain: its use and misuse*

TABLE 5. Paired sample t-tests comparing digitized and documentary area measurement for Hamsey farms.

	Average difference	*Standard Deviation*	*t statistic*	*P*
Total area (digitized versus Primary Return data)	0.37	8.77	0.17	0.88
Total area (digitized versus Agricultural Census data)	1.80	8.06	0.81	0.44
Grassland area (digitized versus Agricultural Census data)	5.25	25.34	0.75	0.47
Arable area (digitized versus Agricultural Census data)	–12.72	20.73	–2.30	0.04

Source: Authors' analysis.

according to the Primary Return. Of the remaining ten, four had clearly identifiable fields designated for ploughing whereas the other six included 'part' fields with no indication as to the exact location of the designated ploughing or the acreage in question. For the four farms with identifiable land designated for plough-up in 1941, an attempt was made to adjust the figures to include these, to see whether this improved the levels of agreement.

A statistical analysis has been carried out on the pairs of area measurements obtained for the 14 farms. These were the figures obtained by digitizing over the NFS maps and those obtained from the Primary Return and Agricultural Census schedule in the case of total farm area, and between the areas for grassland and arable as derived from an interpretation of the aerial photograph in relation to the digitized area and the Agricultural Census. The four pairs of measurements not surprisingly show a very strong and statistically significant positive correlation at the 0.001 level. In addition paired sample t-tests carried out on the data clearly indicate that the differences between the pairs of measures are not statistically significant, except in the case of arable land, where the digitized total is an average 12.7 acres less per farm than that obtained from the Agricultural Census (see Table 5). These results suggest that the interpretation of arable land on the aerial photograph was more challenging than grassland, but that overall the figures obtained from the two sources are virtually identical. Closer examination of the individual differences in the arable areas reveals that these were notably large on three particular farms (02/10, 09 and 13).

For farms 01 and 06, adjusting for the plough-up improved the grassland and arable agreement to within 10 per cent in both cases. However this proved more problematic for farms 08 and 15, which therefore merit closer attention. Winterlands Farm (08) is a 95-acre holding according to the Primary Return, with good agreement (within 10 per cent) between the 1941 Census and Primary Return acreage, and also with the GIS acreage. Section E of the Primary Return characterizes the farm as 'Dairy farm. A well managed holding. About 35% of arable'. The Census return shows 63.25 acres of grassland and 31.75 of arable, whereas the totals classified from the 1940 aerial photograph are 57.21 and 36.89 acres giving within 10 per cent and within 20 per cent agreement respectively. The Primary Return (Section F) shows field



FIGURE 6. Field 322 classed as arable

Source: University of Sussex Map collections

322 as ploughed up for the 1941 harvest. This has an area of 5.65 acres and, if used to adjust the grassland and arable figures, would serve to improve the agreement in both categories. However, on rechecking the aerial photograph, field 322 has already been classified as arable and there appear to be good grounds for this, as shown in Figure 6, where field 322 is outlined in black. The field appears very bright and striped, suggesting arable cropping.

Conyborough Poultry Farm (15) comprises 23 acres according to the Primary Return, and, again, there is good (within 10 per cent) agreement between the Census, Primary Return and GIS acreages. The farm basically consists of two fields and a small area of woodland as shown in Figure 7. The smaller of the two fields (no. 337) is 8 acres and classed as arable from the aerial photograph, giving good agreement with the Census total which is also shown as 8 acres. The larger field (no. 340a) is classed as grassland. The acreage of the field as captured in the GIS is only 12.19 acres and the Ordnance Survey parcel area transcribed onto the map is given as 12.275. However the Census return shows a total of 15 acres of grassland, divided into 12 acres of permanent grass for mowing this season and 3 acres of permanent grass not for mowing. The 12 acres for mowing this season accords well with the larger field but suggests there are 3 acres 'missing'. The patch of woodland in the middle of the larger field is only 1 acre

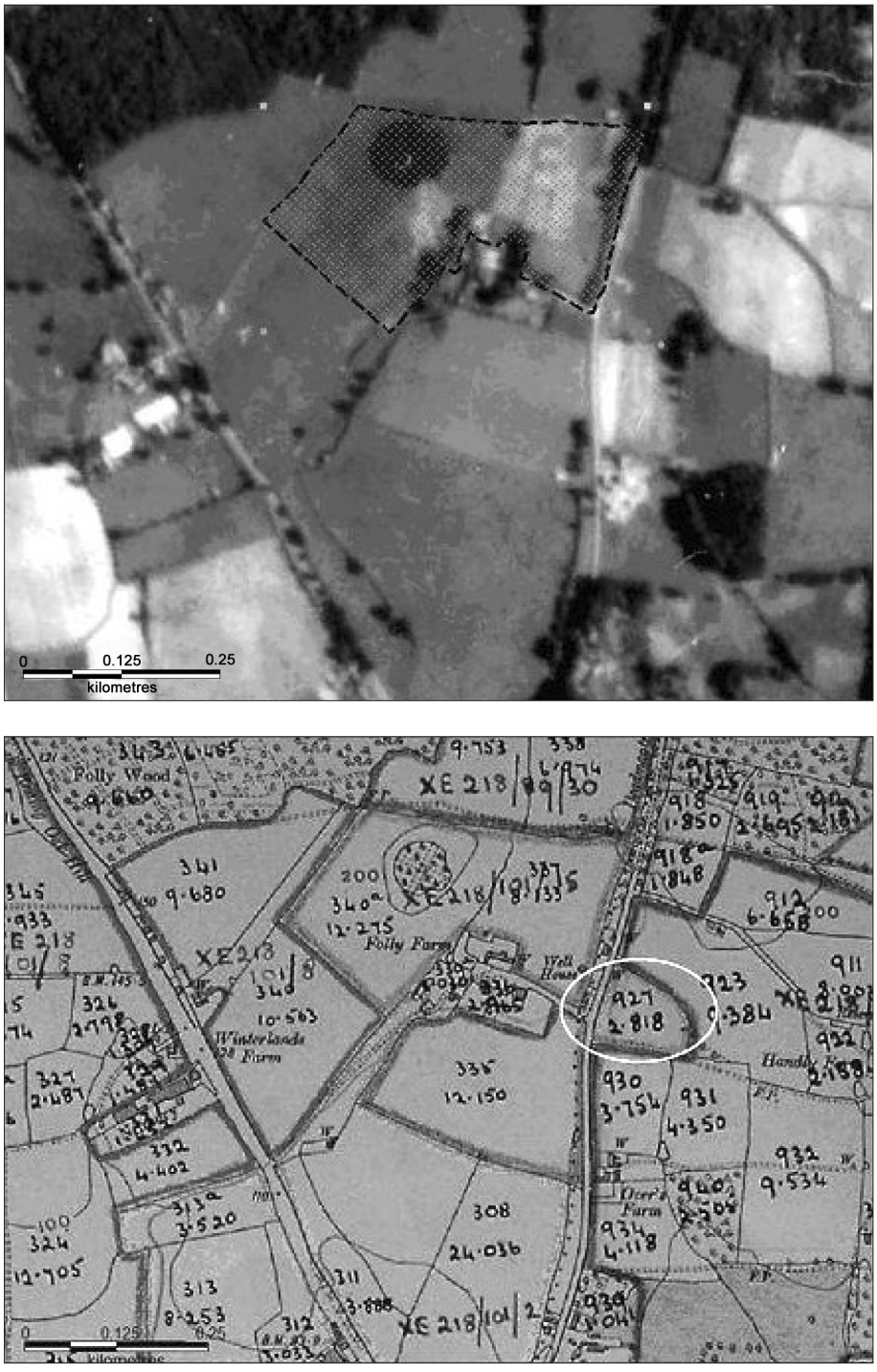


FIGURE 7. Farm 15 from the 1940 aerial photograph and NFS map

Source: University of Sussex map collections; TNA, MAF 73/41/40; 73/41/54 and 73/41/53

in area and insufficient to account for this. However there is an area just to the south of Well House, circled in white on Figure 7, which has not been included in the farm extent by the NFS surveyor and comprises 2.965 acres according to the Ordnance Survey parcel area. It is possible that these could constitute the 'missing' 3 acres. Alternatively, field 927 just to the east of the circled area could have been incorrectly assigned to farm 101/02, which is also outlined in yellow and lies immediately south of 101/15. However, whilst the Census acreage for 101/02 is 2.85 acres less than the area captured in the GIS, the area shown on the Primary Return is 3.9 acres more than the GIS area and so no clear conclusions can be drawn. However, there is a further problem. Field 340a is shown on the Primary Return as directed to be ploughed up for the 1941 harvest. If this is used to adjust the GIS figures, the totals become 20.23 acres of arable and no grassland, which clearly conflicts with the figures given in the June 1941 Census.

Therefore, although the plough-up totals shown on the NFS forms should, in theory, provide a useful source of information regarding changes in land use over this period, in reality they are difficult to interpret and, in some cases, appear to be at odds with the information given on the June 1941 Census forms. It therefore becomes clear that by connecting the data from different sources in this way, and at this micro-scale level, a cautionary note must be offered to any too-ready, simplistic interpretation of wartime land use change using these sources.

V

The aim of this exercise had been to reconstruct all the farms within Hamsey parish using a combination of three sources: the NFS, the 4 June Census data, and a 1940 aerial photograph. As part of this process, the consistency and reliability of the various datasets were examined, and it was these that caused the most difficulties for the project as a whole. In theory, the use of the 4 June 1941 Census, including the Parish Summary, should have been an advantage. However, three of the individual 4 June Census returns were originally added up incorrectly, as was the Parish Summary, and at least one return appeared to be missing altogether. The 4 June Return and Primary Return acreages were all within 20 per cent of each other, but few agreed exactly. The difficulties of comparison were further compounded by the fact that some farms were amalgamated together for the NFS but shown separately for the 4 June Return. It was therefore difficult to establish even the basic farm size in a consistent and reliable manner, although the areas recorded by the NFS surveyors on the Primary Returns were effectively the result of carrying out a check on the acreages given on the 4 June Returns through a conversation with the farmers themselves. Therefore, any discrepancy existing between farm areas as digitised from the NFS maps and the Primary Return gives more cause for concern than between the digitised data and the 4 June Census.

This may be further illustrated with reference to the case of farms 101/03, 101/20 and 109/13. These are returned together on an amalgamated Primary Return form, although farm 109/13 also has its own Primary Return. On the NFS maps, the outlining for farm 101/20 was found to be incomplete and no farms numbered as 109/13 could be located. The Primary Return indicated that farm 109/13 should be called 'Novington' and be located in the parish of Plumpton. It should also include a field no. 34, part of which was ploughed up in 1940 and again in 1941. Using this information it was possible to locate Novington Farm on the

map where it was numbered as 97/10 and included in a farm extent comprising two separate sections with a total acreage of 220 as captured in the GIS. However the Primary Return for farm 97/10 shows the area as only 49 acres. This led to the conclusion that the larger section of the farm was actually the 'missing' farm 109/13. This was therefore captured and added to the known extent of farms 101/03 and 101/20. Further deduction was then employed to attempt a reconstruction of the other fields likely to belong to farm 101/20, given the incomplete outlining on the map. The final result was a digitized acreage within 10 per cent of the Primary Return and Census acreage and good agreement in the arable category.

At this point it is apposite to recall that Harvey and Riley interviewed a number of individuals in Devon who were working on the land during the period of the Second World War, focussing on the plough-up campaign and the NFS in detail. They cited a similar example where a farmer, whose family had occupied the same farm for over a century, identified two places where the farm boundary was outlined incorrectly on the NFS map: 'First, there is one area … that belonged to another farm. Secondly, there is an area that never belonged to the farm.' They conclude that:

> The reliance on, and acceptance of, the factual veracity of certain archival sources, particularly those of an 'official', statistical or 'factual' nature is, surprisingly, still often uncontested … The farmer's oral testimony here shows us an example of how the 'official' NFS is simply wrong. The farmer knows about the detailed field-by-field boundaries, and his family's biographical history (of his father buying land from a nearby estate) intersects with and re-enforces his understanding.[24]

Moving on to consider the attempt to recreate land use on a field-by-field basis, it must be accepted that this met with limited success, with only a third of arable totals and less than 30 per cent of grassland totals showing good agreement (within ten per cent). There are a number of factors that could have affected the outcome of this part of the exercise. One of the reasons for the discrepancies could be difficulties in the interpretation of the 1940 aerial photograph, which is necessarily, as described above, often a somewhat subjective process although in many cases the colour, pattern and texture are enough to give a fairly good idea of land use. However, Fuller notes that:

> The temporary nature of crops and cropping practices may … lead to problems in interpretation. A crop changes appearance markedly within the growing season. For example, barley passes from being a low-growing green grass, to a crop with a green, vertical, flowering spike or ear, which in turn yellows with ripening and bows over. It is then, of course, harvested. The crop's appearance has changed four times in a matter of weeks.[25]

Given the August 1940 date for the aerial photograph, it would generally be expected that harvest of wheat, barley and oats would have been in progress, with some already cut and others still standing, and there is evidence for this in the striped appearance of some fields,

[24] D. Harvey and M. Riley, '"Fighting from the fields": developing the British "National Farm" in the Second World War, *J. Historical Geography*, 35 (2009), pp. 504–6.

[25] R. M. Fuller, 'Historical aerial photographs as records of land-use changes: a case study of Ancaster and Normanton parishes, Lincolnshire', *East Midland Geographer,* 8 (1985), p. 221.

although the altitude from which the image was taken makes it difficult to pick out fine detail. The weather in August 1940 was particularly dry and sunny with no rain at all being recorded at the Southampton recording station during this month.[26]

As close in date as the sources are, they still span from August 1940 through to 1942. The aerial photograph was taken in August 1940, the Census in June 1941 and the NFS Primary Returns for Hamsey were completed between June and November 1942. In all cases, except for farm 109/13 (visited by G. Wibberley), the inspection was carried out by J. Halliday, and so the results should not suffer from differences in interpretation between surveyors. The plough-up campaign was at its peak during these years and so considerable land-use changes would be expected to have occurred between 1940 and late 1942. Whilst the Primary Return gives details of the fields ploughed up, in many cases these were shown as 'part' fields and so could not be identified accurately on the GIS. Where complete fields were shown as ploughed up, attempts were made to adjust the figures accordingly and these were successful for two farms. However, as described above, significant differences remained for two other holdings.

VI

It has been claimed that 'the National Farm Survey is unparalleled in the level of detail which it contains about the rural landscape in the mid-twentieth century'.[27] In fact the amount of detail available to researchers is so vast that to date only case studies have been attempted. Thus Harvey and Riley argue persuasively for the value of a micro-historical approach which can 'on the one hand, add depth and "fine grain" to the meta-narratives of "big history", while also setting the "myopia" of local studies into a wider context of "big events"'.[28] This study has attempted to use the wealth of detail contained within the NFS to build a picture of farming in Hamsey parish, East Sussex, in the early 1940s. This has extended Riley and Watkins's work, which concentrated on single case-study farms, to encompass a larger geographical area and by including an entire parish the summary sheets for the 4 June 1941 Agricultural Census could be used as an additional data source. Although a single parish still covers a relatively small area, it forms part of a larger study area spreading across most of the aerial photograph, where the data from the sources examined here have been combined with data from the mid–1930s and immediate post-war decades.[29]

Importantly for those wishing to understand more about British farming during the Second World War, reconstructing the individual farms in Hamsey from the NFS maps and forms has proved to be fraught with difficulty. Hamsey parish was chosen for this study as the data appeared to be reasonably clear and complete, and Hamsey itself was in no way an exceptional parish in agricultural terms, and yet significant issues were encountered with the consistency of the NFS and 4 June Census information. As well as the significant differences in acreage for some farms, further difficulties were due to information being returned in varying ways so that, for example, holdings were amalgamated in some cases and not in others. The information

[26] http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/stationdata/southamptondata.txt [accessed 13 Oct. 2011].

[27] Riley and Watkins, 'Value of the National Farm Survey', p. 204.

[28] Harvey and Riley, 'Fighting from the fields', p. 502.

[29] Taylor, 'GIS-based approach'.

shown on the NFS maps was also found to be suspect and the result of human error in some instances, challenging the notion that a source must be correct just because it is 'official'.

Furthermore, where farm extents were identifiable and were mapped in the GIS, the arbitrariness of the system of allocating farmland to the parish in which the farmer was resident became very apparent, with, for example, over 260 acres of agricultural land situated in Hamsey being recorded in the neighbouring parish of Barcombe. The fragmentation of some holdings was also notable, with farm 09 appearing to include a single field in the parish of Westmeston, almost 2.5 miles from the main farm.

Riley and Watkins had found that 'it was not possible to tie crops and different types of grassland convincingly to individual fields', and this study encountered similar difficulties.[30] It had been anticipated that the deployment here of a more nearly contemporary aerial photograph might allow land use to be reconstructed with more certainty, but this proved not to be the case. Unfortunately the aerial photograph pre-dated some of the plough-up campaign and it proved difficult to adjust the data for this given the large number of 'part' fields shown as ploughed up on the Primary Return.

It is, of course, certainly possible to gain much useful information from the NFS and Agricultural Census, particularly when allied to the power of GIS, and it may simply be the case that, in the end, an exceptionally problematic parish was chosen for this study. However some of the difficulties encountered here mirror those experienced by Riley and Watkins and echo the farmer interviews conducted by Harvey and Riley. Of course, the latter's informants themselves might have been potentially suffering from difficulties associated with accurately recalling information after many years, but there is certainly evidence here to suggest that the veracity of the NFS maps may be questionable in some cases. It is extremely likely that the particular issues described here in relation to the Hamsey data may well be more generally applicable.

Gaining a more complete understanding of farm extents and land use in the early 1940s on a micro-scale can help to add detail and 'colour' to our understanding of the bigger picture and to throw into relief important local and regional variations. It remains an open question as to over how large an area researchers should attempt to reconstruct individual farms. An individual parish is quite possibly too small an area given the large amount of land in Hamsey that was farmed by farmers living in other parishes. Clusters of parishes might be a better solution, although those around the edges of such groups are inevitably likely to include some land farmed from the outside. The issue was faced many years ago by Coppock in his study of Chilterns farming, and he advocated the use of parish groups to overcome, to some extent, the 'agricultural versus civil parish' problem.[31] The availability of the nearly contemporary aerial photograph was beneficial in this study and therefore the choice of area may need to be guided by such pragmatic issues as the data sources available. It may be that the reconstruction of farms is most applicable at a small scale, where sufficient time and attention can be devoted to unravelling the intricacies of each individual farm.

[30] Riley and Watkins, 'Value of the National Farm Survey', p.214.

[31] J. T. Coppock, 'The relationship of farm and parish boundaries: a study in the use of agricultural statistics', *Geographical Stud.* 2 (1955), pp. 12–26; id., 'The parish as a geographical/statistical unit', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 50 (1960), pp. 317–26.

In conclusion, the digitization of the farms from the NFS maps seems to have produced reliable figures for total farm area, although the vagaries of interpreting the aerial photograph mean that the grassland and arable areas may be less sound. However, the accuracy issues associated with the Agricultural Census previously identified by other researchers make it difficult to determine whether land use areas obtained from the combined capture of data from the NFS maps and aerial photograph are more accurate. Further application of the reconstructive technique in other localities where the required combination of data sources are available and where other arable crops (for example, potatoes and field-scale vegetables) and horticultural crops (for instance top and soft fruit) were grown would potentially be worthwhile.

Here the interlinkage of documents provided the source and procedure for the examination of this important period in British agriculture. The NFS itself offers us perhaps the most detailed picture of farming in Britain that has ever been available, and when reading off its data alongside that from aerial photographs, other official sources and oral histories, there is an unparalleled opportunity to drill down from national-level accounts of mid-twentieth century agricultural history to the micro-scale level of the farm, community or parish. The analysis is made that much easier by the use of GIS techniques. But in seizing this opportunity, this paper sets out, necessarily in a detailed and technical manner, the decisions that have to be made, and the discrepancies that may lie in wait to trap the unwary researcher.

Farming and folklore in the contested countryside: the 'Year of the Village' (1978) and the transformation of the Farmers' Union in Flanders*

by Chantal Bisschop and Rien Emmery

Abstract

In the twentieth century, the countryside of densely populated Flanders was increasingly contested by the competing interests of agriculture, recreation, rural housing and industrial development. However, Flanders' largest agricultural organization – the *Boerenbond* – managed to retain its hegemonic position in this multi-purpose countryside by dividing into dual networks of highly specialized Farmers' Guilds and non-professional 'Rural Guilds'. This paper mainly deals with the Flemish 'Year of the Village' (1978) and the pivotal role it played in the achievement of this transformation. Seemingly a governmental campaign to promote rural awareness, we will show that the 'Year of the Village' was actually conceived and planned by the *Boerenbond*'s public relations service and subsequently monopolized by the newly-founded Rural Guilds.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, modernization processes have substantially and increasingly altered rural societies in north-western Europe. This 'Agrarian Transition', as it is known, signifies the transformation of a predominantly agrarian countryside towards a post-productivist and multi-purpose rural realm, both on the economic and the cultural front. On the one hand, a process of 'de-agrarianization' followed the decline of the agrarian sector. On the other hand, 'de-ruralization' entailed the cultural transformations and the decline of traditional political power structures in the countryside due to changing patterns of production, living and settlement.[1] After the Second World War, these processes accelerated and intensified in pace, scale and intensity. The 1960s may be regarded as a turning point. At a time when the European level became a major player in agricultural policy, mainly because of the Common Agricultural Policy, the societal importance of European agriculture dwindled. The continuing modernization, specialization and mechanization of agriculture pushed the

* We are grateful to our colleagues at the Leuven Ruralia Group for their expert advice and comments on the early drafts of this paper and to the editor and anonymous referees for their valuable and constructive comments.

[1] Gunther Mai, 'Die Agrarische Transition. Agrarische Gesellschaften in Europa und die Herausforderungen der industriellen Moderne im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 33 (2007), p. 471.

rural youth and women out of the farming sector towards the booming industrial and service sectors. The active farming population decreased and aged rapidly.[2] As a result, professional agricultural organizations in several European countries lost significant numbers of members. For example, between 1960 and 1990, the Danish farmers' unions (for smaller and bigger farmers) shrank by 60 per cent[3] and the national Catholic, liberal and Protestant farmers' unions in the Netherlands saw their membership decline by 25 to 30 per cent.[4] In Britain, the National Farmers Union lost over half of its members between 1953 and 1990.[5]

Simultaneously, the countryside gained new roles and new inhabitants. Improvements in transport opened up rural areas to non-agricultural functions, such as housing, industrial activities and recreation. The rapid transformation of the countryside in Western Europe – the Agrarian Transition, cultural and economic urbanization, migration and globalization – prompted many actors to reflect on the true meaning of 'the countryside'. The less pronounced the difference between the urban and the rural, the greater the need to reflect on the definition of rurality and its specific characteristics.[6] As a result, 'the rural' acquired a multiplicity of meanings, subject to a hegemonic struggle through which several societal actors (political parties, farmers' organizations, environmental groups, etc.) contested the countryside. This heightened the importance of discourses of the 'rural', as actors attempted to secure institutional support for their views on rurality.[7] Mormont rightfully claims that social actors' representations of rurality are significant because they determine specific options for the actual development of the countryside.[8] Gradually, the rural is reduced to a 'category' imbued with different meanings and employed in different ways by actors wishing to institutionalize their particular definition.[9]

Across Europe, a new representation of 'rural consciousness' emerged as 'village action' gained popularity. Around the second half of the 1970s, grassroots rural village action groups or movements were founded in many countries in response to the rapidly changing countryside.

[2] Ibid., pp. 508–11; Bertrand Hervieu, 'Ruptures identitaires et fondamentalisme agraire', in Marcel Jollivet and Nicole Eizner (eds), *L'Europe et ses campagnes* (1996), p. 133.

[3] Flemming Just, 'Danemark. La gestion d'une agriculture intensive', in Bertrand Hervieu and Rose-Marie Lagrave (eds), *Les syndicats agricoles en Europe* (1992), p. 66.

[4] Rolf Van der Woude, *Op goede gronden: geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Christelijke boeren- en tuindersbond (1918–1995)* [*On good grounds: the history of the Dutch Protestant Farmers' and Gardeners' Association (1918–1995)*], (2001), p. 510; Marinus Smits, *Boeren met beleid: honderd jaar Katholieke Nederlandse boeren- en tuindersbond 1896–1996* [*Farmers with policy: one hundred years of the Catholic Dutch Farmers' and Gardeners' Association, 1896–1996*], (1996), pp. 310–12.

[5] Mark Cleary, Andrew Flynn and Philip Lowe, 'Royaume-Uni. Les fragilités d'un monopole en Angleterre et au Pays de Galles', in Hervieu and Lagrave (eds), *Les syndicats agricoles*, pp. 234–35; Mark Cleary, 'Royaume-Uni: Sous la houlette de la NFU', in CEVIPOF (ed.), *Les organisations syndicales et professionnelles agricoles en Europe* (1989), p. 115; Rolf G. Heinze and Helmut Voelzkow, 'Organizational problems for the German Farmers' Association and alternative policy options', *Sociologia Ruralis* 33 (1993), pp. 26–27.

[6] Paul Cloke, Marcus Doel, David Matless *et al.*, *Writing the rural. Five cultural geographies* (1994), p. 5; Paul Cloke and Mark Goodwin, 'Rural change: structured coherence or unstructured incoherence?', *Terra* 105 (1993), pp. 166–74.

[7] Andy Pratt, 'Discourses of rurality: Loose talk or social struggle?', *J. Rural Studies* 12 (1996), pp. 69–70.

[8] Marc Mormont, 'Rural nature and urban natures', *Sociologia Ruralis* 27 (1987), p. 3; Marc Mormont, 'Vers une redéfinition du rural', *Recherches Sociologiques* 20 (1989), p. 332.

[9] Mormont, 'Redéfinition', p. 349.

In 1975, the Dutch Association of Small Towns and Villages was founded in the Netherlands to protect village interests and promote rural quality of life. In 1976, the first Village Action Groups were created in Scandinavia. In the southern, French-speaking Belgian region of Wallonia, a predecessor of the *Fondation Rurale de Wallonie* was founded in the mid-seventies. And in 1980, the Rural Voice appeared in England. These local grassroots action groups were established to address issues of rural decline, agricultural change, migration, centralization and those posed by the EU accession.[10] They were similar in that they had non-agricultural origins and were conceived in a bottom-up fashion.

However, in Flanders – the northern, Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, home to about 60 per cent of the country's ten million inhabitants – the situation was quite different. Flanders had developed a very ambiguous relationship with its rural dimension over the course of the twentieth century, especially following the Second World War. With its early industrialization and relatively weak agricultural sector, it is an interesting case study for rural change in Europe. Ever since medieval times, the region has had an exceptionally dense population, with a multitude of towns and chains of rural settlements, connected by a well-established transport network. Even in the 1930s, the farming population in the villages was outnumbered by blue- and white-collar workers, who lived in the countryside but commuted to their jobs in nearby cities and industrial centres using an efficient public transport system. Decentralizing housing and industry had always been an objective of government policy. Flemish rurality is therefore quite paradoxical, both because of the lack of large agglomerations and the strong urbanization of the countryside, often prompting planners to label the region one large 'nebular city'.[11]

How did the agricultural sector cope with these changes? As in the rest of Europe, the Flemish farming sector modernized and professionalized rapidly. However, unlike Wallonia or countries like the Netherlands and Denmark, the Flemish agricultural sector was characterized by relatively small but very intensive farms integrated into a dynamic agro-alimentary industry. The number of farmers in Flanders plunged from 415,183 in 1950 to just 198,319 in 1970 and 142,843 in 1990, a decline of over 50 per cent in just 20 years and a decrease of over 75 per cent in 40 years.[12] Even though the post-war membership figures of the *Boerenbond* (Flanders' largest farmers' union) decreased slightly along with the shrinking agricultural population, it captured an ever-growing share of the remaining Flemish farmers, up to roughly 51 per cent in 1964.[13] The two smaller, non-Catholic farmers' unions – the *Boerenfront* (Farmers' Front, 1937) and the *Algemeen Boeren Syndicaat* (General Farmers' Syndicate, 1962) – were of marginal or

[10] Vanessa Halhead, 'Rural movements in Europe: Scandinavia and the Accession States', *Social Policy and Administration* 40 (2006), pp. 596–611.

[11] Marc Mormont, 'Belgique. A la recherche des spécificités rurales', in Marcel Jollivet (ed.), *Vers un rural postindustriel* (1997), pp. 21–4.

[12] Mormont, 'Belgique', p. 23; Leen Van Molle, *Chacun pour tous. Le Boerenbond belge* (1990), p. 365; Annual Belgian agricultural census, 1950–70. These numbers represent farmers (male and female) and farm workers in the *Boerenbond*'s entire field of action, meaning Flanders, Brussels and the province of Walloon Brabant.

[13] Calculations by the authors. Annual reports of the *Boerenbond*, 1945–90; Information Centre of the Farmers' Union (*Boerenbond*) and Rural Guilds (*Landelijke Gilden*) [hereafter BB INFODOC], Annual Belgian agricultural census, 1950–90. These figures represent Flanders plus Brussels and the province of Walloon Brabant.

local importance and certainly offered a less developed system of economic and social support for their members.[14]

However, these changes within the rural population were not reflected by the emergence of village action. Even before the Second World War, many villages had societies for local history, branches of the national conservation organizations and of the national pillarized[15] organizations for workers or the self-employed, but these types of groups did not champion a 'rural identity'. The same holds true for the rag-tag collection of local or regional organizations that concerned themselves with nature protection, beautification, open space planning and ecology under the umbrella of the national *Bond Beter Leefmilieu* (League for a Better Environment, 1971). These groups sometimes teamed up with farmers in protests against locally unwelcome developments, but were for the most part glorified NIMBY-committees that did not act out of a distinct feeling for the rural.[16] The only initiative similar to village action covering all of Flanders was the 'Year of the Village' (in Dutch *Jaar van het Dorp*), a 1978 governmental campaign aimed at motivating individuals, organizations and village authorities to assume an active stance in the process of rural restructuring.

In this paper we will examine the peculiarities of the situation in Flanders, and the pivotal part played by the *Boerenbond* and the 'Year of the Village'. Firstly, we will present a brief outline of the history of the *Boerenbond,* Flanders' largest agricultural organization. We will especially concern ourselves with the ambiguous stance of the *Boerenbond* towards the 'Agrarian Transition'. We will argue that, by transforming itself into parallel networks of highly specialized and professional farmers' guilds and a broader 'Rural Movement', the *Boerenbond* managed to keep its power hold on the Flemish countryside. Specifically, we will demonstrate that the 'Year of the Village', although officially a governmental initiative, was conceived and almost entirely planned by key figures within the *Boerenbond*, tailored to the network of the recently founded 'Rural Guilds' and seized upon as an opportunity to institutionalize a specific rural ideology. In short, 1978 represents a pivotal moment for assessing the broader hegemonic struggle within the Flemish countryside as well as for the transformation of its largest agricultural organization.

I

The *Boerenbond* was founded in 1890 by Catholic politicians in support of the predominantly Catholic peasantry suffering from the agrarian crisis. The founders of the *Boerenbond* were

[14] Chantal Bisschop and Leen Van Molle, 'De landbouwersorganisaties', in Patricia Van den Eeckhout and Guy Vanthemsche (eds), *Bronnen voor de studie van het hedendaagse België, 19e–21e eeuw* [*Sources for the study of contemporary Belgium, 19th–21st century*] (2009), pp. 903–14; Bart Coppein, 'De hand aan de ploeg. Vlaamse landbouwersorganisaties en Vlaamsnationalistische partijen in de twintigste eeuw', *Wetenschappelijke tijdingen* (2009), pp. 67–87.

[15] Pillarization refers to the political and social segregation of Belgian society along ideological lines, most prominent from the 1880s until the 1960s. The Catholic, liberal and socialist political parties integrated unions, media and leisure organizations in three subcultural networks or 'pillars'. Staf Hellemans, *Strijd om de moderniteit: sociale bewegingen en verzuiling in Europa sinds 1800* [*Struggle for modernity: social movements and pillarization in Europe since 1800*] (1990), pp. 266–71.

[16] Rien Emmery, 'Looking past the rural idyll. "De Kat", or televising the post-productivist countryside', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 87 (2009), pp. 793–809.

inspired by German corporatism and modelled their farmers' guilds on the medieval guilds and the *Rheinische Bauernverein*. Additionally, with the introduction of universal suffrage in mind, they wanted to 'protect' farmers against socialist influences. The *Boerenbond* was set up as an umbrella structure over a network of parochial farmers' guilds, tightly affiliated to the Catholic church and the Catholic party. It was conceived as a 'total' organization, aiming 'to protect not only the professional but also the social, moral, religious and political interests of its members and their families to form a powerful Christian farming class'.[17]

Consequently, from the late nineteenth century onwards, the *Boerenbond* developed an extensive range of services for farmers and their families including an insurance company, a financial institution and a cooperative for buying and selling cattle feed, fertilizers etc. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the *Boerenbond* also founded branches for farmers' women and youth.[18] Membership quickly increased[19]; virtually every parish in Flanders had its own farmers' guild, in which the local priest served as the chaplain. These guilds nestled themselves in the small village communities that were for the most part already structured around the church and local gentry. The *Boerenbond* was also deeply involved in the political system through its representation in the Catholic party. Its interests were guarded by the prominence of sympathetic experts in the agricultural administration, including some Ministers of Agriculture. In short, its well-developed centralized structure, strong economic branches and religious and political affiliation enabled the *Boerenbond* to become a virtually hegemonic farmers' organization in Flanders and to play an influential part in the development of the political, economic, social and cultural life in the countryside.[20]

Over the course of the twentieth century, the *Boerenbond* continually tried to adapt and respond to social change. The 'Agrarian Transition' played a large part in prompting the restructuring of the *Boerenbond* in 1971. Following the Second World War, the remaining farmers tended to specialize. These modern farmers no longer felt at home in the 'old-fashioned' parochial farmers' guilds, which were still centred around the older mixed family farms. The social position of the *Boerenbond* was further threatened by the rapidly decreasing farming population. Fewer farmers meant fewer members, less revenue and diminished political influence.[21] Similar agricultural organizations throughout Europe such as the *Deutsche Bauernverein* encountered the same organizational challenges.[22]

Aware of this fast-changing farming landscape, the *Boerenbond* began to reflect about its future. In the early 1960s, the recruitment of sociologically trained employees – instead of

[17] The Boerenbond's charter, 1890. Marc Mormont and Bogdan Van Doninck, 'Belgique. L'Hégemonie du Boerenbond', in Hervieu and Lagrave (eds), *Les syndicats agricoles*, pp. 27–8.

[18] *Boerinnenbond* for women (1911); *Boerenjeugdbond* for boys (1929) and for girls (1931).

[19] From approximately 20,000 members in 1900 to 98,620 in 1945. In 1945, the *Boerinnenbond* or women's branch counted 87,731 members and the youth branch roughly 30,000. Van Molle, *Chacun pour tous*, pp. 365–7.

[20] Mormont and Van Doninck, 'L'hégémonie du Boerenbond', pp. 27–31; Van Molle, *Chacun pour tous*, pp. 34–7.

[21] Documentation and Research Centre for Religion, Culture and Society, Leuven [hereafter KADOC], Boerenbond [hereafter BB], Centrale Bestuurs- en Adviesorganen [hereafter CAB], 2.3.3., Boon to Hinnekens, 26 Sept. 1966; note Eggers with handwritten excerpts by Tijskens and De Bisschop, 20 Feb. 1967; note De Bisschop, 20 Feb. 1967; note Tijskens, 21 Feb. 1967.

[22] Heinze and Voelzkow, 'Organizational problems', pp. 26–7.

merely agricultural engineers and lawyers – demonstrated that new ideas were gaining ground. The recruitment of highly educated staff members was a determined and common strategy in every branch of the *Boerenbond*. This tendency cannot be separated from the general democratization of the higher education and the development of social sciences at that time.[23] Moreover, from the 1960s onwards, new chairmen felt the need to rethink and restructure the organization and took the lead in the reshaping of the *Boerenbond*.[24] The management of the *Boerenbond* regarded farmers as traditionalist and somewhat closed-minded, unable to deal with the rapid changes in their profession, neighbourhood or village. The *Boerenbond* considered itself the ideal agent to promote the 'mobilization of the farmer in contemporary modern society'. An additional, non-professional, socio-cultural education for the male rural population was therefore proposed, similar to existing practices within the youth division and the women's division of the *Boerenbond*. These branches had also long opened their doors to non-agricultural members. The women's branch in particular served as a key inspiration for the *Boerenbond*'s administrators. Farming women were deemed to be more sensitive to the cultural and social aspects of life, whereas men seemed merely preoccupied with farming. Moreover, to reflect the new configuration, the youth organization changed its name from 'Young Farmers Union' (*Boerenjeugdbond*) to 'Catholic Rural Youth' (*Katholieke Landelijke Jeugd* or KLJ) in 1965. The women's movement (*Boerinnenbond*) followed in 1969, first informally renamed 'Catholic Rural Women' and later officially adopting the name *Katholiek Vormingswerk voor Landelijke Vrouwen* (KVLV or 'Catholic Socio-Economic Education for Rural Women') in 1971.[25]

Discussions and consultations between 1966 and 1968 led to the vague idea of a broad 'Rural Movement'. While maintaining its basic inspiration – 'Putting the farmer's fate in the farmer's own hands' – the *Boerenbond* acknowledged that profound social changes now made the realization of this goal dependent on new means.[26] In 1970 both the board of directors and the *Bondsraad* or 'parliament' of the *Boerenbond* approved a renewed charter. From that moment, the *Boerenbond* was split up into a highly specialized professional branch consisting of male farm guilds and agricultural circles for farming women (Agra-Circles) and farming youth (Green Circles); and a parallel, broader Rural Movement consisting of Rural Guilds, the

[23] Based on several interviews with *Boerenbond* employees, made as part of the ongoing doctoral research of Chantal Bisschop. However, the link between *Boerenbond* and the academic discipline of sociology at the University of Leuven existed long before the 1960s. For example, in 1936 Professor Van Dievoet – a jurist, politician and prominent figure in the *Boerenbond* – initiated the foundation of the new Institute for Political Science and Sociology. Emmanuel Gerard and Kaat Wils, 'Catholics and sociology in Leuven from Désiré Mercier to Jacques Leclercq: a process of appropriation', in Liliane Voyé and Jaak Billiet (eds), *Sociology and religion: an ambiguous relationship* (1999), pp. 49–50.

[24] The consecutive chairmen of the *Boerenbond* were Alfons Conix (1940–45); Gilbert Mullie (1936–40; 1945–61); Maurice Van Hemelrijck (1961–64); Constant Boon (1964–77); Andries Dequae (1977–81) and Jan Hinnekens (1981–92). Hinnekens had been First secretary of the *Boerenbond* from 1960 to 1977. KADOC, BB CAB, 2.3.3., Boon to Hinnekens, 26 Sept. 1966, note Hinnekens, 21 Nov. 1966; BB CAB, 6.3.4, 'Dagelijks Bestuur', 7 Nov. 1966, 21 Nov. 1966 and 19 Dec. 1966.

[25] KADOC, BB CAB, 6.3.4, 'Dagelijks Bestuur', 21 Apr. 1969; BB CAB, 2.3.3, notes and reports on phase C, Apr. 1967 – Nov. 1967; BB Kultuurdienst [hereafter KD], 1, note Nackaerts, 24 Sept. 1964.

[26] KADOC, BB CAB, 2.3.3, note Hinnekens, 7 Aug. 1969.

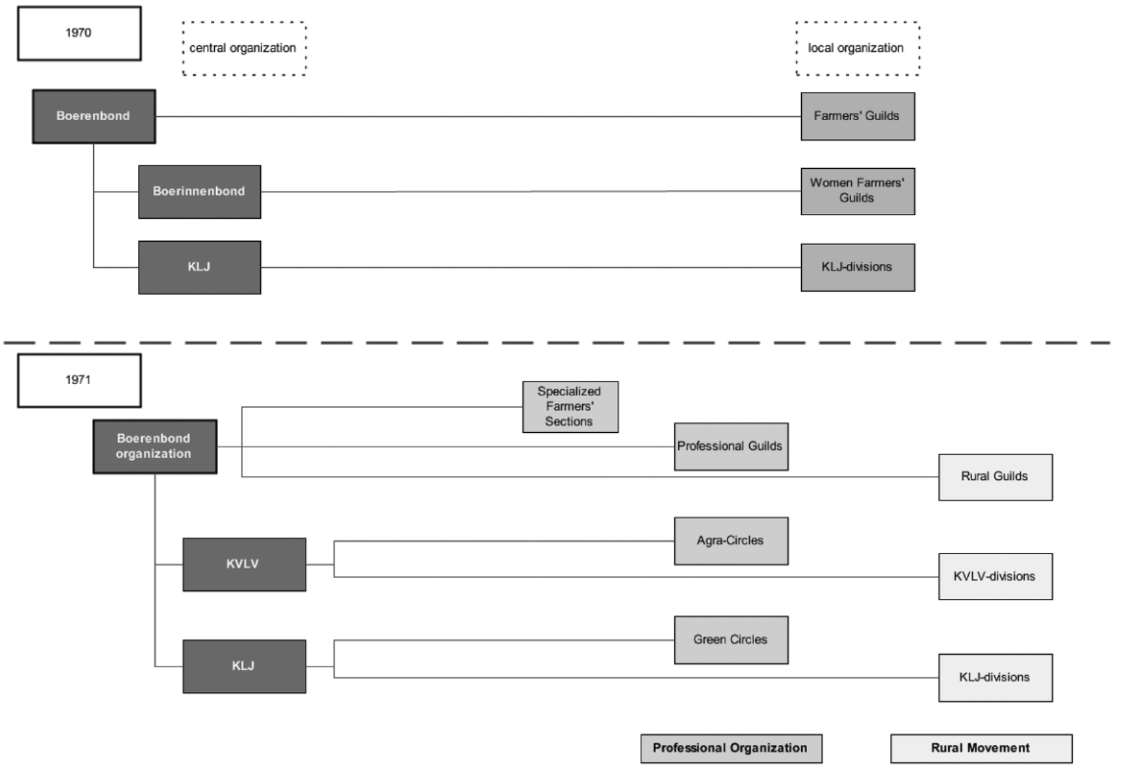


FIGURE 1. Structure of the *Boerenbond*, before and after 1971 (chart by Chantal Bisschop)

KVLV and the KLJ (Figure 1).[27] Notwithstanding an increasing focus on the socio-cultural education of farmers, it must not be forgotten that the *Boerenbond* remained first and foremost an advocate for the economic interests of its members. The debate about the 'Rural Movement' was mainly aimed at modernizing and strengthening the *Boerenbond* as a *professional* organization. The first notion of broader 'Rural Guilds' open to non-agricultural members even came from within the economic and financial divisions of the *Boerenbond*, on the lookout for new revenues from an extended client base.[28]

Although this reorganization largely determined its future, the *Boerenbond* presented its new corporate structure as a practical adjustment, not as a spectacular change of course. They emphasized the gradualness of the reorganization, likening it to existing trends within the KLJ and KVLV.[29] Nevertheless, the new structure required a shift in corporate attitudes on different levels, which was not always easy to obtain.

The first few years were mainly dedicated to a continuation of activities within the professional

[27] Official announcement of the reorganization, General Assembly 23 June 1970; Approval of the renewed Charter by the *Bondsraad* on 25 Oct. and 22 Nov. 1970; Approval of the derivative Charters on 31 Jan. 1971.

[28] KADOC, BB CAB, 2.3.3, notes and reports on consultation phases, Jan. 1966 – Apr. 1967; note Hinnekens, 7 Aug. 1969; BB CAB, 6.3.4, 'Dagelijks Bestuur', 3 Apr. 1964; BB CAB, 2.3.3, notes and reports of phase B, Apr. 1967 – Nov. 1967.

[29] KADOC, BB CAB, 2.3.3, Proposal for the reorganization by the *Hoofdbestuur*, Mar. 1970.

(male) organization. For practical reasons, professional farmers' guilds were established across parochial boundaries, next to specific sections arranged according to specialization. The 'old' parochial guilds were merely renamed 'Rural Guilds', without any deep reflection on their role. For example, a dairy farmer would become a member of the professional guild of his municipality (not his parish) and of the dairy section of his region. Automatically, he also remained a member of his old parochial guild, now called 'Rural Guild'. By slowly and silently intensifying their rurally oriented activities, these guilds would then gradually evolve to become part of a broader rural movement.

The first edition of *Levend Land,* the journal of the Rural Guilds, was issued in January 1972. From the summer of 1972 onwards, a few employees of the *Boerenbond* were charged with the organization of the Rural Guilds. For each province, a single officer within the professional organization was appointed to oversee the Rural Guilds.[30] A long-term strategy was put into motion to energize the committees of the local guilds, specifically looking for new, younger and not exclusively agricultural representatives. The *Boerenbond* also launched 'Objective 5000', a special campaign for membership recruitment. The goal was to halt the annual member loss of about 3 per cent and attract 5000 new members, ideally half of them professional farmers.[31] Competition between guilds was stimulated through contests and prizes for the most successful membership drives.

At first, these efforts generated a positive effect.[32] By 1974, over a thousand new members – three quarters of whom were non-farmers – had joined the Rural Guilds. But in 1975 and 1976, the new guilds *lost* over 5000 members, mostly professional farmers, whose numbers continued to dwindle.[33] This reduced membership level also illustrated a general feeling of malaise within the newly established Rural Movement. From the outset, reactions recorded by the field staff of the *Boerenbond* had not been universally positive. Even Maurice Beddegenoots, director of the *Organisatiediensten* (OD or 'Organizational Services'), admits that he initially had his doubts about the future of the Rural Guilds.[34] Moreover, despite the extensive consultation undertaken in the years of reorganization, many farmers decried the lack of shared decision-making and the top-down approach of the restructuring. Beddegenoots had to rebut these allegations in a special memorandum, reminding members that the Rural Movement was not the invention of the Organizational Services Department but merely a dynamic and loyal execution of earlier decisions.[35]

It is striking that, in the mid-seventies, many people in the *Boerenbond* shared the view that the Rural Movement had started off on the wrong foot. Farmers' guilds had been abruptly renamed Rural Guilds without sufficient explanation. Throughout the planning of the reorganization, there had been scarcely any reflection on their purpose. The Rural Movement was, from the outset, essentially an empty box. It is significant that Beddegenoots encouraged officials to

[30] KADOC, BB KD, 1, First meeting of the provincial representatives of the Rural Movement [hereafter MPR], 7 June 1972.

[31] KADOC, BB Organisatiediensten [hereafter OD], D.192, note Beddegenoots, July 1973.

[32] KADOC, BB OD 95–128, MPR, 5 Dec. 1973.

[33] Membership dropped from 84,395 in 1974 to 79,433 in 1976. Annual Reports of the *Boerenbond* and Rural Guilds, 1974–77.

[34] Interview with Maurice Beddegenoots, 12 Mar. 2010.

[35] KADOC, BB KD, 3, note Beddegenoots, 8 Sept. 1972.

get to know the local needs of the rural population, to ensure a dynamic Rural Guild.[36] The guilds themselves were often reluctant or even defiant about the shift, with reports of explicit opposition to the inclusion of non-farmers in committees or even the guild as such. Especially in the most agricultural areas of Flanders, many still called themselves 'farming guilds'.[37]

This vicious circle was broken by both a change in approach and an ideological deepening of the Rural Movement. Firstly, more attention was paid to the ongoing training and supervision of the existing committees of the Rural Guilds and to the recruitment of new committee members. This required a major shift in attitudes for the still heavily agrarian and technically skilled corps of consultants. Secondly, the adoption of the decree for the 'socio-cultural education for adults in a group context' on 4 July 1975 marked an important step in the right direction. The resulting governmental subsidies provided for a fully funded staff and, from that moment on, several *Boerenbond* consultants were exclusively responsible for socio-cultural activities.[38] Thirdly, at around the same time, a consensus was reached about an intensified political engagement of the Rural Movement.[39] The Rural Guilds adopted the practice of 'theme years' highlighting one aspect of village life, for instance 'A school for each village' in 1974-75.[40]

The Rural Movement embraced a functional definition of the countryside, as a separate spatial category with some typical characteristics and functions (agriculture but also green belt areas, recreation, tourism and rural dwellings). Considering the growing influence of sociologically-trained employees within the *Boerenbond*, it is not surprising that this definition subscribed entirely to the sociological thinking of that time.[41] However, although the leaders of the Rural Movement were convinced of this clear functional definition, some doubt remained about the specificity and the future of the countryside: 'The Flemish countryside is urbanizing continuously. In some areas this process has reached the point where the rural specificity is hardly recognizable'.[42]

The Rural Movement's contemplation of the 'inherent character' of the countryside went hand in hand with musings on the position of the *Boerenbond* itself within that changing countryside. From the mid-seventies onwards, more attention was paid to identity formation as a tool for institutional survival. The most important expression of this new identity consciousness was the *Grondvisie* of the Rural Movement, a new set of maxims published in 1975. It consisted of an analysis of the rural *status quaestionis*, followed by a clear formulation of purposes and strategies. The aim of this declaration of intent was to justify the existence of the movement by defining a distinct rural identity. 'Without a clearly formulated image in

[36] KADOC, BB OD, 95–128, MPR, 5 Nov. 1975; BB KD, 3, note Beddegenoots, 8 Sept. 1972.

[37] KADOC, BB OD, 95–128, MPR, 5 Nov. 1975; Interview with Edgard Debergh and Julia Baert, 30 June 2008.

[38] The *Boerenbond* lobbied intensely for the passing of this decree. Annual Report of the Rural Guilds, 1977–78; KADOC, BB OD, 95–128, MPR, 4 Dec. 1974.

[39] KADOC, BB OD, 95–128, MPR, 4 Jan. 1974; BB OD, 95–128, Official approval on the National Advisory Board of the Rural Movement, 9 Feb. 1974.

[40] KADOC, Boerenjeugdbond/Katholieke Landelijke Jeugd [hereafter: BJB/KLJ], 4.7.2.13, 23 Mar. 1979; BJB/KLJ, 4.7.2.8, Jan. 1976.

[41] Paul Cloke, 'Conceptualizing rurality', in Paul Cloke (ed.), *Handbook of rural studies* (2006), p. 20.

[42] KADOC, BB KLJ 4.7.2.13, *Grondvisie* of the Rural Movement, 14 Apr. 1975; BB CAB, 2.3.3., note De Bisschop, 7 Oct. 1969.

respect of the members, employees and the outside world, the movement cannot achieve the dynamism and depth that it needs to reach its objectives.'[43]

The 'Year of the Village' in 1978 is, without a doubt, the best case study for an analysis of this process of identity formation. The remainder of this paper will outline how the *Boerenbond* presented itself with an excellent opportunity for both the crafting and the institutionalization of a particular rural identity.

II

(a) Planning

Outwardly, all official statements presented the 'Year of the Village' as an initiative of several ministries within the government of Christian-Democrat Prime Minister Leo Tindemans. The Departments of Dutch Culture and Flemish Affairs, Agriculture and Public Transport were the principal promoters of the campaign.[44] The 'official' explanation about the origins of the campaign is rather dubious. Supposedly, the Minister of Dutch Culture and Flemish Affairs, Rika De Backer, was persuaded of the necessity of a 'countryside campaign' after attending a joint seminar organized by two rural organizations from the villages of Balegem and Zandhoven in 1976. De Backer's *chef de cabinet* Johan Fleerackers was present at the seminar the next year, where his speech explicitly credited the people of Balegem and Zandhoven with the bottom-up conception of the 'village action' represented by the 'Year of the Village'.[45]

In reality, the campaign was almost entirely conceived by the *Boerenbond*. In the spring of 1975, around the time when the *Grondvisie* of the Rural Movement was approved, the concept first emerged when the *Boerenbond*'s public relations officer and political liaison Paul Marck met with Fleerackers to discuss the *status quaestionis* of the Flemish countryside. Fleerackers pitched the idea of a special campaign, similar to that of the ongoing European Monument Year (1975), to protect and preserve village culture. Marck urged the *Boerenbond* administrators to embrace this suggestion. He drafted the first proposal for a 'Year of the Village', which was officially approved by the executive committee of the *Boerenbond* in May 1976. A month later, the *Boerenbond* sent De Backer a very detailed proposal for the 'Year of the Village', including a description of the different steps to be taken in preparation. The *Boerenbond* pledged the 'dynamic cooperation' of its Rural Movement, consisting of the Rural Guilds, the KVLV and the KLJ, but 'preferred' the creation of a national committee to deal with the day-to-day organization of the campaign. Unsurprisingly, De Backer welcomed the idea and immediately invited a *Boerenbond* delegation for preparatory talks with her advisors.[46]

[43] KADOC, BB OD, D19–1I, note Snaet, 3 May 1974; BB OD, 95–128, MPR, 14 May 1974; KLJ, 4.7.2.13, 14 Apr. 1975 and Annual Report of the Rural Guilds, 1975–76.

[44] These three ministries were supported by other (quasi-)governmental agencies, such as the Association of Belgian Cities and Municipalities (*Vereniging van Belgische Steden en Gemeenten* or VBSG), the General Commissariat for Tourism (*Commissariaat-generaal voor Toerisme*), the Department of Planning (*Landinrichting*) and the State Service for the Preservation of Monuments and Landscapes (*Rijksdienst voor Monumenten en Landschapszorg*).

[45] *Dorpskrant*, Sept. 1977, p. 13.

[46] KADOC, Katholiek Vormingswerk van Landelijke Vrouwen [hereafter KVLV], 78, Marck to Hinnekens, Beddegenoots en Lievens, 30 Apr. 1975, KVLV, 78,

Paul Marck then drafted a working paper on the practical organization of the 'Year of the Village', which – due to the 'consensus atmosphere' surrounding the idea at that time – he urged should be held no later than 1978. Undoubtedly, his recommendation was also inspired by the municipal mergers that were, at the same time, being heavily contested by local authorities because they would rob many small villages of their longstanding self-government. These mergers, more ambitious than the previous rounds in 1964 and 1970 that had already reduced the original number of 2663 municipalities by approximately 300, would soon reconstitute them as a mere 589 local authorities.[47] A campaign like the 'Year of the Village' was exactly the kind of gesture required to highlight the prized individuality of every village.

Marck envisioned a steering committee consisting of all branches of the *Boerenbond*, the ministries concerned (Culture, Public Transport, Agriculture) and several (semi-)governmental institutions. He also eyed other organizations in the fields of social tourism, the environment and local history, but these never joined the steering committee. Marck singled out the Rural Movement to undertake the important task of 'animation' in the villages.[48]

It is no coincidence that all the ministers involved hailed from the *Christelijke Volkspartij* (CVP or 'Christian People's Party'), which was founded shortly after the Second World War as the successor of the Catholic Party. In the late 1970s, the Christian Democratic CVP, which had been part of coalition governments for the previous 20 years, was at a new height in its political power. Especially in Flanders, the 'catch-all' party appealed to a large swathe of the electorate (workers, retailers, farmers), especially in rural areas. As with the Catholic Party, the CVP became the *Boerenbond*'s preferred political partner. In 1950, all *Boerenbond* representatives holding an electoral office for the CVP joined forces in the *Centraal Comité voor Land- en Tuinbouwbelangen* (CCLT, Central Committee on Agricultural and Horticultural Interests), which met several times a year.[49]

Although continually represented as a grassroots campaign catering to an existing need in the countryside, the Year of the Village's organization was unquestionably structured in a top-down fashion. On a day-to-day basis, the campaign was run by a central secretariat, the 'National Service', managed by an agricultural engineer who had been an occasional member of the *Boerenbond*'s educational staff.[50] The National Service consisted mainly of staff members seconded from the co-operating ministries and participating institutions, including many high-profile *Boerenbond* employees. This was due to the fact that there was no official campaign budget for the 'Year of the Village': all costs had to be covered by the budgets of the ministries involved. Nevertheless, the actual basic unit of the campaign was delegated to the municipal level. Villages were to establish their own 'task force' during an 'open meeting' with the population. In the end, the campaign sought to co-ordinate all existing

Note 46 *continued*
'Dagelijks Bestuur', 3 May 1976; KVLV, 78, Boon to De Backer, 4 June 1976; KVLV, 78, De Backer to Boon, 22 June 1976.

[47] Theo Luykx, *Politieke geschiedenis van België, deel 2 van 1944 tot 1985* [*Political History of Belgium, part 2, from 1944 to 1985*] (1985), pp. 674–75; Rudolf Maes, 'De samenvoeging van de gemeenten en de gemeentelijke bestuurskracht', *Res Publica* 18 (1976), pp. 275–313.

[48] KADOC, KVLV, 78, note Marck, 29 Sept. 1976.

[49] Jozef Smits, 'De standenvertegenwoordiging in de Christelijke Volkspartij en de Parti Social Chrétien', *Res Publica* 24 (1982), pp. 84–5.

[50] KADOC, KVLV, 78, Marck to Boon *et al.*, 11 Feb. 1977.

neighbourhood councils, local action committees, socio-cultural, recreational and environmental organizations behind a 'singular community project' based upon 'unanimous concern' for the countryside's future.[51] At the end of 1978, the final report would itemize 2075 separate activities throughout all participating Flemish villages, of which 70 per cent were initiated by 'local organizations' (mostly the Rural Guilds, KVLV and KLJ), 16.5 per cent by the 'grassroots' municipal task forces (in which *Boerenbond* organizations generally took part), and 13.5 per cent by the municipal authorities.[52]

During and leading up to the 'Year of the Village', the National Service organized several colloquia and seminars for Flemish and foreign experts to discuss rural issues. The campaign itself was announced several months in advance. Prime Minister Leo Tindemans (CVP) – a former minister of Agriculture and also a member of the CCLT – officially proclaimed the 'Year of the Village' at a forum gathering all Flemish mayors on 22 March 1977. In the ensuing months, the sponsoring ministries held several press conferences to inform the general public of the aspirations and ambitions of the campaign.[53]

To fuel discussion at the local level, the National Service had prepared a slide show and tape recording highlighting the rural issues that would be tackled. They even encouraged local committees to assemble their own slide shows. Top of the bill was a short film about the 'Year of the Village' offering specific suggestions to improve the village environment. Municipal task forces were asked to conduct a survey among the rural population, chronicling their complaints and expectations concerning housing, employment, education, well-being, services and traffic in the countryside. These 'inventory files' were subsequently processed by the University of Antwerp and presented as a blueprint for a renewed rural policy at a colloquium in December 1978. The official aim of the campaign was to have a lasting influence on rural society, especially at the municipal level, regarded as 'closest to the population'. Apart from several local and regional initiatives devoting attention and funds to the quality of rural life, the Belgian government decided to support 'socially responsible projects on village and countryside renewal' with 300 million Belgian francs in subsidies, allocated by Royal Decree on 30 March 1978.[54]

The National Service provided all participating village committees with thousands of promotional items including posters, stickers, flags and T-shirts. It also published several brochures on the issues of social alienation, country planning and rural well-being.[55] Combined with a booklet providing practical instructions, these thematic brochures were to serve as guidelines for the initial discussion panels among the rural population.[56] The National Service even hired out an educational staff of 140 lecturers to boost local activities. Most of the information and guidelines were (at least partially) announced or reprinted in an *ad hoc* quarterly magazine called *Dorpskrant* ('Village Paper'). Contact with the general public was established at 'Action and Idea Fairs' held in each of the five Flemish provinces. These

[51] *Dorpskrant*, July 1977, pp. 20 and 24.

[52] *De Boer*, 15 Dec. 1978.

[53] *Dorpskrant*, May 1978, p. 9; *Levend Land*, Sept. 1977, p. 5; *Dorpskrant,* Sept. 1977, pp. 8–10.

[54] *Dorpskrant*, Sept. 1977, pp. 11–12; July 1978, pp. 20–2; Oct. 1978, pp. 2–4 and 8; Dec. 1978, p. 17.

[55] *Samen leven: over de vervreemding van de plaatselijke bevolking* (1978); *Ruimtelijke ordening: over de ordening van de plattelandsruimte* (1978); *Wel-zijn,* (1978).

[56] Rika De Backer-Van Ocken, *Het jaar van het dorp: hoe werken aan de basis* (1978).



FIGURE 2. Official logo of the 'Year of the Village' (KADOC, collection *Boerenbond*)

fairs were meant to be a source of inspiration for local administrators and an opportunity to exchange ideas on campaign projects. Screenings of the slide show and film were arranged and ample quantities of the brochures and promotional items were distributed among interested parties. Every participating national, regional or local institution was assigned an information stand. The fairs lasted for several days, with no entrance fee to encourage the largest possible attendance. Livened up by village-themed events such as orchestras, folk dances, puppet theatre, crafts demonstrations and even a circus, the explicit goal was to lure in young families and 'introduce children to rural issues'. Entire Flemish schools visited the exhibitions, during which the National Service presented their teachers with teaching materials. Pupils were invited to participate in provincial drawing and essay contests on the subject of the countryside. The *Dorpskrant* even featured an article enumerating several possible 'Year of the Village' projects for elementary schools.[57]

At the local level, the Rural Guilds effectively took over the organization of activities. As early as May 1977, the campaign and its logo were featured in *Levend Land*, the monthly journal of the Rural Guilds (Figure 2).[58] In fact, the organizational structure of the 'Year of the Village' seemed tailored to jump-start and boost the recently founded but struggling Rural Guilds. For instance, the campaign headquarters warned 'paternalistic' municipal authorities not to 'monopolize' the campaign and leave its implementation to the rural population, through its existing local, socio-cultural organizations and neighbourhood committees.[59] Some articles in *Levend Land* even expressed frustration at municipal councils empanelling campaign committees without *Boerenbond* representatives, paradoxically accusing those local authorities of abusing the 'Year of the Village' concept and ignoring the 'grassroots' movement. The Rural Guilds explicitly recommended themselves and the other *Boerenbond* branches as the actors best fit for assuming these responsibilities.[60] In recent interviews, Maurice Beddegenoots readily admitted the 'Year of the Village' gave momentum to the sluggish Rural Guilds and provided them with an opportunity to gain ground within the local communities.[61]

[57] *Dorpskrant*, July 1977, pp. 22–3; Mar. 1978, pp. 23–32; May 1978, p. 22; Sept. 1978, p. 5; Oct. 1978, p. 13; Dec. 1978, pp. 15–16.

[58] *Levend Land*, May 1977, pp. 4–5.

[59] *Dorpskrant*, Mar. 1978, pp. 15–16.

[60] *Levend Land*, Nov. 1977, p. 22.

[61] Interviews with Beddegenoots, 16 Aug. 2008 and 12 Mar. 2010.

This promotion of the Rural Guilds caused friction with the KVLV and KLJ, the other pillars of the *Boerenbond*'s Rural Movement. For one thing, their representatives never attended the meetings with government officials, although they had been invited and were sent progress reports.[62] Marck kept reminding all *Boerenbond* branches that the 'Year of the Village' was a 'unique opportunity' for the Rural Guilds to introduce themselves to the general population and strengthen the Rural Movement, in close cooperation with the KVLV and KLJ.[63] However, internal documents often contained instructions to ensure that activities concerning the 'Year of the Village' were credited to the Rural Guilds. Tensions arose and both the KVLV and KLJ repeatedly complained to Beddegenoots that neither their names nor logos featured in press releases and campaign brochures. They clearly feared that the Rural Guilds would be the sole benefactors of the publicity stemming from the 'Year of the Village'.[64]

(b) Message

In the opening article of the first issue of the *Dorpskrant*, the 'Year of the Village' was said to have been inspired by an existing and growing interest among the general public for 'nature, agriculture, the countryside and the village'. The magazine perceived a shift in the late 1970s towards the peace, quiet, clean air and 'simplicity' of the countryside, in contrast to the appeal of urban economic, social and cultural services before the Second World War. Urbanites explored the countryside as tourists, sometimes moved on to building a weekend cottage and even moved to rural areas permanently in considerable numbers. The National Service for the 'Year of the Village' interpreted this phenomenon from a social perspective: 'Society rediscovers values and lifestyles that had almost been forgotten. From within his fully automatic, mostly impersonal social order, the city-dweller in particular is on the lookout for nature, for the village, for "uncommon commonness"'.[65] However, among other damaging consequences, this entailed the 'chaotic' expansion of villages through ribbon development. The attachment of urban-rural migrants to their urban lifestyle was deemed equally harmful. Villages and their inhabitants resented being treated by tourists as 'museum pieces that are worth a visit'.[66] In short, the authenticity of the countryside was regarded as increasingly threatened by urban influences – be it cultural, social or architectural.

The National Service pleaded, above all, for a deeper *understanding* and *appreciation* of the countryside. The 'Year of the Village' was in essence a conservationist effort, to protect the 'harmony between people and environment, between greenery and a peaceful lifestyle' from the threat of urbanization. The countryside ought to remain a 'social environment organized according to human standards'.[67] It is not difficult to link these objectives with documents such as the *Grondvisie* of the Rural Movement and the earlier shift within the *Boerenbond* towards socio-cultural education.[68]

[62] KADOC, KVLV, 78, Marck to Boon *et al.*, 4 Nov. 1976; KVLV, 78, Marck to Boon *et al.,* 11 Feb. 1977; Marck to Lievens *et al.,* 13 Sept. 1977.

[63] KADOC, KVLV, 78, Marck to Boon *et al.,* 11 Feb. 1977

[64] KADOC, KVLV, 78, correspondence between OD, KVLV and KLJ, Sept.–Dec. 1977.

[65] *Dorpskrant*, July 1977, p. 1.

[66] Ibid., pp. 1–5.

[67] *Dorpskrant*, Dec. 1978, p. 17.

[68] KADOC, BJB/KLJ, 4.7.2.13, *Grondvisie* of the Rural Movement, 14 Apr. 1975.

The most important buzzword was the call for the integrity of the countryside's 'inherent character'. The 'Year of the Village' emanated a particularly social view of rurality, hailing its humanity, simplicity and sense of community, which were credited to the 'spontaneous interlocking of nature and culture'. Unequivocally, there was a call for the conservation of this rural heritage, to preserve it from the threats of industrialization and urbanization:

> The village and the countryside cannot let themselves be helplessly squeezed to death by proliferating industry, by hungry traffic and by colonizing strangers from cities that had become uninhabitable. We cannot be reconciled with a concept that reduces the countryside to the lost space between two cities. On the contrary, the countryside fulfils a purpose that is of essential advantage to the entire society and that has to be preserved.[69]

According to the *Dorpskrant*, the key to this equilibrium was mutual respect between the city and the country and among the different rural actors themselves.

The 'Year of the Village' strived to find a balance between several competing rural functions: food production by a dynamic agricultural and horticultural sector, natural recreation and housing. The Ministry of Agriculture, for example, focused primarily on the importance of farming for the rural society, stating several times that a countryside was 'unimaginable' without agriculture: 'Thriving agricultural companies shape the core of the countryside, of which the farmer and his business are an integrated and irreplaceable part'.[70] According to the Ministry, the countryside had been affected – and agricultural activities disturbed – by road construction, industrial sites and the proliferation of second homes and weekend cottages. It was primarily concerned with the sustainability of Flemish farms. This required not only the preservation of 'fine agricultural land' but also the unrestricted use of machinery, tractors, fertilizers and even pesticides. It was remarkable that the Ministry argued that agricultural and environmental interests actually coincided. For instance, farmers were credited with the creation and maintenance of the existing rural landscape and represented and hailed as 'guardians of nature' or 'environmental sentinels'.[71]

The other ministries and governmental agencies involved with the 'Year of the Village' highlighted other aspects of rural life, but always with respect for the countryside's 'inherent character' – and this always meant agriculture. The General Commissariat for Tourism, for instance, regarded tourism as a possible means of 'rural public relations' for the regularly shunned agricultural sector. They encouraged petting farms (where children could get close to and touch the animals) and farm tourism, combined with traditional folkloristic recreation, rural festivals and 'simple local food and drink'. This 'intertwining with agriculture' was deemed crucial to rural tourism if it was to avoid disrupting existing farming activities.[72]

Without a doubt, a prominent agricultural bias permeated the 'Year of the Village' and its activities, as a result of the *Boerenbond*'s quasi-monopoly in the day-to-day organization of the campaign. All other functions of the countryside were deemed secondary to the unhindered functioning of Flemish agriculture. Even the initial proposal for the 'Year of the Village' put special emphasis on campaign initiatives that would familiarize people with modern

[69] *Dorpskrant*, July 1977, pp. 1–5.
[70] Ibid., p. 6.
[71] Ibid., p. 6.
[72] Ibid., p. 17.



FIGURE 3. Flailing demonstration in Westrozebeke, July 1978 (KADOC, collection *Boerenbond*)

agriculture.[73] We must remember that, in order to be successful in their attempt at redefining 'the rural', social actors ultimately strive to impose their definition upon others. That is the main reason why the 'Year of the Village' and its pro-agricultural message were steeped in the established imagery of the rural idyll, instantly recognizable to the entire population, irrespective of political, social or economic boundaries. These idyllic images were not meant as a nostalgic history lesson, but rather as a model of 'neo-rurality', defined by Mormont as 'a way of life, or a model of an alternative society inspiring a social project that challenges contemporary social and economic ills'. Within this view, '[p]easant autarky, village community and ancient techniques are no longer relics, but images which legitimize this social project of a society which would be ruralized, so to speak, or in which rurality would be revalued'.[74] The dominant depiction of the countryside throughout the campaign was as a possible refuge for modern society, relying heavily on the imagery of 'a traditional rural world based on a symbiosis with nature, autonomous forms of production, frugality and a harmonious social life within small-scale communities'.[75] Typical, in this vein, was the praise for craftsmanship, folklore, 'simple' rural cuisine and local history opposed to the 'banal' media and consumer culture.[76] The final report claimed that 77.5 per cent of activities were of a folkloristic nature

[73] KADOC, KVLV, 78, Boon to De Backer, 4 June 1976.

[74] Mormont, 'Rural nature', p. 18. '[T]he traditional rural world and the peasant way of life are quite clear references for their projects, for their aspiration, for their desire to be autonomous and for their dissent from the urban environment and the dominant economic universe'. Ibid., p. 11.

[75] Ibid., p. 14.

[76] Mormont, 'Redéfinition', p. 342.

(parades, plays, banquets, demonstrations of traditional farming techniques and so on) and a mere 22.5 per cent concerned informational or educational activities on contemporary problems facing the countryside (Figure 3).[77] The adoption of the idea of the rural idyll within a discursive strategy explains the strong folkloristic bias of the 'Year of the Village'.

III

It is not far-fetched to regard the 'Year of the Village' as an extension of the Rural Movement's practice of organizing its socio-cultural education into theme years. On the one hand, the *Boerenbond* employed the campaign to voice and institutionalize its opinions about post-war, rural land-use planning which had been frustrating them for decades. The farming community increasingly felt boxed in by new industrial and residential neighbourhoods, newly constructed roads and nature reserves that hindered their conventional agricultural practices.[78] On the other hand, the *Boerenbond* grasped the 'Year of the Village' as a public relations tool for the agricultural sector and the countryside's agricultural past. This led to a focus on folklore, farm beautification and rural arts and crafts.[79]

Because of this bias, the campaign encountered harsh criticism. In particular the Belgian Socialist Party (BSP) and its pillarized organizations denounced the 'Year of the Village' as an expensive government campaign promoting Christian Democratic values and providing the regional (mostly rural) CVP strongholds with an opportunity for self-affirmation.[80] The budding Flemish environmental movement pointed primarily to the negative impact of modern agriculture on landscape and environment, also mocking the nostalgia, folklore, parades and farm beautification.[81] Even within the CVP itself, Christian Democratic workers' organizations decried the overly romantic nature of the activities, the timing immediately after the controversial municipal mergers and complained about the lack of attention devoted to cultural and recreational infrastructure for rural labourers.[82] Many critics of the 'Year of the Village' nevertheless attempted to insert their own talking points into the campaign: issuing manifestos and press releases, parodying the logo, making alternative slide shows on rural issues etc. Instead of eclipsing the different policy options for the development of the countryside and uniting all rural organizations and individuals as it set out to do, the 'Year of the Village' proved itself to be nothing more than another arena in which the Flemish countryside could be contested.

Paradoxically, the agricultural sector was never universally enthusiastic about the 'Year of the Village'. In the last issue of the *Dorpskrant*, Minister of Agriculture Humblet evaluated the impact of the campaign on Flemish agriculture. Although he did not dispute the success of certain initiatives such as 'farm open days' and admitted to a greater interest in agriculture among the general public, he doubted that there would be a better understanding or appreciation of, or attitude towards, modern agriculture. On the contrary: according to the minister, the

[77] *De Boer*, 15 Dec. 1978.
[78] *De Boer*, 27 Jan. 1978, p. 15.
[79] *De Boer*, 14 July 1978, p. 19.
[80] *Dorpskrant*, Oct. 1978, p. 25; *Stem der Vrouw*, Mar.–Apr. 1978, p. 23; *Stem der Vrouw*, May-June 1978, p. 5.
[81] *Dorpskrant*, Sept. 1977, p. 14.
[82] *Dorpskrant*, Oct. 1978, p. 25.

largely folkloristic take on the campaign in many villages was having an adverse effect: '[M]any non-farmers are left with a romantic image of the farmer. This entails a kind of jealousy, rather than a realistic picture of agriculture and its complications'. The five Flemish 'Provincial Chambers of Agriculture' had each held a discussion on this issue and proclaimed themselves very wary of the newfound interest in 'their turf'. According to Humblet, Flemish farmers were not opposed to the countryside opening up and were reconciled to the fact that 'purely agrarian districts' were economically unsustainable. But they expected the respect and esteem of rural newcomers for their farming activities. The Flemish farmer 'abhorred' a future role as the mere attendant of a park-like countryside and dreaded the 'strangulation or paralysis of his enterprise in between residential areas, industrial nuclei, classified landscapes, etc'.[83] This brings to mind the claim by Mormont that farmers have always regarded the transformation of agricultural areas into recreational areas as 'a subtle means of disposing of the rural community … which will complete the process of dispossessing the remaining peasantry of their territory and their culture wherever agriculture is not considered economically viable'.[84]

Indeed, there were comments of a cynical tone in the weekly paper of the professional farmers' guilds. These critiques frequently reminded the reader of the municipal mergers shortly beforehand, likening the campaign to a 'funeral ceremony'.[85] At the end of 1978, in response to these sarcastic comments, the *Boerenbond* devoted its monthly TV programme to an evaluation of the 'Year of the Village'. The episode consisted of a show with music and poetry, but also a 'serious' panel discussion about the campaign. The panel was made up of 'representative' farmers and horticulturalists and was meant as a forum for their thoughts on the campaign and the rapidly changing rural environment and community.[86] This forum allowed the disgruntled professional branches of the *Boerenbond* a final opportunity to highlight the dominance of agricultural food production over tourism and other rural functions.

The new Rural Guilds were generally satisfied with the outcome of the 'Year of the Village' and hoped for its lasting influence. At the local level, the inclusive nature of the activities, stimulated by the campaign, successfully linked the agricultural base with other rural inhabitants, which clarified the future direction and workability of the Rural Movement to the previously hesitant local committees. At the central level, rural issues such as rural development, environmental planning and the reassessment of rural space became increasingly important themes for the Rural Movement. The most obvious example is the creation of the non-profit 'Foundation for Rural Policy' (*Stichting Plattelandsbeleid*) in 1981. It was based on an informal working group that had already been established in the first years of the 1970s and consisted of both Rural Movement delegates and other interested community workers. Like the 'Year of the Village', the Foundation for Rural Policy promoted a positive approach towards rural issues by both government and the population.[87]

[83] *Dorpskrant*, Dec. 1978, pp. 2–3.

[84] Mormont, 'Rural nature', p. 4.

[85] De Boer, 18 May 1979; *Levend Land*, Feb. 1979, p. 14.

[86] KADOC, BB KD, 1, documents on TV programme, Aug.–Sept. 1978.

[87] KADOC, BJB/KLJ, 4.7.2.13, meeting of the Working Group for Rural Policy, 23 Mar. 1972; BJB/KLJ, 8.3.5, meetings of the committee of the Rural Movement, July-Dec. 1980.

IV

Over the course of the twentieth century, recreation, housing and industry have challenged the position of agriculture in the Flemish countryside. Nevertheless, the long-established *Boerenbond* managed to retain its hegemonic position in this multi-purpose countryside by effectively transforming itself into a highly professional agricultural organization and a broader Rural Movement. Inviting all rural inhabitants to join non-professional 'Rural Guilds', the *Boerenbond* extended its client base and effectively pre-empted the founding of village action committees more critical of modern agriculture. Initially confronted with opposition from its agricultural base and disappointing membership figures, the *Boerenbond* decided to devote more attention to identity formation during the 1970s, culminating in its successful attempt to organize a 'Year of the Village' in 1978.

Was the 'Year of the Village' a turning point for the Flemish countryside? Not in terms of policy: it was a strictly single-year campaign, on a shoestring budget, that did not generate any structural changes, which frustrated many of the people who were involved in its day-to-day organization.[88] Urban sprawl and industrial settlement on agricultural land happily continued in the 1980s. Was it a turning point for the *Boerenbond*? Not in terms of public perceptions of agriculture. Although the campaign boosted the Rural Movement and effectively pre-empted the emergence of non-agricultural village action groups as in other European countries, the polluting nature of intensive, industrialized agriculture was nevertheless increasingly contested during the 1980s and 1990s. As far as the expectations of the *Boerenbond* went, the 'Year of the Village' did not entirely fulfil their aspirations. The campaign even caused additional tensions between different branches of the *Boerenbond* itself. Basically a joint venture between the farmers' union and the Christian Democratic party, its obvious agricultural bias spurred critiques directed at the organizational level, especially within environmentalist and socialist circles. From the outset, this thwarted the attempt at rallying all rural inhabitants and the various competing organizations behind the same flag. In addition, the campaign's largely folkloristic approach, tuning into the idea of the rural idyll upheld by the general public, had the adverse effect that it did not result in a better understanding or greater respect for modern agriculture. Finally, many common farmers felt that the entire campaign about 'their' village rather passed them by.

Then again, it is a valid point that the 'Year of the Village' served as the real take-off point for the *Boerenbond*'s Rural Movement. When the Rural Movement was created, it was little more than an empty box. Not only did several central leaders and local chairmen explicitly reference the 'Year of the Village' as the catalyst for the sluggish Rural Guilds, the campaign may also be regarded as the extrapolation of their ongoing process of identity formation, institutionalized as a government initiative.[89] Or, as one of the regional *Boerenbond* supervisors strikingly put it: 'It was tailor-made for us but I have to admit that *we* were the tailors'.[90]

By embedding themselves in the local organization of the campaign, the Rural Guilds made

[88] Interviews with André Smout and Jef Geldof.

[89] This is based on the ongoing doctoral research by Chantal Bisschop through interviews with major *Boerenbond* leaders and local (committee) members of several Rural Guilds.

[90] Interview with Dries Delrue, 8 Mar. 2011.

their mark in the Flemish villages, thereby attracting a growing number of non-farming members in the following years. If, by 1990, the *Boerenbond* had more or less the same number of members as in 1976, this was mainly due to non-farmers joining their ranks. If anything, the 'Year of the Village' and its inclusive message contributed to the institutional survival of the *Boerenbond* as the most important rural organization in the Flemish countryside.

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SARGENT, ANDREW (ed.), *Traditional crafts and industries in East Anglia: the photographic legacy of Hallam Ashley.*

SCORGIE, B., *a way of life disrupted.*

SCOTT, JOHNNY, *A book of Britain; the lore, landscape and heritage of a treasured countryside.*

SETCHELL, ELIZABETH VERA, *Leckhampstead village: yesterday and today.*

SLY, R., *Soil in their souls: a history of Fenland farming.*

SMALLBONE, TREVOR, *The Burrell Gold Medal tractor: a photographic appreciation.*

SMITH, B. S. (ed.), *Turnastone: stability and change in the Herefordshire countryside, 1800–2000.*

SMITH, E. A., REED, D. and RAMSBOTTAM, A., *Discovering Dringhouses: aspects of a village history.*

STEINKE, ROBERT H., *Farm harness decoration.*

STEWART, K., *Cattle on a thousand hills: farming culture in the Highlands of Scotland.*

STRATFORD, KATHLEEN, *This was our village.*

SUTHERLAND, JON and SUTHERLAND, DIANE, *Images of the past; farming.*

SYMES, MICHAEL, *Mr Hamilton's Elysium: the gardens of Painshill.*

SYMES, MICHAEL and

HAYNES, SANDY, *Enville, Hagley, The Leasowes: three great eighteenth-century gardens.*

TALBOT, RICHARD, *The royal manor of Penkhull and the surrounding areas of Stoke and Newcastle.*

TAYLOR, PATRICK, *The toll-houses of Essex.*

THOMPSON, IAN, *The English lakes: a history.*

TILLER, KATE and DARKES, GILES (eds), *An historical atlas of Oxfordshire.*

TINDLEY, ANNIE, *The Sutherland Estate, 1850–1920: aristocratic decline, estate management and land reform.*

TITTENSOR, RUTH, *From peat bog to conifer forest: an oral history of Whitelee, its community and landscape.*

TOTT, VICTOR, *A Braughing countryman's diary and the Braughing of Victor Tott: the visual and written memories of a country gentleman.*

VICKERY, ROY, *Garlands, conkers and mother-die: British and Irish plant-lore.*

WALKER, JANE (ed.), *Datchworth tithe accounts, 1711–1747* (Hertfordshire Record Pubs., 25)

WALLACE, EILEEN, *Children of the labouring poor: the working lives of children in nineteenth-century Hertfordshire.*

WARD, LEN, *Memories of a moorland farmer.*

WARD, ROD, *Traction engines and tractors built in the UK.*

WATKINS, PETER R., *Villages of the Meon Valley: aspects of their history.*

WAY, T., *Digging for victory: gardens and gardening in wartime Britain.*

—, *A nation of gardeners: how the British fell in love with gardening.*

WELSHMAN, JOHN, *Churchill's children: the evacuee experience in wartime Britain.*

WHITE, EDWARD (ed.), *Village government and taxation in later Stuart Nottinghamshire: the Gedling 'Town book', 1665–1714* (Thoroton Soc. Record Ser., 45).

WICKHAM-JONES, CAROLINE, *Fear of farming.*

WILIAM, EURWYN, *The Welsh cottage: building traditions of the rural poor, 1750–1900.*

WILLIAMSON, TOM, *The origins of Hertfordshire* (new edn).

Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

NICHOLAS J. HIGHAM and MARTIN J. RYAN (eds), *Landscape archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (The Boydell Press, 2010). xii + 231 pp., 29 figs., 14 illus., 4 tabs., £60.

Nicholas Higham's introduction offers not only an excellent indication of the book's contents but also summarizes the many changes that have occurred over recent decades in the interpretation of settlement development, field systems and woodland cover in early medieval England. Such changes may now be better understood because of recent progress in the techniques available to landscape archaeologists, but, as this book reveals, much as yet remains unclear. It is the companion volume to another which concentrates upon the evidence that may be derived from place-names and documents.

The papers themselves illustrate the use of developing archaeological techniques. These include experimental archaeology (in the use of timber); spatial modelling and mapping (multiple estate formation in Kent); test-pitting within present-day settlements to indicate chronological changes in settlement location; the use of illustrations showing farm implements and activities; archaeobotany and the use of climatic records; pottery collection through field walking; the use of pollen and other palaeoecological data; topographic analysis; and cemetery evidence.

The greatest interest, however, may arise from the fact that all these sources point towards the less well understood mid-Anglo-Saxon period (generally seen as *c.*650–*c.*850 AD) as a time of significant change. Breaking away from the 'Midland-centric' tradition of landscape research, Stephen Rippon argues that landscape transformation began rather earlier than has sometimes been assumed, in 'the long eighth century'. Within a framework of greater territorial stability, village nucleation began to take place and agriculture began to intensify, involving the introduction of new crops and ploughing techniques as well as land use change. Much of the evidence for this has been derived from pottery collected by field walking, but in south-west England, where pottery evidence is limited, it is palaeoenvironmental data that has to be examined. Carenza Lewis shows how the collection (or non-collection) of pottery by test-pitting in East Anglia, marked by an absence of early or middle Anglo-Saxon pottery in many present-day settlements, seems to indicate a break in continuity and related settlement shift in the middle Anglo-Saxon period. New sites, ranging from village clusters to dispersed farms, most apparently dependent upon agriculture, can be detected in the late Anglo-Saxon period (*c.*850 until the Norman Conquest) after a period of apparent abandonment and shift. Susan Oosthuizen, in a chapter sadly depleted of much-needed plans, also argues for a process of settlement nucleation beginning in the middle Anglo-Saxon period (as Anthony Brown and Glenn Foard have long argued), again drawing attention to the 'long' eighth century. Debby Banham's chapter discusses how far agricultural change was due to a shift to wheat as a staple of the Anglo-Saxon diet sometime after 700, also envisaging this as related, through the provision of better drainage, to the use of ridge and furrow ploughing and greater use of the mould-board plough. In East Anglia, the location of Christian cemeteries in close association with settlement sites, examined by Richard Hoggett, seems to have emerged rather earlier than was once thought, perhaps as early as the seventh century, coinciding with a restructuring of the landscape during the Middle Saxon period. With the extension of both settlement and agriculture at this time, Peter Murphy discusses the evidence for settlements and associated farming on the highest, but still risky, locations of the Fenland coastlands, such as on the roddons, from the seventh to ninth centuries. He also dates fish traps recorded in the estuaries of East Anglia, both sources of evidence suggesting the more intensive use of coastal resources at this time, the same period of agricultural intensification argued for elsewhere in this volume.

Several authors attempt to relate their findings to a wide contextual frame. It remains unclear how far development of the open fields was related to settlement nucleation; changes were a recurrent possibility as

fashion and techniques changed, with ample scope for the remodelling of settlement patterns in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Neither were 'open' fields necessarily the same as 'common' fields. Tom Williamson reminds readers of the importance of environmental factors, suggesting that social practice could not act within an environmental vacuum. He argues that choices are likely to have been affected by soils and, to a lesser extent, climate. However, he also launches new ideas: that the same factors that facilitated cereal production and reliable harvests in eastern England also led to a freer peasantry not as inclined, through necessity, to put itself under lordly control. Furthermore he points to the influence of river valley systems and watersheds on the flow of peoples and ideas.

Although this volume is not the only one covering these themes, and many of the ideas presented here will be found scattered across the published literature, it is especially valuable that so many views are brought together here so that they can be contemplated and cross-referenced.

DELLA HOOKE
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MARK GARDINER and CHRISTOPHER WHITTICK (eds), *Accounts of the manor of Mote in Iden, 1442–1551, 1673* (Sussex Record Society, 92, 2008). lxxxv + 314 pp., 11 illus. £20.

The Sussex Record Society has a long and distinguished history of producing scholarly, meticulous and above all useful editions of primary sources. This volume fits very well into that tradition.

Mark Gardiner and Christopher Whittick's edition of the accounts and records of Mote manor in Sussex provides both a meticulous transcription and translation of the documents themselves and an extensive and highly informative introduction. The addition of the appendices and a glossary make this an exemplary volume of its type and one that will be used by local historians, students and academics alike.

The records comprise accounts, court rolls, a rental and a survey and cover over 200 years of the manor's history. One outstanding feature of the accounts is that the management of manor was taken back into the lord's hands in 1471. This makes these accounts particularly valuable since direct management was rare at this time and surviving accounts are often very sketchy indeed. The accounts presented in this volume therefore have an importance quite apart from their information about the individual manor. Their value is heightened by the fact they survive for a period of large-scale building on the manor.

The introduction is excellent and surely covers all the necessary elements of the documents. The expected diplomatic of the various documents is there but this introduction contains much more. It also outlines the history of the manor and its owners, and then discusses in detail the contents of the documents themselves. It focuses on the household and the building elements of the accounts, but also looks more briefly at the agrarian economy of the estate.

The section concerning the agrarian economy puts the activity on the manor of Mote in its historical context and offers such things as calculations of the yield and seeding rates of different crops. The importance of wood sales to Calais is highlighted; Sir John Scott made the most of his knowledge of the Calais market to expand this trade using wood from his own and others' estates. The accounts paint a lively picture of the Scott household in the 1460s, '70s and early '80s, using evidence in the accounts to look briefly at purchasing patterns of the household and the local processing of foodstuffs. The building accounts too are fascinating for the snapshot that they provide of the building/refurbishment of a private house in the fifteenth century. References in the accounts to 'the lady's paper' and 'the accountant's paper' and 'books of particulars' are a tantalising reminder of the lost layers of medieval administrative documents.

The editors have also provided considerable information about the history (up to the present day) of the archive of which these documents are part, and include a list of stewards of the estate from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Their detailed discussion of the diplomatic of all the different record types includes an analysis of the paper of the account rolls. The individual administration of the different bailiffs is also outlined and their characters brought to life; Thomas Russell's notes, which form part of the 1673 survey documents, display the impatience and frustration of someone trying to make maps from a combination of direct survey and written descriptions.

The appendices are also very welcome. The stock-deeds, which encompass records from 1280 to 1645, demonstrate, as the editors point out, the changes in terms over time, which reflect the changing nature of feudal relationships. The detailed prosopography highlights the breadth of the medieval 'career'. The concordance will be of great use to those using the records themselves and a glossary is always handy.

The indices in this volume are especially detailed and a highly valuable accompaniment to the texts. The carefully compiled index of persons and places is to be expected from such a volume, but the index of subjects will also be welcomed by a wide range of scholars.

There is however one area where the editors' care is somewhat lacking. The maps are a good addition but their usefulness is undermined by a lack of detail. Illustration 3 is discussed in the text with regard to Walland Marsh and Ewhurst, but these are not marked on the map. Again in a discussion about Map 4, Walland Marsh is mentioned, but not marked on the map. A key on these maps would make clear the import of the shaded areas. More generally, the maps which comprise illustrations 8, 9 and 10 might have been more convenient had they appeared close to the rental to which, one assumes, the numbers on them refer.

These are small quibbles. This volume makes a highly valuable source accessible. It will be of great use to a wide range of historical enquirers and will be mined for evidence across a wide range of subjects.

MARILYN LIVINGSTONE
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TONY STEPHENS, *Landscapes and townscapes of North Craven: insights from the archives* (Long Preston Heritage Group, 2011). 153 pp., 126 figs. 23 tabs. £9. Available from sales@longpreston.info.

We all tend to like books full of high-quality photographs, maps, images of old portraits and other fascinating material, and this is such a book. There can be no doubt that Tony Stephens knows his area and shares this knowledge enthusiastically with us. Craven was the name of a British kingdom. Its modern geography is usually taken to refer to the area of the Yorkshire Dales that runs south from Whernside to the Lancashire boundary, west to meet Cumbria and east to the watershed between Wharfedale and Nidderdale. From this substantial area Stephens has selected five towns (Burton in Lonsdale, Long Preston, Giggleswick, Settle and Rathmell) and two dales (Langstrothdale and Littondale). This is perhaps where the problems start, for – although we are provided with some truly splendid detailed maps – there is no map of the whole area to help those less familiar with this part of the north of England to put the discussions into context and understand how his subject areas relate to each other. A considerable proportion of the introductory chapter is devoted to explaining the documentary resources, which are generally illustrated with first-class images of the originals alongside a transcript; similar illustrations appear in later chapters. The five townships are each allocated a chapter, with chapter seven (which is longer than the others) devoted to both dales. There follows a remarkably brief conclusion given the complexity of what goes before. The volume ends with a relevant glossary, a list of abbreviations, the footnotes to the text and a bibliography. There is no index, which seems a significant weakness in a book dealing with complex and geographically widespread material. Each chapter moves between topics and seems to be driven by the documentary resources, which are often of great value. The Long Preston chapter for instance, mentions *The Frameing Boke* and generated deep envy in this reviewer that such a resource was available to the township's historians. (This remarkable manuscript is thought to date to about 1590 and sets out detailed information as to who was responsible for which roads.) These top-quality resources are used liberally to generate an insight into his areas of interest. Each township is discussed over a lengthy timescale with some very detailed considerations of specific buildings and fields for which we are given maps and photographs of exemplary relevance, quality and labelling. Some of these more concentrated discussions are perhaps shorter than we might like. It is worth noting that there is more space devoted to the inhabitants of some towns than might be anticipated in a work dealing with landscapes.

We are never told why Stephens selected these townships rather than any of the others, which are, on the face of it, equally interesting, and we are left with a sense of an opportunity missed. Craven is a truly beautiful and fascinating place, with a long and rich history, but no narrative emerges from Stephens's book. His resources are excellent but diverse; a more selective use of these, based upon narrower themes and shorter timescales, could have produced a clearer story. The relatively high number of photographs of walls immediately brought to mind Martin Wildgoose's work on Roystone Grange, and this is clearly an aspect of Craven's history worth pursuing. (Wildgoose's work is discussed in R. Hodges, *Roystone Grange: 6000 years of a peakland landscape,* 2006.) The extremely detailed texts, together with the associated maps and photographs, which form an important component of the landscape discussions, generated a similar feeling that these minute descriptions based upon a comprehensive local knowledge could be a major strength. However, after all the caveats, this is a book one would be glad to possess and which is excellent value for its price.

JENNIFER S. HOLT
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MARK MCDERMOTT and SUE BERRY (eds), *Edmund Rack's* Survey of Somerset (Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, 2011). xix + 417 pp., 30 illus. £45.

Edmund Rack was a founder member and the first secretary of what became the Royal Bath and West of England Society: though he had no practical experience

of farming, he was keen to encourage agricultural improvement. He had been a shopkeeper in Essex until he retired to Bath in 1775 aged 40, where he wrote articles and poetry, as well as having interests in geology and fossil collecting. In the 1780s he collaborated with Rev. John Collinson in producing a history of Somerset. Collinson was mainly responsible for the documentary and historical research, while Rack carried out the field survey of the parishes, travelling around the county from 1781 until his early death in 1787. His health was never very good and the travelling in all weathers probably hastened his end, when some parishes remained unfinished. When the history finally appeared in 1791 under Collinson's name, he used only small parts of Rack's material. For modern historians this is probably the more interesting part of the project, providing an observant and informative contemporary survey of the majority of the parishes of Somerset, arranged by Hundred.

This handsome volume, well designed and thoughtfully produced, makes available most of Rack's survey, arranged by hundred, from his original manuscript now deposited in Bristol Record Office; a small part of his manuscript is in private hands and unavailable. The deposit also includes letters from Rack to Collinson, which the editors have used in the introduction to throw light on the way the history was being prepared and subscribers found. Rack's wide interests are reflected in the range of information he included for many of the parishes, everything from geology to the surnames found on gravestones. For most parishes he noted the current population, with annual numbers of baptisms and burials; the number of dwellings in the main settlement and also in each hamlet, with their size and materials; the interior fittings of the churches; watercourses and the species of fish found; woodland and the species of tree; the roads and their surfaces; local industry and its employees and output; bridges, mills, workhouses, almshouses, charities, public houses, meeting-houses; the dates of fairs and revels. Occasionally he included significant passages of historical information, on manors and estates or church livings and tithes, possibly gathered from local sources.

The agricultural material is fairly brief: he naturally concentrated on what he perceived to be the main production of the parish, and did not give a total picture of agricultural output, though he also included more detail in his accounts of each hundred. He was more interested in arable farming when it was present, and possibly because of his East Anglian background, was fairly critical of farming practices in Somerset: not enough marl, under-drainage, turnips, or hoeing all round, but he did note good practice as well. Animal husbandry is mentioned less often, usually only when it formed the significant part of the production, such as on the rich coastal pastures of parishes like Huntspill or Burnham, with their many wealthy graziers, or the fine Cheddar cheese made in Weare in the Somerset Levels.

The amount of information varies considerably from place to place, but he frequently gave figures: price of labour, value of meadow, pasture, or farms, value of industrial output. He noted the main products sold at the fairs and weekly markets, and any unusual or outstanding products, and sometimes the actual value of goods traded. Though his home city of Bath received detailed treatment, several major towns, notably Taunton, are not covered: possibly he was going to rely on local contributors, or his death intervened.

The book also includes in a separate pocket a reproduction of Bowen's *Map of Somerset*, first published in 1750, showing the hundreds and parishes and much additional information. Two of the illustrations are by Rack himself, one a rendering of the topography of Dunster, used for the endpapers, and the remainder are appropriate topographical drawings and paintings of the period. Rack's survey gives a valuable snapshot of the county in the later eighteenth century, not only for agricultural change, but also aspects such as population, housing, and religious life. The Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society are to be congratulated on making this interesting material more widely available.

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CHRISTOPHER P. RODGERS, ELEANOR A. STRAUGHTON, ANGUS J. L. WINCHESTER and MARGHERITA PIERACCINI, *Contested common land. Environmental governance past and present* (Earthscan, 2011). xii + 227 pp., 17 figs. £60.

The commons have occupied a central place in the lives and minds of past generations, and continue to do so today. As much a cultural and symbolic landscape as it is an economic resource, the history of common land is an amalgam of competing interests and identities that have developed and shifted over time and place. However, if the commons are to be protected and managed for future generations, the mediation of conflicting interests among resource users together with the application of appropriate management schemes is a pressing challenge. *Contested common land* is the outcome of an innovative interdisciplinary collaboration between scholars from the disciplines of history and law. The book reveals the importance and great potential of developing interdisciplinary

research that pays attention to temporal depth and micro-scale analyses in order to inform present policy-making in ways that will have lasting effect. Published at an important time, following the Commons Act of 2006, the work explores ways to secure and strengthen sustainable management systems that will ensure the protection of ecologically sensitive environments while balancing agricultural and recreational interests. Drawing on a rich body of archival material and fieldwork together with contemporary research on modern stakeholders' views and often conflicting agendas, the authors show the value and prudence of unpicking the entangled meanings and relationships between legal and 'idealized' concepts of property and cultural conceptions of common land.

Following an introductory chapter, which introduces key aims and methodologies, the book is divided into three parts, each subdivided into chapters exploring the historical and modern dimensions of common land management. Part one, entitled 'Custom, property rights and sustainable management', is primarily concerned with governance strategies and institutional frameworks within which tensions and conflicts over access and land use rights have been mediated. Chapters two and three deal with customary and local governance strategies in historical context and highlight, in particular, the social and cultural significance of the commons and regulation of rights through principles of good neighbourliness. Chapters three and four shift the emphasis to modern notions of property rights and institutional governance, which is often closely aligned with environmental legislation. In this, the authors offer an assessment of the 2006 Act in view of wider international debates and especially following Elinor Ostrom's work on the governance of common pool resources (CPRs). Part two applies the methodological approaches discussed in preceding chapters to four case studies, from Cumbria, North Yorkshire, Norfolk, and Wales. Each chapter explores the development of common rights since the sixteenth century, and subsequent impact of the Commons Registration Act of 1965. A linking theme to emerge from these micro-studies is that notwithstanding the compulsory registration of common rights, local custom and pragmatism continue to influence farming practices. The concluding part of the book outlines the key themes of common land governance, and discusses the social construction of law and custom, as well as some of the implications the research has for wider debates concerning the institutional governance of CPRs. Some of the technical and legal language is challenging at times and a glossary of terms and acronyms would have provided useful reference for the reader.

Throughout the volume the authors demonstrate the importance of attending to both historical depth and environmental diversity. The authors argue against static, one-dimensional governance systems, as reflected in the 1965 Commons Act, which fail to take into account the particularities of different locales and the long-term impact of human activities and responses to management and change. Of particular interest to this reader is that local customs and traditional farming practices continue into the modern day to contradict and subvert formal legal requirements, as stated in the 1965 Act. Customs are an inherently adaptable and flexible system of local practices developing out of social as well as economic pragmatism, and are typically viewed as being eroded by the legal concepts of private property that have emerged since the sixteenth century. The evidence presented here sheds light on the development and reformation of customary practices beyond the eighteenth century. The authors show how space has been created by the Commons Act of 2006, for the emergence of a more dynamic interplay of property rights allowing for greater flexibility and diversity for the representation of customary practices.

The work is a timely contribution of interest to a wide readership concerned with issues of environmental sustainability, the evolution of institutional governance systems, the history of English and Welsh commons and our historic landscape more generally.

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CHRISTOPHER DYER, ANDREW HOPPER, EVELYN LORD and NIGEL TRINGHAM (eds), *New directions in local history since Hoskins* (University of Hertfordshire Press, 2011). xix + 276 pp., 47 figs, 12 illus., 8 tabs. £16.99.

This volume of essays arises out of the second conference organised at University of Leicester to commemorate the work of W. G. Hoskins. The conference, held in July 2009 in association with the British Association for Local History, was designed (ostensibly) to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Hoskins's influential *Local history in England*. In fact, it was also intended as a showcase for the writing of local history today, much of which takes Hoskins as its inspiration, but a great deal of which has developed in ways that he might not have expected.

These essays are gathered together under several headings: 'The practice of local history'; 'Region, class and ethnic diversity'; 'Making a living in town and country'; 'Religious culture and belief'; and 'Sources, methods and techniques'. As the editors note in their introduction, perhaps the most profound shift in local

history since the late 1950s is its increasing preoccupation with the twentieth century. This is an inevitable development, particularly as the tumultuous events of its first four decades recede from memory, even if it might not have met with the approval of Hoskins (a confirmed anti-modernist).

Nevertheless, the essays in this volume confirm that local history remains the history of the places in which we live. As such, it is not surprising that the essays in this volume have a predominantly urban focus, from Dick's fascinating study of the histories of settler communities in Birmingham, Sweetinburgh's detailed reconstruction of Hythe's medieval butcher-graziers, Howells's equally interesting analysis of working women in nineteenth-century Salisbury, and Royle and Smith's studies of church building, and church politics in the nineteenth-century suburbs. Only Miller's study of the crofter economy of Skye in the eighteenth century is resolutely rural and agrarian in theme. Perhaps this august journal corners the market in all such research, but it would be nice to think that local history can still be agrarian in character.

All the essays in this volume are detailed, scholarly explorations of local or regional themes. Those by Chris Lewis on local history between the wars, and Ruth Paley on the King's Bench (crown side) are the two most likely to be cited repeatedly. Both illustrate local history at its best. Lewis makes a substantial contribution to our understanding of the historiography of local history, and emphasizes the role that its 'amateur' practitioners played in the simultaneous evolution of political, economic, agrarian and social history within British universities and colleges in the 1920s and 1930s. As he notes, the efflorescence of professional local history at Leicester after 1945, during which Hoskins produced his best work (and the BAHS was founded), had much deeper roots. Paley's essay demonstrates another profound contribution of local history to wider knowledge. The best local history has always been grounded on a knowledge of sources that comes only by working with them repeatedly, and thinking about their structures and forms. Her essay on the criminal side of the King's Bench opens up a vast array of important and revealing eighteenth-century deposition evidence that offers detailed new insights into the conflicts produced by daily life. However, as she notes, the task of wading through the various index books in order to trace the cases is not for the faint-hearted.

Remembering Hoskins as chronicler of the histories of Exeter, the 'Great Rebuilding', and Tudor inflation and agrarian distress, the essays by Sweetinburgh, Hey and Miller review urban life in late medieval Kent, the houses of Derbyshire lead smelters, and the demographic and agrarian difficulties of eighteenth-century Skye. They emphasize the benefits of local history in anchoring historical research very firmly to the practicalities and possibilities of place. Similarly, the essays by Cross and Watson on the processes of religious reform in Tudor England show how detailed local insights can reveal the complexities of larger historical processes. Cross demonstrates that it took considerable effort to translate Salisbury's vigorous Henrician religious conservatism into its equally strident late Elizabethan Protestantism. Watson explains the role of the Court of High Commission in challenging the power of lay elites in Elizabethan Yorkshire. Royle's chapter takes up where Pevsner left off, and illustrates the architectural and historical significance of the Gothic revival within Victorian nonconformity (among sects which had previously set their Greco-Roman faces against Anglican architectural filigree). Smith's entertaining chapter illustrates the sub-Trollopian machinations created when various shades of Anglicanism (and snobbery) collided in suburban Oxford around 1900.

Finally, while it difficult to reconcile modern technology with the nostalgia of Hoskins's vision of local history groups dusting off their school exercise books after a summer of tending their potatoes, Ell's chapter on local history and the Web is instructive. Although such essays stand to be outdated with alarming rapidity, his chapter serves as a timely reminder of how much local history is being done on-line. Since its inception, family historians have harnessed the various incarnations of the Internet with enthusiasm. Local historians have followed in their wake rather more slowly, but technologies such as 'crowd sourcing' surely provide a means to join up research, expertise, and effort in a form first envisaged in the 1890s by the *Victoria County History*, but in ways that might now truly be democratic, representative and flexible. While funding has dwindled for resource-enhancement initiatives and ended for 'millennium' local history projects, the technology still advances at a pace to make such open-access research enterprises tantalisingly possible. It would definitely be worth following that particular new direction in local history.

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RICHARD MOORE-COLYER, *Farming in Wales, 1936–2011: 75 years of the Farm Business Survey* (Y Lolfa, Talybont, Ceredigion, 2011). 206 pp., 50 plates. £9.95.

As the subtitle suggests, this book has been written to commemorate the 75th anniversary in Wales of what is now called the Farm Business Survey. A little less

than half of the text is concerned directly with the history of the Survey, while the rest covers the state of Welsh agriculture from the inter-war period to the present day.

Before 1985 the Farm Business Survey was known as the Farm Management Survey. It involves the collection of information on the outputs and inputs, in both physical and financial terms, from a sample of farms spread across England and Wales. Nationally some 2,000 farms have normally been involved, and the results from them have been used by the relevant Ministry (originally Agriculture and Fisheries, now DEFRA) to assess the annual changes in farm incomes across the country as a whole. Given the sensitivity of such detailed financial information, and the consequent likely reluctance of farmers to co-operate with civil servants, the Survey has always been carried out by investigation officers employed by university departments. Only after the data collected for individual farms had been anonymized was it sent to the Ministry. This process began in 1936, and continues to the present day. Chapters four to six trace its history from the viewpoint of the Department of Agricultural Economics at Aberystwyth University.

Although chapter four is entitled 'The origins of the Farm Business Survey', more than half of it is devoted to the development of the department of Agricultural Economics at Aberystwyth and the difficulties it faced because of the agricultural scientists who found it difficult to recognize economics as a serious discipline and the economists who looked down upon those who studied agriculture. The remainder, dealing more specifically with the establishment of the Survey itself, implies that the impetus for it came from the Conference of Provincial Agricultural Economists, the inter-war meeting point of agricultural economists in the various university departments. This may be how the story emerges from the perspective of a single university department, but we are told nothing about the wider intellectual context at the time. The inter-war period was, after all, one in which agricultural economists in other European countries and the United States were expanding data collection and analysis, both nationally and in international organizations such as the International Institute of Agriculture. More specifically, although the book mentions that the funding for the Survey came from the Treasury, it does not explain how the Treasury was persuaded to provide the necessary funding or how the Oxford Agricultural Economics Research Institute was persuaded to abandon its preference for alternative accounting methods.

The first three chapters tell the familiar twentieth-century story of an agriculture pushed about by external political and economic influences. There were the difficult years between the wars when, apart from the increasing production of milk for the liquid market, and rural electrification, traditional farming technolog-ies were maintained, while the landownership structure underwent dramatic change. The level of owner-occupation in Wales rose from nine per cent in 1909 to 39 per cent in 1936. Nevertheless, a 'mild flavour of decay' began to pervade the Welsh countryside as the traditional economy, society and culture began to 'rot at the centre' (p. 21). The need to maximize wartime food production saw a combination of mechanization and mixed farming begin to reverse this trend. Moore-Colyer's account of this concentrates on the effects of the 'quasi-fascist control' exerted by the County War Agricultural Executive Committees. Dealing with the post-war period he again emphasizes the role of national and, latterly, European policies in determining the fate of a Welsh agriculture that was increasingly dependent upon government funding. The book is rounded off by a fascinating series of individual histories featuring farms that participated in the Survey. Two remain as full-time working farms, some rely on associated activities, such as golf courses or caravan sites, or have become part-time farms or residential holdings, and others have disappeared under housing developments.

In his familiar fluent and vigorous style, Moore-Colyer has produced a book which – despite the odd blemish (the first footnote in chapter one, for example, is inaccurate), and what this reviewer sees as the more serious misinterpretation of its origins – will introduce historians to the research possibilities of the Farm Management Survey, provide a readable introduction to the recent history of Welsh farming, and serve as a fitting memorial for several generations of Aberystwyth agricultural economists.

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STEWART SQUIRES and CATHERINE WILSON (eds), *Growing better: Lincolnshire and the potato* (Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 2011). 136 pp., 147 figs. £15 & £2 p. & p. from SLHA, Jews' Court, 2–3 Steep Hill, Lincoln, LN2 1LS.

This informative study provides an almost encyclopaedic review of potato growing in Lincolnshire, a county which historically has been regarded as the premier site for the crop. Following a brief review of the history of the potato and the local dialect, the text explores the changes which have taken place in potato production since the mid-nineteenth century. These include alterations to the cultivation of the land,

to harvesting and storage, as well as the more recent revolutionary changes in the processing and retailing of potatoes in their various forms. The text is complemented by an impressive collection of photographs, diagrams and illustrations.

Stewart Squires and Catherine Wilson, in addition to editing the book, have also contributed either individually or jointly to most of the chapters. Their input is accompanied by contributions from either leading figures in the historical development of this particular region, or acknowledged subject experts in aspects of potato production. I particularly enjoyed Dennis Mills's short account of the 'Great Potato Boom', which resulted from the development of new, improved varieties in the first few years of the twentieth century. Of considerable merit is Peter Dewey's longer, more detailed critique of 'Mechanisation and Lincolnshire manufacturers', which provides a wealth of factual details of the history of mechanization and the importance of Lincolnshire manufacturers. Abigail Hunt's critique of the mobilization of additional sources of labour women, prisoners of war and children as 'unseen labour' in harvesting the crop is particularly impressive in enhancing our understanding of a crucially important activity in the farming calendar. Another interesting chapter is Stewart Squires' account of the role that Lincolnshire played in the popularization of fish and chips. The final chapter contains an impressive collection of recipes compiled by the editors, illustrating various ways of cooking potatoes.

There is a considerable degree of variability between the different chapters not only in terms of their length, but also quality of the analysis. For example, chapter two concentrates on providing a family-history-style review of the leading families involved in the history of potato production in Lincolnshire. There is extensive background information on the role of these pioneers in the region, but the rationale for including these individual families is not completely persuasive. There are a number of dubious points in the text which merit clarification. For example, on page 22 it is suggested that all potato picking was undertaken as piecework, an assertion which is very difficult to substantiate. In a similar way, on page 27, Ralph Godfrey's role in chairing one of the War Agricultural Executive Committees is left rather vague. On page 107, the figures for the average potato acreage in 1950 are incorrect. These relatively minor criticisms do not, however, undermine a text which provides a very useful account and an interesting insight into the historical importance of the crop in Lincolnshire.

In its defence, the book does not set out to conform to traditional academic conventions, where the analysis of the central theme is supported by an extensive array of endnotes referring to a wide range of sources. Instead, is better to judge it as a coffee-table book, which can be dipped into as light reading. In this respect the book has considerable merits in terms of explaining the different aspects of production, distribution and processing of the potato crop. It will be of interest not only to academics, but also to a general audience interested in the history of Britain's most important source of food, as well as having considerable relevance for individuals focusing on the historical development of Lincolnshire.

JOHN MARTIN
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Europe and Elsewhere

MAURICE BICHARD, *Baskets in Europe* (Fyfield Wick Editions, 2008). 272 pp., illus. £20 incl. p.&p. Available from Fyfield Wick Editions, The Farmhouse, Fyfield Wick, Abingdon, Oxon., OX13 5NB

Maurice Bichard's work has to be one of the most definitive studies on basketry to date. This book will appeal not just to the basket maker but to all basket users, who may look at baskets differently after reading it, and give more respect to the craftspeople who made them.

The book reveals the seemingly countless variety of types of basket and materials used to make them. Most of us have at some time used a shopping basket, hamper or laundry basket, but we might not have been aware of their importance in the not-too-distant past, before plastics were invented. After the invention of string, basketry must have been mankind's first essential craft. Without manipulating fibrous plants to make string they would not have been able to hold together their primitive shelters, catch food with a line or net, or just tie up prey in order to carry it home to their families. The wattle and daub prehistoric houses all over Europe were more or less big baskets and people lived in that type of house for thousands of years, so they must have been functional.

The chapter on materials best exemplifies the years of research that the author has undertaken. Whilst most people know that willow is the prime material used in basket manufacture, some might not be so aware that split oak and marsh grasses were also used for this purpose. Think of a need and someone, somewhere, seems to have made a basket to serve it. The bee baskets in Germany are just one example showing the utilization of thick insulated baskets covered with clay to keep bees nice and warm during the harsh winters in the alpine regions. The basket walls to the carts

highlighted in page 174 look as though they originated among the ancient Hallstatt Celts of the Alpine regions, and it appears that their design was little changed. The description of the straw over-shoes made in Sweden for market traders who had to stand for a long time in freezing conditions was also fascinating. They had a single function, because their susceptibility to wear meant that they were made only for people to stand in and could not be used when walking about. How sensible to devise something to keep ones feet warm while sitting in a cart or standing at a market stall, leaving them to be taken off and changed when one wanted to walk! Today, we expect products to do everything, yet the basket maker in this case made a product for a very specific yet vital role in a cold climate. From fig drying trays to cow muzzles, the variety of baskets this book displays will amaze anyone reading it.

The book begins with a brief history of the origins of basketry and the formation of guilds in various parts of Europe. However, there is a question about how far the in-depth coverage of the political and social history of each region adds to the study of baskets. Others with wider political or economic interests might disagree. The book certainly provides the author with a platform to display his knowledge of basketry very extensively. However, his writing style is somewhat disjointed in places, with some rather long sentences which can cause the reader's attention to wander. Leaving this aside, though, the study is a truly comprehensive record of the development and diversity of basketry in Europe.

Even so, it might have been enhanced by a few drawings to show how some of the more unusual baskets were made, such as the delightful flower-shaped baskets from Sofia on page 228. The photographs and illustrations in the book are, however, truly wonderful and make me what to go out and harvest some material and make some of the more unusual ones myself. History aside, this book is a must-have for anyone who has more than a passing interest in the subject. The book demonstrates wholeheartedly our abilities to manipulate nature and make even seemingly useless material such as wild grass into cherished and useful objects.

JACQUI WOOD
Saveock Water Archaeology

INA ZWEINIGER-BARGIELOWSKA, RACHEL DUFFETT and ALAIN DROUARD (eds), *Food and war in twentieth-century Europe* (Ashgate, 2011). xvii + 276 pp., 7 figs., 9 tabs. £65.

The International Commission for Research into European Food History (ICREFH) holds a symposium every two years in a different European city. In 2009 its members met in Paris to discuss 'Food and War in Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', and from that meeting this book has emerged. It has an introduction and conclusion, and seventeen further chapters, which are almost entirely concerned with the First and Second World Wars. The exceptions are Drouard's chapter on horsemeat, which covers the period from 1870 to 1975 when, he argues, horsemeat was at its most popular, and Alicia Guidonet Riera's study of the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath. Otherwise, the book is fairly evenly balanced between the two conflicts, with Jonsson and Jonsson's chapter on Iceland covering both, and indeed going back into the nineteenth century to explore what was then the traditional Icelandic diet, a mixture of dried fish, blood puddings, milk, and curds, all generally eaten cold, with few vegetables, cereals or potatoes.

The book is divided into four sections, the first of which is concerned with feeding soldiers. Official ration scales in the British and German armies in both the First and Second World Wars provided for an energy and protein intake that was more than adequate for an active man. However, the troops receiving these nutrients in the form of canned meat and hard biscuit suffered at best from 'menu fatigue' and in many cases from vitamin shortages, tooth problems, and constipation. Lummel's chapter on German Army food in the First World War has an interesting comparison with British Army rations, which had more meat but less of almost everything else, including variety. Nevertheless, as Rachel Duffett points out in her companion chapter on British Army food, they were good enough to attract recruits from the poorer sectors of society, who would eat more, and certainly more meat, than at home. These two chapters, and a third on the problems of providing kosher food for Jewish soldiers in the German Army, provide some fascinating insights into the practical difficulties of providing industrial-scale food supplies for industrial-scale warfare. It is perhaps a pity that there is no comparative study of industrial-scale food supply in the later conflict to see if lessons were learned or mistakes repeated, or to make wider comparisons with French and American army provisioning.

The second and third parts of the book deal with the civilian experience. Shortages of meat, fats, and imported foods, increased use of rabbits, game, and more exotic animals (some Czech writers discussed the advantages of dogs, water rats, squirrels, frogs and turtles), the expanding use of substitutes for butter, cheese, milk, and coffee, and the imposition of food rationing, were all common across most European countries in both wars. What is interesting is how

these common experiences varied between countries, and the effects of the differences. Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska concludes that, although British food policy in the Second World War was, on the whole, successful, and meant that the black market was never very significant in the 'people's war', it still 'fell short of the ideal of equality of sacrifice and at times social solidarity was severely strained' (p. 135). In France, however, it was strained to breaking point. Mouré's chapter on the 'cruel realities' of the black market shows how an unsuccessful rationing system could produce desperation and evasion, and Isabelle von Bueltzingsloewen highlights the role of food shortages and malnutrition in producing opposition to the Vichy regime. In the Netherlands, den Hartog argues that food supplies were generally sufficient, if dull, until September 1944, but then came the hunger winter, in which some 16,000 people died of starvation and related diseases, and an official brochure was published on how to cook tulip bulbs. Crocus, gladioli and iris bulbs were eaten too, but hyacinths and daffodils were found to be toxic. The effects were not only physical, and Pavel Vasilyev has some intriguing data on the food-derived psychoses that arose during and after the siege of Leningrad, which lasted from September 1941 to January 1944. The final part of the book examines the role of war in producing modernization and innovation in the food industry. To choose only one example, Ulrike Thoms points out that the Second World War saw thousands of food-related patents for new products and methods in Germany, and that military requirements led to some products that are still with us, such as Nestlé's new product, dehydrated coffee, or Nescafé.

This is a rich and varied collection of detailed studies that provides a starting point for any future research on the impact of war on food production and consumption, although it has less to say on the effects of food problems on the outcomes of war.

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Autour du 'Village'. Établissements humains, finages et communautés rurales entre Seine et Rhin (IVe–XIIIe siècles) (Publications De L'Institut D'Études Médiévales, Université Catholique de Louvain). xxi + 543 pp. 41 figs.

In the summer of 2003 René Noël, Professor of Medieval Studies jointly at the Facultés Universitaires Notre-Dame de la Paix (Namur) and the Université Catholique de Louvain (Louvain-la-Neuve) took retirement after forty years teaching in the Belgian university system. A disciple of Léopold Genicot, who created the centre for rural history at Louvain, and a colleague of Adriaan Verhulst at the University of Ghent, who founded the Belgian national centre for rural history, Noël defended his doctoral thesis in 1967 on rural settlement in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries across territory between the Semois and Chiers valleys. Located in the far south of Wallonia, this area was not far from his birthplace in the Belgian province of Luxembourg. With Genicot's encouragement, Noël's scope of interest and expertise broadened from the analysis of medieval documents to using field archaeology and fossil pollen records. His publications focused on the transformation of rural Belgium in medieval times but also embraced the rural architecture of Wallonia, the history of Namur, and teaching about the legacy of Charlemagne. The *liber amicorum* under review contains many of the presentations made at an international conference held in his honour at Louvain-la-Neuve in May 2003. Twenty-one essays by colleagues, pupils and friends deal with fundamental aspects of the transformation of rural settlement in Western Europe during the long middle ages.

The volume begins with a masterly, 75-page essay by Noël devoted to differing interpretations of the 'medieval village' proposed by an exceptionally wide range of authors. The traditional model was largely derived from critical evaluations of written material, and envisaged the nucleated village as being anchored in the distant past. However, important archaeological evidence became available during the 1950s and subsequently, with pollen analysis adding to site evidence. Examples of settlement desertion, as well as creation, in medieval times were being found in many areas. Hence, by the 1980s, a second model of the village was being advanced, which saw the nucleated village, with church, cemetery, cultivated fields and surrounding communal territory, replacing earlier, much more fragile and fragmented patterns. Having defined and compared the models, Noël then revisits a vast array of documentation and explores archaeological evidence old and new.

Drawing on findings from many parts of Western Europe, he concludes on page 75 that a kind of village existed in the early middle ages, but lacked the composition and characteristics recognized in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It had neither a juridical identity nor communal lands. It was arranged spaciously, but was less disorganized and fragile than some scholars have supposed. Its inhabitants were not very numerous and shared the sorrows and joys of daily existence, meeting each other outside their dwellings, in the fields and on nearby roads. From the ninth century onwards, they assembled in their parish church

on Sundays and religious festivals. After funerals and memorial services they visited the cemetery, walking across the graves of their ancestors, and evoking their memory. Older members of the group transmitted memories to younger villagers, thereby reinforcing a sense of collective conscience.

The remainder of *Autour du 'Village'* is structured into three unequal parts. The first traces the emergence of 'the village' in medieval scholarship, with four contributors discussing how this concept was handled by anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, and classicists. The second section contains eleven essays relating to areas located between the Seine and Rhine valleys, at various times between the fourth and thirteenth centuries. Five contributions explore such themes as grouped settlements, different types and uses of buildings, continuity of routeways, and opportunities – and challenges – posed by palynology for interpreting past landscape features. Six papers then discuss 'structuring elements' of the medieval village: churches, cemeteries, cultivated fields, communal institutions, and castles. The three essays in the final section examine the relationship between villages and their surrounding rural space in Brabant and the lower Sambre valley, and the utility of place names to elucidate changes in medieval settlement in north-eastern France.

This substantial volume casts fresh light on many of the themes that were central to René Noël's own research, and present recent findings for areas that he knew from field experience. Financial and other problems delayed its publication, and some contributors took advantage to update their texts, but *Autour du 'Village'* has been well worth the wait.

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JANKEN MYRDAL and MATS MORELL (eds), *The agrarian history of Sweden from 4000BC to AD2000* (Nordic Academic Press, 2011). 336 pp., 249Kr.

The last decades have seen an increasing interest in agrarian history among Swedish scholars. One proof of this was the publishing of the five-volume work *Det svenska jordbrukets historia* between 1998 and 2003. It was a splendid piece of work, in both substance and appearance, written by eight well-known authorities in the field, directed at the general public and academics alike. This book is a condensed version of those five volumes, translated into English for an international audience. The texts are, moreover, updated by research undertaken in the last ten years.

The book has six main chapters, ordered chronologically, from the very oldest archaeological finds of charred grains and bones of domesticated animals dating from 3900 BC to today, when agriculture is as much about preserving a pastoral landscape and providing 'experiences' as it is about producing food. In addition, there is a short introduction that includes a brief historiographical account of agrarian history in Sweden, a synthesis that puts Swedish agriculture in a wider context, a statistical appendix, and a comprehensive bibliography. Unfortunately, but unavoidably, most of the many beautiful and informative illustrations that made up much of the five-volume work have been omitted in this abridged edition.

The guiding idea is that the Swedish experience is relevant to international research. I share this view, and therefore welcome this book. I believe, however, that more explicit international comparisons would have helped the foreign reader. From the general account it is clear, however, that Sweden's agrarian history belongs to a wider European story. Stig Welinder, whose article covers the first three millennia, points to the fact that the first findings of agricultural activities are associated with finds of Funnel-Beaker pottery. Agriculture seems to have been introduced as part of a wider cultural package, common to a large area around the Baltic and the North Sea. In the subsequent chapter, Ellen Anne Pedersen and Mats Widgren explore at length when and where the different elements of Northern European mixed farming – cattle byres, hay-meadows, permanent fields, and iron implements such as the scythe – turn up in the Swedish setting. In the third chapter, Janken Myrdal tells a story familiar to most British readers, that of medieval growth and decline. Sweden in the high middle ages was characterized by demographic expansion, land clearance, and rising productivity. In the fourteenth century, times were bad, culminating in 1350 with the Black Death. A dramatic drop in population, warfare, and efforts to increase rents – a 'feudal reaction' – followed. However, in the end, peasants' conditions improved. A new era of expansion began.

A main and recurring theme in the book is the view that agricultural development is by-and-large a discontinuous process, characterized by times of rather rapid transformation and times of relative immovability. Carl-Johan Gadd describes a radical transformation in the fourth chapter, 'The agricultural revolution in Sweden 1700–1870'. Here we are told how Sweden changed from being an importer of agricultural produce to an exporter, despite a growth in population from 1.4 million in 1700 to 4.2 million in 1870. A 'technological complex', to use Myrdal's term, consisting of iron ploughs, the use of scythes to harvest grain, new crops and crop rotations, and land reforms (inspired

by English enclosures), made this possible. But Gadd also gives credit to 'underlying socio-economic and institutional changes' that strengthened the position of the peasant-farmer, who is depicted as the chief carrier of change.

In the two last chapters, written by Mats Morell (covering 1870–1945) and Iréne A. Flygare and Maths Isacson (1945–2010), we meet a very different agrarian society, now inextricably dependent on, but at the same time at odds with, industrial and urban society. In 1900, half the Swedish population was still employed in agriculture. During the twentieth century this number was in constant decline; in the 1990s it was 4 per cent. In its place, machines driven by electricity and fossil fuels made possible an unprecedented increase in production. We are also told about the political and ideological struggles between agrarian interests and the rest of the Swedish society, within the context of an ever more important market economy and a rising welfare state.

This is an impressive book, spanning a wide range of topics: cultivation techniques, structures of landholding, the gender division of labour, to name but a few. The importance of forestry in Swedish rural society, not the least in the northern area, could have been emphasized more strongly. But the large regional differences that characterize Sweden are still accounted for; even brief, but repeated, references are made to the pastoral economy of the Sami, otherwise sadly neglected by Swedish historians. My guess, and hope, is that this will be an important book of reference for many years to come.

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SVERRE BAGGE, MICHAEL H. GELTING and THOMAS LINDKVIST (eds), *Feudalism. New landscapes of debate* (The Medieval Countryside 5, Brepols Publishers, 2011). 232 pp. £80.

This volume consists of eleven essays based on conference papers, with an introduction. The conference, held in 2006, aimed to review early medieval aristocratic society in a comparative light, and in particular to consider the revisionist views of feudalism advanced by Susan Reynolds in a book published twelve years earlier, on which she has contributed a reflective essay. Some of the other essays discuss the institutions and social bonds found in the traditional heartland of feudalism, northern France and the Empire, but seven of them deal with the periphery: Denmark, England, the south of France, Hungary, Norway, Romania and Spain. They range over the centuries between the eighth and the thirteenth, with a tendency to congregate around the year 1000. Their approaches and conclusions differ, but most of them are in tune with Reynolds's belief that the concepts of fiefs and vassals are not the most useful tools for analysing early medieval society. She was questioning the view of Ganshof that the key relationship among the aristocracy between the Loire and the Rhine was the performance of service in exchange for grants of land. The authors find land leased for cash rather than service, and various types of property which cannot be called tenancies at all. The terms used for conditional grants include the widespread 'benefice', and many local words, such as the Norwegian *veitsla*. Subordinates were described as 'men' or 'faithful men' more often than vassals. There were many forms of association and bonds between people, other than those based on the tenure of land in exchange for service, such as kinship, friendship and clientage. Authors find that the chronology of social development varies across the continent. Sometimes there was a period of 'classical feudalism', in France between 980 and 1060 according to Barthélemy, but it was not a defining or enduring feature of medieval society. Popa-Gorjano ends his contribution on Romania with sentiments that serve as a conclusion for the whole book: 'the term [feudalism] is a hindrance rather than an aid to the historian's work'.

The subject under discussion is potentially relevant to historians of agriculture and the countryside, because lordship over land and the tenure of land lie at the root of the aristocratic world of vassals, clients and faithful men which is the main concern of this book. But almost nothing is said about the means by which the possession of land was used to generate wealth. The existence of the peasantry is sometimes hinted at when an author explains that the Marxist concept of feudalism as a mode of production is not the concern of this book. The contribution on Denmark by Gelting is an honourable exception to the omission of the lower ranks. We do not need to be Marxists to understand that societies functioned as a whole, and the inferior 80 per cent turned land held by whatever tenure, or by none, into a productive asset.

Readers should feel grateful to a publisher prepared to devote resources to a book catering for a minority interest, and to the editors who were ready to give their time to making a collection of essays available. Their work is especially commendable when the essays were prepared for publication in English and French, which are not the native languages of the editors, yet the style of the book is fluent and readable. However, potential readers who are being asked to pay £80 for a relatively slim volume ought to be provided with information

about the contributors, a conclusion, a bibliography and an index (or at least some of these). The introduction consists mainly of a summary of the papers, and should have aimed higher, either by framing the subject more thoroughly in the historiography, or by advancing some alternative to the Ganshof model.

CHRISTOPHER DYER
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ULF JANSSON, LEIF WASTENSON and PÄR ASPENBERG (eds), *National atlas of Sweden. Agriculture and forestry in Sweden since 1900: a cartographic description* (Norstedt, 2011). 232 pp., 225 illus., £25.

HANS ANTONSON and ULF JANSSON (eds), *Agriculture and forestry in Sweden since 1900: geographical and historical studies* (Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry, 2011), 542 pp., £13.

The Royal Academy of Forestry and Agriculture in Sweden has arranged the production of two excellent books on twentieth-century history, the first an atlas and the second an anthology of articles. The atlas contains hundreds of wonderfully detailed maps and diagrams with 50 chapters covering subjects such as technology, politics, landscaping and industry. These topics are explored in more detail in the 30 articles that make up the anthology. The project was a follow-up of a similar study conducted a hundred years ago that resulted in the publication of an atlas of Swedish agriculture. The original study was funded entirely by a wealthy donor called Moritz Fraenckel. He also set up a fund to cover the costs of a similar project to be conducted one hundred years later. The fund has remained untouched – until now. The new atlas also forms part of the National Atlas of Sweden (SNA) series published in 24 volumes since the late 1990s.

The books reveal that there is a great deal of continuity in Sweden. Large parts of the plains have been farmed for hundreds of years. Woodland continues to dominate the landscape and in many respects areas north of Scania actually make up the western part of the Taiga eco-region. Forests mature slowly and although futurology is normally risky business, it is quite possible to estimate tree species proportions for the next hundred years. Nevertheless, caution prevails with the estimates given on pages 148–149. Indeed these are subsequently revised on page 167 on the basis of climate scenarios.

Reindeer husbandry is another enduring feature. For the last hundred years there have been around a quarter of a million reindeer in Sweden at any given time. Interestingly the number of predator-gated animals is approximately 30,000 according to the atlas (p. 189), whilst the anthology estimates this figure to be between 40,000 and 50,000 (p. 462). This indicates that reindeer herding must be assessed in a cultural and political context.

There has also been a great deal of change during the last century. By shifting our perspective to the 'knees of the curves' when the pace of change alters drastically (either faster or slower), we can identify at least two major transformations. Firstly, the developments in technology after World War Two had a major effect on farming, particularly with respect to the rapid decline of farm units. The smaller farms were the first to go. They were generally located in the forested areas of Sweden, many of them having been reclaimed during the nineteenth century. The technological transformation meant that farming underwent systemic change, primarily due to the new energy sources and more scientific agricultural techniques being introduced. Key innovations included tractors, milking machines, artificial fertilizers and pesticides, and they all had a major impact on productivity.

A slightly different picture emerges when we look at forestry. There were similar technological advances during the 1950s and 1960s that resulted in the introduction of tractors and chainsaws. Nevertheless, work remained difficult and very manual. There was a second technological leap forward in the 1980s with the arrival of the harvester (a machine used in cut-to-length logging operations) and more efficient planting techniques. Whilst this resulted in increased productivity, it also led to a dramatic decrease in the workforce. Another important consequence was the decline in the number of accidents, which had until then been a big problem in forestry.

The second major transformation had a different content. It came when society at large started placing greater demands on production with respect to the environment. The text and map on page 152 states rather proudly how much dead wood per hectare there is in each forest. This is certainly not something that old-school foresters would have applauded. The use of artificial fertilizers and pesticides has been declining since the 1980s and organic farming has been increasing since the 1990s. Simultaneously there have been efforts to protect nature with a ten-fold expansion of nature reserves.

Other demands concern the use of the countryside as a place for leisure and entertainment. There was a rapid increase in the ownership of summer cottages or 'second homes' from the late 1950s, and the trend is still on the up. With a population of nine million, there are now 700,000 second homes in Sweden. Many

of these properties are used by more than one family and in southern Sweden a significant proportion of them are owned by Danes and Germans. Hunting is an important pursuit in Sweden and the annual elk hunt has become almost sacrosanct. Yet it was not until the 1970s that elk hunting became so popular. Since then around 100,000 or 150,000 elks are shot every year. Mass tourism is quite a modern phenomenon and it has a huge impact on the countryside. Moreover, the rapid increase in the number of golf courses across the country should not be forgotten, and horses for leisure riding have become a key feature on the landscape.

The books also provide information about food production, gardening and much more. Whilst it could be argued that greater comparisons could have been drawn between Sweden and Europe and the rest of the world, these books should perhaps be regarded as a good basis on which such comparisons can be made.

JANKEN MYRDAL
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NOELLE PLACK, *Common land, wine and the French Revolution. Rural society and economy in southern France, c.1789–1820* (Ashgate, 2099). 215pp., £65.

The long-term transformation of the common lands of France is a question that has held a central place within French rural history of the revolutionary and post-revolutionary period since at least the 1920s. As in Britain, historians (and contemporaries) saw the transformation of the ownership of the commons as a key indicator of agrarian modernization and, as with Britain, the debate over this transformation has also been marked by an ideological dimension. In France, in studies of the revolutionary period in particular, much of the debate has centred around the role of the peasantry in the enclosure and/or regulation of common land and the subsequent effects of that role on the nature of peasant society and class formation in the rural areas. For many years the orthodox view was that of Georges Lefebvre. At the most basic level this was that the peasantry, especially the poor peasants, were opposed to the enclosure and division of the common land since, once the land was lost, they had nothing. Against this, Anatoli Ado and adherents of the *marxisant* views of Soboul following Lenin saw the peasants, especially the middle peasants, as key actors in the creation of agrarian capitalism. To them enclosure and division of the essentially wasted commons was the first key step on the ladder to a viable peasant proprietorship. More recent work, especially that of Nadine Vivier, has shifted the argument, in the first instance at least, away from grand narratives to a much more nuanced and localist interpretation. Vivier argues that it was not so much the act of enclosure that was important as how the land was to be divided – the *mode de partage*. This in turn depended crucially on regional, economic, social and agrarian variables.

It is within this model that Plack's study is set. Taking Vivier's insistence that the nature of the enclosure and partage of common land can only be understood when studied over a long perspective, it follows one region of southern France through the Revolutionary, Napoleonic and Restoration legislation that fostered the privatization of common land. The region studied is centred on the modern department of the Gard. The Gard, as Plack's study shows, was a region of several agricultural regions, but the dominant landscape form was (and is) that of *garrigues*, a barren landscape of low scrub produced by the long-term burning and grazing of forests. It was in the regions of *garrigues* that most of the common land was concentrated and where the changes in the years from the 1780s to the 1820s had most effect. Outside these regions change was lass obvious. For example to the north of the Gard the region of the Cevennes saw little change and the pre-revolutionary pattern of tiny arable holdings and large communal pastures was maintained. Against that, the majority of communes in the south and east of the region saw some changes in the years between the 1780s and the 1820s, and most of these were in areas of *garrigues* or the arid Mediterranean plain.

Plack's study follows this process at two levels, first as represented in the discussions at national level, mainly in Paris and, secondly, in the local response to national and mainly legislative change. In this, the discussion of the revolutionary period takes most time and space with the complex, and often opaque, relationships between the desires of the legislators, local and national, carefully charted. However, for the agricultural historian, there is an often a frustrating lack of precise detail as to how this worked out at the level of the *commune*. Nevertheless the discussion of the regional impact of these reforms does add a further local study of the effects of land reform on land holding and landowning and landownership in this period. Against this there are important caveats. For example, although 42 per cent of *communes* in Plack's study region experienced some privatization of common land. In most of these some communal land was retained well into the nineteenth century and in some communes until the present period. This mix, as Vivier has argued more generally, enabled the *petit producteur* to straddle the world of both the collective and the individual forms of agricultural production, combining the peasant worlds of both Lefebvre and Soboul.

In the final chapter, which looks at the socio-economic impact of the changes in land tenure, Plack looks at the more conventional 'agrarian history' of the region during the period. What we see here is not a 'revolution' in productive techniques, but rather a building on existing methods and structures. To the non-specialist (like this reviewer) the long-term trend in this region would appear to be the expansion of viticulture, and indeed that is certainly reinforced here. Yet the importance of land reform is rather less clear. There had been considerable increase in the amount of land under vines before 1789, but that there was a further increase before 1850 cannot be doubted. What is not always clear from this study is precisely where and how land 'reform' contributed to this. However, it does seem clear that in some communes at least the expansion that lead to the 'golden age' of wine in Languedoc after 1850 was based upon 'new' peasant exploitation of former communal *garrigues.* But, it is equally clear that, for many *petits,* the privatization of communal resources meant simply more expansion on the old system. As Plack says, 'a balanced polyculture still dominated most villages in the Gard during the early nineteenth century and traditional forms of exploitation were carried out on new plots (p. 150)

Like many regional studies, this study makes important points about the agrarian changes wrought during (if not by) the French revolution. While it may lack the grand narratives and great explanations so many British writers have come to expect of French historical writing, its contribution to the complex mosaic of French rural French history is clear. It also presents, almost *en route,* a clear and precise discussion of the debates and methodology around the question of the commons in the revolutionary period and from that discussion raises important points, which are of interest well beyond the wild *garrigues* of the Gard.

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GAIL KLIGMAN and KATHERINE VERDERY, *Peasants under siege. The collectivization of Romanian agriculture, 1949–1962* (Princeton U.P., 2011). xxi + 520 pp., 26 figs., 9 tabs. £27.95.

It is difficult to disagree with the verdicts of the eminent scholars that its publishers have recruited to help market this book. It is without doubt an 'important work of scholarship' and 'the most comprehensive … and penetrating work on the collectivization of agriculture in Romania available in any language'. The result of a multi-disciplinary research project involving 20 scholars using local and national archives and oral history techniques, the book is divided into three sections. Chapters one to three cover the Soviet blueprint, the Romanian village prior to collectivization and the politics of collectivization, and the creation of cadres to implement it. Chapters four, five and six address the means (from propaganda to brute force) used to persuade peasants to sign up ('pedagogies of power'), and the nature of 'class war'. Chapter seven considers the final achievement of collectivization and factors that contributed to its variable success, while chapter eight addresses its impact on village life, in particular the lack of commitment of peasants to collective farming.

Both authors have worked extensively on Romania for many years, Kligman as a sociologist, Verdery as an anthropologist, and both with an eye to history. As might be expected from these backgrounds, the book is exceptionally strong on the social implications and consequences of collectivization's attempt at total transformation. They remind us, for example, that crucial concerns for peasants were issues like dowries and the organization of marriages under collectivized agriculture, matters that figured nowhere in the Socialist modernizing rationale that underpinned collectivization, let alone the minds of the poorly educated cadres who implemented it. The book is particularly strong on the latter, the extent to which cadres were not in place and had to be trained as the campaigns developed. Equally, it is strong on complexity and variability. The experience of collectivization was not uniform. There was cruelty, violence and brutality, but also scope for concessions and bargains.

Nevertheless, as with all important contributions to scholarship, the nature of that contribution should be delineated. First, the book is not, strictly speaking, agenda-setting in that another book from this research project (Constantin Iordachi and Dorin Dobrincu [eds], *Transforming peasants, property and power. The collectivization of agriculture in Romania, 1949–62* [2009]) came out first. As an edited collection, it lacks the coherence of the earlier volume, but it contains many fascinating papers, including contributions by both Kligman and Verdery. Second, the authors insist on seeing the land reform of the immediate post-war years, together with the introduction of quotas, teleologically as precursors to collectivization. For historians, it is far from clear that collectivization was a Communist goal in 1945, other than a long-term ideal. Its sudden emergence as an agenda item in 1948, in the context of the Stalin-Tito dispute, surprised most of the Eastern European Communist leadership.

The authors also see collectivization as an unchanging process, one that entailed a continuous

'class war' in the countryside. Yet it becomes clear from the text that collectivization policy was not uniform, that in a 'second major wave' (p. 320), from 1957 to 1962, the focus switched to attracting wealthier peasants into co-operatives so as to encourage others to join. There is increasing evidence from across the region that 'class war' in the countryside, which was always in theory against the kulaks and not the peasantry as a whole, was Stalin's peculiar obsession. After his death, and in particular, the debacle of 1956, which had ramifications throughout the region, all Eastern European governments quietly switched their focus away from making war against kulaks. Less centrally, the authors' explanation of the slow pace of collectivization in Romania when compared to the Soviet Union, in terms of the Russian tradition of communal tenure in the *mir,* is presented ambiguously. In places they seem to suggest Russian peasants were less committed to their land, while elsewhere they argue that tenure in the *mir* made it possible to persuade peasants collectively to join, obviating the need to convince them individually. This suggests the central issue was legality rather than tenure; indeed, as the authors stress, the need for a spurious legality for collectivization, for peasants to petition to join farms, was an important feature Romanian 'voluntary' collectivization.

Finally, the book ends in 1962 when total collectivization was achieved, omitting any discussion of how collective farming proceeded after that. Having persuaded peasants to sign up to collective farming, the next challenge was to get them to participate in it. Romania was particularly unsuccessful in this respect; yet collectivized agriculture really did succeed in overcoming rural poverty in countries that abandoned further elements of Stalin's model.

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PETER D. GRIGGS, *Global industry, local innovation: the history of cane sugar production in Australia, 1820–1995* (Peter Lang, 2011). xxxvi + 928 pp., 60 figs., 69 illus., 56 tabs. £72.50.

1,650 grams of paper suggests heavy reading. In over 900 pages, Peter D. Griggs presents the first comprehensive history of Australian cane sugar production. Covering a period from 1788 to 1995, Griggs's impressive study offers a thorough and detailed look into the development of the Australian sugar industry. Expanding from the north-eastern coast into a global business, it was part of a wider trend in commercial sugar production around the globe.

Three sections cover the main epochs in the historical development of the Australian sugar industry. The years from 1788 to 1863 mark the beginnings of the Australian sugar production. The second period covers the years from the sustained commercial production of raw sugar in 1864 to the outbreak of the First World War. The third period, from 1915 until 1995, saw government regulation of all sectors of the sugar production process changing to a mostly de-regulated environment by the 1980s. Nineteen chapters fill those epochs with life. On the basis of a remarkable number of primary sources and secondary literature, Griggs presents a story of economic success and environmental drama. Even though he claims his book focuses on geographical and environmental questions, he deals with a number of other historical subject areas as well.

In particular, Griggs focuses on social and economic history, when outlining the fundamental differences in Australian cane sugar production compared to that practised by the rest of the world. By the early twentieth century Australian sugar was produced in central milling systems supplied with cane grown on small, family-owned farms, which relied on high-cost European labour. This was a unique feature of the Australian sugar industry. In his seminal work of 1985, *Sweetness and Power*, Sydney Mintz reminded us that elsewhere the origins and structures of cane sugar production were mainly a mixture of colonial 'indigene' production and metropolitan 'white' consumption.

The high wage cost led to a high degree of mechanization. Here, the study is a history of technology that focuses on research and innovation in the refining and milling sectors, cultivation methods, improving the network of drainage, breeding and improving cane varieties, combating diseases, and harvesting and transporting cane.

Governmental measures were also very important in the development of the Australian sugar industry. Here, Griggs's study is a political history. Australia's sugar industry became one of most regulated in the world. Tight government controls over production were installed in the 1920s. Before 1985, numerous regulations governed all aspects of production, from the amount of cane produced on each farm, or the amount produced in each mill, to the final price paid. Government intervention stopped in the 1980s, and today Australian sugar production is no longer protected through a comprehensive set of measures, unlike that of the United States or Brazil for example.

Griggs's work is also a history of entrepreneurship. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company assumes a prominent role in the book. Having been a major driving force in the development of the Australian cane sugar industry, the Company was responsible for about 25 per cent of the Australian raw sugar output after 1920.

It took up a near monopoly over the refining sector between 1850 and 1880 and again between 1900 and 1989 and was important in maintaining the connection between science and agriculture. Therefore, it became a major driver and pioneer in Australian sugar business.

The downside of intensive sugar farming is shown in the environmental history that Griggs traces. Through large-scale deforestation between 1860 and 1915 and water pollution, the sugar industry had a massive effect on the character of the landscape along Australia's north-east coast. Only in the late twentieth century has a new generation of cane growers and millers begun to repair the environmental damage. They have a long way yet to go.

Griggs's book is extensive. Here and there one misses analytical connections to other parts of the world, because sugar was, and is still, a global commodity. Accordingly, policy measures were highly responsive to measures taken elsewhere. Some aspects on transfers could have been elaborated a bit more, especially when it comes to innovation and science. Was there an international global community of knowledge-based experts, a so-called 'epistemic community' of sugar-cane scientists? Furthermore, the cultural aspect of the family farm in shaping a national economy – and maybe identity – deserved elaboration in a twentieth chapter. By contrast, in Europe the family farm has been considered as the cultural pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy since 1962. Here again, an international link would have been most interesting.

Griggs has written an impressive and highly informative volume. Anyone interested in sugar as a global commodity ought to read the 900 pages. This may be a daunting task, but after you have finished the book, you will have gained a taste for it. The sugar industry provides a perplexing taste of sweetness, but one that has clearly incited Griggs to maximum performance.

FRITZ GEORG VON GRAEVENITZ
EUI Florence

Conference Report: Winter Conference 2011 'British Food Security in Historical Perspective'

by John Chartres

Displaced, by renovation works, from the normal Winter Conference venue to the panelled sobriety of the University of London Senate Chamber, fifty-one members met on 3 December 2011 to reflect upon four papers on the theme of food security. Excellent emergency action by the conference organizer happily overcame the projection deficiencies of the new venue, which did, however, offer unusual comfort and circulating space in its anteroom, easing the social intercourse of the lunch break. Four varied papers lived up to challenges of the space, and explored the major issues of the subject to give us a very interesting day.

Dr James Davis (Queen's University, Belfast) explored the dogs of famine that did not bark in '"Goþ or wey, corn is dere!": attitudes towards grain traders and dearth in fourteenth-century England', in which we learned that the Great Famine of 1315–22 seemed not to provoke authorities to regulatory action. Careful analysis of the chronicles rather indicated that the censorious attitudes towards middlemen visible in the literary and religious tracts of the time were not representative of actuality, and that consumers and authorities instead recognized their utility. Realism governed attitudes to grain supplies, and there was recognition of price reality without riot in the early fourteenth century: speculation against the interests of the consumer was disparaged, but price-setting was seen as unrealistic. Later attempts by Edward II to control livestock prices were unsuccessful, and were in any event motivated by the need to supply his army rather than his subjects. Increased legislation against forestallers and others after the Famine was argued to have been publicly accepted as reinforcement of protection, and food scarcity as the 'will of God'. This argued for a more general appreciation in the period of a complex commercial ethic that combined moral principle, political imperative and the instability of economic forces. Government action thus linked in this context with a wider acceptance of the virtues and limitations of a pragmatic moral economy that helped to dampen potential social unrest between 1315 and 1322.

The second paper, by contrast, was explicitly literary in its focus and methodology, and almost reversed the approaches of the first. Dr Ayesha Mukherjee (University of Exeter), discussed 'Literatures of Dearth in the 1590s', a paper based upon her current book project on the remedial measures for dearth undertaken and imagined by the English in the 1590s. Contrasting texts were analysed to explore the cultural meanings of dearth in the decade, where they overlapped and influenced anxieties, and how assessment of causes and remedies were debated. Her five core sources began with the reception of Ludwig Lavater's sermons, published in translation in 1596, which argued God as the 'proper cause' of dearth, but also illustrated how problems of dearth-time were treated and shaped to meet pragmatic problems of resource management. Her second, Hugh Platt, was more familiar to many in the audience, and his *Remedies against Famine* (1596), which have often been disregarded in their eccentric discourses on eating: here it was argued that they were presented as practical options, with serious ethical implications that linked with the cultural discussions of dearth in literary texts. They related to her final three authorities, Shakespeare's Falstaff (1598), Robert Greene's *Defence of Conny Catching* (1592) and Thomas Nashe's *Lenten Stuffe* (1599), all of which illustrated how the divorce of ingenuity from moral imperatives could license gluttony, cheating, vagrancy, dishonest projection, and adulteration to make personal self-sufficiency out of the misery of others. The literature of dearth thus mixed prodigality and moderation, and problems of punishment in a society in which poverty could cause excess and corruption, and conflict with the virtues of ingenuity.

Contemporary writing thus drew attention to the transitory nature of plenty, and could itself participate in the remedy of dearth. Pressures of time precluded the full reconciliation of the empirical and the literary conceptualization of these first two papers.

Professor Cormac Ó Gráda (University College, Dublin) presented results from joint work with his colleagues Morgan Kelly and Bruce Campbell to cover an extraordinary range of years, 1300–1800, in 'Harvest failures and mortality in pre-industrial England'. He was, perhaps, the principal sufferer from the wobbly IT provision in the room, since this remarkable presentation consisted of a large number of complex slides, a full re-reading of which assisted in the drafting of this report. Two important datasets were analysed and compared, to demonstrate year-to-year variability in crop yields, short-run linkages between real wages and mortality, the occurrence of major crises of subsistence, changing living standards, increasing market integration, and the lack of convincing evidence for temperature cooling, the 'Little Ice Age' of the late sixteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century. His explorations made for an exhilarating journey through time, and suggested significantly lower harvest variation in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries than some scholars have postulated, with remarkably similar net yields per acre appearing over the period 1268–1480, with perhaps enhanced variation in the fifteenth century, and clear correlations of natural pairs of grains – wheat and rye, barley and oats – and lower incidence of back-to-back harvest failures than might have been expected. Medieval food security may have been a little better than sometimes thought, but the time trend also demonstrated its improvement, visible in the documentation of very clear diminution in harvest-to-harvest wheat prices from the middle of the seventeenth century. His medieval data documented clear correlations between measures of mean summer temperatures and cereal yields, 1211–1500, but the later evidence proved hard to reconcile with the 'Little Ice Age', and its assumed effects, reduced growing seasons, shorter working years, changing crop mixes, relatively falling wheat yields, and shifting patterns of settlement. None of these consequences appeared in England, 1350–1700, and days worked per family may have been significantly higher in 1600 or 1700 at over 400, close to the estimates for 1300 (382), but far higher than the 331 of 1380 or the 266 of 1450 estimated by Apostolides and colleagues (2008). Market integration was an important part of this story, but may have been exaggerated in its impact, but over the whole period, variation of food supply was reduced, standards of living and nutritional levels rose, crop mixes increasingly made trading down the grain scale possible, and storage costs fell, easing the rise in capacity. Ó Gráda's paper thus provided a heady mix, more than sufficient for analysis in another conference, but, sadly, time precluded the extended discussion it warranted.

The 700-year scope of the conference reached the late twentieth century and beyond with the final paper, by Dr David Barling (City University), 'The security of the UK food supply: policy discourse and advocacy in an era of embedded neo-liberalism'. This explored the historical context of the late 1990s to explore the fundamentals of food policy after 2007–08, but for most of the audience it related powerfully to the policy discourses that had engaged the UK since 1947. Dr Barling identified the key precepts of policy that had characterized the 1990s: food safety, competitiveness of sectors of UK farming, and some related aspects of rural policy. The foot-and-mouth crisis of 2000 helped to lead to a wider policy review that remained framed by the ideology of the competition state as the enabler of competitiveness in international markets. The same agenda was reinforced by UK policy towards the CAP, and the wider discussions within the World Trade Organization: the policy stance of the Treasury and DEFRA was reaffirmed in 2005–06 as one seeking further liberalization. Some of the complacency about the UK free trading food system came under challenge in 2007–08, with price spikes on world markets, and pointed to risks in UK and EU policy positions on exports and imports of food. These processes exposed contradictions in policy, treating the international market as the most efficient and risk-reducing approach to the UK's current and future food supplies. Critical among these tensions were the risks of dependence on international supply as trading competitors raise demand; the uncertain resilience of this supply strategy; and the contradictions of pressures for farm support within the UK and the Government desire for the ending or reduction of CAP support. This very recent piece of historical and policy research thus brought the conference to end where it had started, with the role of the state in securing a reliable food supply for its citizens.

As always, the day was too short, and all the members attending must have shared the buzz of new thoughts and approaches to a fundamental set of problems reviewed in this long historical perspective. All were again grateful to the conference organizer, Dr Jane Whittle, for once more arranging such a challenging and engaging programme, and to all the speakers who made it such a rewarding day.

THE

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Forthcoming conferences, 2013

'Ploughing Ahead'
Friday 15 March 2013

The Society is co-sponsoring the Ploughing Ahead colloquium on technological, socio-economic and environmental developments in Old World ploughing, to be held at Rewley House, University of Oxford.

The one-day colloquium will discuss recent research into pre-industrial tillage methods. There has been limited synthetic research in recent years, to draw together the evidence for the use of different tillage methods in antiquity, despite their importance for the study of past agricultural practices and their social implications. It is hoped that this conference will bring together scholars with varying backgrounds and levels of experience, representing a range of historical, archaeological and environmental disciplines.
For details, see http://farmingunearthed.wordpress.com/ploughing.

British Agricultural History Society Spring Conference
8–10 April 2013

The 2013 Spring Conference of the British Agricultural History Society will take place at Askham Bryan College, near York, 8–10 April. Speakers include Professor Michael Turner (University of Hull) on the hidden history of 'yeoman' survival in the twentieth century, Dr Paul Brassley (University of Exeter) on technical change in agriculture in the mid-twentieth century, using evidence from the Farm Management Survey in South West England, and Professor Joyce Burnette will join us from Wabash University, Indiana, to speak on the utility of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century farm account books. There will be a New Research Session, which this year will feature three papers from scholars researching various issues connected to early modern rural history. The conference field trip will visit the recently restored Coulton Mill, Hovingham, which has documentary evidence of its use dating back to 1230. Nigel Copsey, the project manager and historian, will present a history of the mill and farm buildings on the visit.

European Rural History Organisation (EURHO) – Rural History 2013
19–22 August 2013

Rural History 2013 is being organized by the Swiss Rural History Society and will be held at the University of Bern, Switzerland.

More details are available on the conference Web site at www.ruralhistory2013.org.

'Tout-à-la-fois cultivateurs et commerçans': smallholder and the Industrious Revolution in eighteenth-century Brabant*

by Johan Poukens

Abstract

Hitherto, pessimism about the material living standards of Belgian peasants during the eighteenth century has largely dominated the historiography. This article argues for a more positive outlook on the capacity of smallholders (*handwerkers*) to improve their standard of living. In the duchy of Brabant in the second half of the eighteenth century they could benefit from the rising grain prices by reserving part of their land for the cultivation of wheat for urban markets. The introduction of the potato was key to this process because it freed up land formerly reserved for growing food for household consumption. I argue that their market-oriented behaviour could be characterized as an Industrious Revolution because smallholders became consumers of urban luxury items such as colonial groceries. Innkeepers in particular played a pivotal role in the diffusion of these urban consumer practices throughout the countryside.

Travellers who visited the duchy of Brabant (one of the principalities in the territory of present-day Belgium) in the second half of the eighteenth century were impressed by the density of its population. Dérival de Gomicourt, who visited the province in 1782, noticed that the villages were 'more populated and better built' ('plus peuplés et mieux bâtis') there than in his native France.[1] One of his countrymen had already noticed in 1768 that the entire province had the appearance of 'a single city' ('une seule et même ville') because cities, towns and villages were so close together.[2] The Brabantine urbanization rates were indeed amongst the highest in Europe. In 1784, 33 per cent of the duchy's population inhabited a town of at least 5,000 inhabitants (Figure 1). Dérival was also surprised by the general prosperity of its inhabitants, particularly those living in the countryside. They were truly, he wrote, 'a happy

* Abbreviations: OA: Oud Archief [Old Archive]; OGB: Oud Gemeentearchief Buggenhout [Aldermen's court archive, Buggenhout] RAB: Rijksarchief Beveren [State Archive, Beveren]; RAL: Rijksarchief Leuven [State Archive, Leuven]; SAL: Stadsarchief Lier [City Archive, Lier]; SGB: Schepengriffies arrondissement Brussel [Aldermen's court archives, Brussels].

[1] Dérival de Gomicourt, *Le voyageur dans les Pays-Bas autrichiens, ou lettres sur l'état actuel de ces pays* (6 vols, 1782–83), I, p. 122.

[2] Quoted in B. Blondé, *Een economie met verschillende snelheden: Ongelijkheden in de opbouw en ontwikkeling van het Brabantse stedelijke netwerk (c.1750–c.1790)* (1999), p. 21.



FIGURE 1. Population figures and urbanization in Brabant, 1709-1806

Source: P. M. M. Klep, *Bevolking en arbeid in transformatie: Een onderzoek naar de ontwikkelingen in Brabant, 1700–1900* (1981), pp. 412–13.

people' ('un peuple heureux').[3] In his opinion, they owned their happiness to the advanced state of agriculture in the region. The Brabantine soil was not particularly rich, but fertile nonetheless and never left fallow because it was cultivated and manured with the greatest possible care.[4] For Dérival, who was clearly influenced by his Physiocratic compatriots, rural opulence and dense urbanization were strongly correlated. Urban success was both dependent on and contributed to the prosperity of the Brabantine peasantry. The urban market provided the rural population with plenty of opportunities to sell animal products, grain, vegetables, and wood; in the words of Dérival, they were 'cultivators and merchants at the same time' ('Les habitans de ces villages sont tout-à-la-fois cultivateurs et commerçans').[5]

Dérival's observations have been reflected in recent studies of agricultural development in north-western Europe during the early modern era. Jan De Vries, a advocate of neo-Smithian interpretations of agricultural development, has summarized them by characterizing increased agricultural output as an endogenous response to market opportunities which were strongly correlated with urban developments.[6] This response took the form of more work and harder work, and shifting the output-mix toward greater market production.[7] Peasant households increasingly sacrificed leisure time, or devoted labour formerly engaged in producing non-agricultural goods and services for household use, to produce marketable food production or – alternatively – undertook proto-industrial work. For De Vries, this was a consumption-driven phenomenon; the peasants' incentive for market orientation came

[3] Dérival, *Le voyageur*, I, pp. 9–10.

[4] 'Les terres de Bravant ne se reposent jamais; elles ne sont pas généralement grasses, mais elles sont toutes fertiles, parce qu'elles sont tous cultivées avec le plus grand soin & fumées avec le plus profusion'. Dérival, *Le voyageur*, I, p. 127.

[5] Dérival, *Le voyageur*, I, p. 122; II, pp. 46–54.

[6] J. De Vries, *The Dutch rural economy in the Golden Age, 1500–1700* (1974).

[7] J. De Vries, 'Great expectations: Early modern history and the social sciences', in J. A. Marino (ed.), *Early modern history and the social sciences: Testing the limits of Braudel's Mediterranean* (2002), pp. 71–98. See also J. De Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer behaviour and the household economy, 1650 to present* (2008), pp. 92–6.

from their desire to incorporate not only basic necessities into their consumer pattern, but also the goods and commodities that are normally associated with an urban style of living. Together, these changes in household behaviour constituted an 'industrious revolution'.[8]

The *positive* effect of commercialization was first pointed out by De Vries in his study on the agricultural development of the Dutch Republic during its Golden Age.[9] Market access stimulated Frisian peasants to give up their struggle for self-sufficiency; specialization and commercialization improved their material living conditions. Over the course of the seventeenth century, probate inventories from Frisian dairy farmers revealed their increasing possession of new types of furniture which provided greater comfort, new types of tableware made from porcelain and Delftware which were associated with the spread of coffee and tea drinking, and mirrors, clocks and paintings. In his recent book, Craig Muldrew has also argued that English agricultural labourers benefited from 'a more comfortable material standard of living' because farming improvements led to more demand for labour and increased real wages over the period from roughly 1650 to 1780.[10]

There is still much debate, however, on the impact of agrarian commercialization on the rural demand for consumer goods and services in the territory of present-day Belgium. In a recent contribution to the Brenner debate on the relation between social-property relations and agricultural development in the Low Countries, Robert Brenner was quite explicit on the possible positive effect of peasant-driven economic evolution on the standard of living of peasants in the inland southern Low Countries.[11] In his view, which closely echoed that of Erik Thoen in the same volume, the first and foremost objective of the rural household was survival.[12] All productive decisions were subordinate to the household's reproduction. Autarky and subsistence were the norm; peasant households only became *involved* in market-oriented production when external forces compelled them. By the end of the thirteenth century, peasants in the highly urbanized county of Flanders had developed a market-oriented survival strategy in response to the fragmentation of holdings and their consequent inability to produce sufficient food to ensure their survival and reproduction, as well as to increasing surplus extraction in the form of taxes and rent. In order to avoid *dependency* on insecure markets, their survival strategy was characterized by its unspecialized nature. It was based on the combination of highly labour-intensive agriculture which produced both basic foodstuffs for the household and industrial crops for the market, with intermittent wage labour and/or proto-industrial activities

[8] J. De Vries, 'Between purchasing power and the world of goods', in J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the world of goods* (1993), pp. 85–132; J. De Vries, 'The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution', *JEcHist* 54 (1994) pp. 249–70.

[9] J. De Vries, 'Peasant demand patterns and economic development: Friesland, 1550–1750', in W. N. Parker and E. L. Jones (eds), *European peasants and their markets: Essays in agrarian economic history* (1975), pp. 179–266.

[10] C. Muldrew, *Food, energy and the creation of industriousness: Work and material culture in agrarian England, 1550–1780* (2011), p. 206.

[11] R. Brenner, 'The Low Countries in the transition to capitalism', in P. Hoppenbrouwers and J. L. Van Zanden (eds), *Peasants into farmers? The transformation of rural economy and society in the Low Countries (middle ages-nineteenth century) in light of the Brenner debate* (2001), pp. 275–338, repr. as 'The Low Countries in the transition to capitalism', *J. of Agrarian Change* 1 (2001), pp. 169–241.

[12] E. Thoen, 'A "commercial survival economy" in evolution: The Flemish countryside and the transition to capitalism (middle ages-nineteenth century)', in Hoppenbrouwers and Van Zanden (eds), *Peasants into farmers?,* pp. 102–57.

(especially linen weaving). In such a *commercial survival economy*, says Thoen, 'the impact of farmers and peasants on the consumption of commodities remained restrained and maybe even decreased' because the rise of land productivity to unprecedented levels came at the cost of declining labour productivity, poverty, and restricted rural markets.[13]

Consumer demand is the cornerstone of De Vries' theory of the industrious revolution. Opposing the neo-Marxist view that households were pushed to the market by increasing surplus extraction or by pure need (for survival), De Vries has forwarded the hypothesis that households were lured to the market by the attraction of certain incentive goods. Hence, the theory of the industrious revolution needs to be proven on the demand side of the equation. If naturally risk-aversive peasants were willingly exposing themselves to the uncertainties of the market, we must find evidence of, for example, the consumption of colonial groceries in peasant households. If no evidence of incentive goods is found in probate inventories of peasant households, this supports the pessimists' case that peasants only entered the market for survival, not for improving their standard of living. In this article, eighteenth-century smallholders' households from the duchy of Brabant function as a test-case. The duchy of Brabant is an interesting case in this respect because its rural economy shared the features of a commercial survival economy, but it was also a highly urbanized area where elements of an urban consumer culture could trickle-down into the countryside.

I

When Dérival visited the duchy, small, if not tiny, holdings blanketed Brabant's countryside. Large farms were few, but these might occupy as much land as all of the peasants' holdings taken together. At the top of the rural social hierarchy in 1747/55 were the tenant-farmers or '*pachters*' as they were called in contemporary sources (Table 1).[14] For contemporaries, virtually every farmer who worked his land with a horse was considered a *pachter*, whether or not he owned the lands he tilled. Most, however, leased their farms from an ecclesiastical or lay landlord.[15] *Pachters* were independent farmers who generally made up about a fifth of households. In a mixed farming area like Brabant, possession of livestock was positively correlated to access to land.[16] Farms of five hectares generally had one horse; two horses could be found on holdings of ten hectares. One- or two-horse farms could be tilled with family labour, although these households generally had one or two living-in servants and maids, and hired day labourers during harvest. According to the poll tax returns of 1747, only five per cent of the households owned three or more horses. Their farms were generally over 20 hectares and they regularly employed day labourers who were recruited from the households of the *handwerkers*.[17]

[13] Ibid., pp. 145–6; Brenner, 'Low Countries', p. 200.

[14] This paragraph is based on P. M. M. Klep, *Bevolking en arbeid in transformatie: Een onderzoek naar de ontwikkelingen in Brabant, 1700–1900* (1981).

[15] M. Limberger, *Sixteenth-century Antwerp and its rural surroundings: Social and economic changes in the hinterland of a commercial metropolis (ca. 1450–ca. 1570)* (2008), pp. 200–6.

[16] B. H. Slicher van Bath, *De agrarische geschiedenis van West-Europa, 500–1850* (1987 edn), pp. 309–10, 342; E. Vanhaute, *Heiboeren: Bevolking, arbeid en inkomen in de 19de-eeuwse Kempen* (1992), pp. 212–14.

[17] J. De Vries and A. Van der Woude, *The first modern economy: Success, failure and perseverance of the Dutch economy, 1500–1815* (1997), p. 208.

TABLE 1. Social status of household heads in rural Brabant, 1747 and 1755 (per cent)

Category	1747	1755
Pachters	22	21
with ≥ 3 horses	5	–
with 1–2 horses	17	–
Handwerkers	54	52
[smallholders		37]
[labourers		15]
Craftsmen and retailers	24	27
TOTAL	100	100

Source: Klep, *Bevolking*, p. 293.

Half the number of household heads in the Brabantine countryside were classified as '*handwerker*' in contemporary sources.[18] The *handwerker* divide two ways. There are those who were prosperous, who owned one or more cows and worked a plot of land which generally did not exceed three hectares.[19] They can best be characterized as smallholders, able to subsist on their own holding in good years, but who also relied on wage labour to supplement their income (especially in bad harvest years). There are then those without land. Klep provides no percentages for *handwerkers* without cattle or access to land. Based on the number of households which required permanent support by the parish, I would estimate the proportion of proletarian labourers in the total rural population at somewhere around 15 per cent. The remaining quarter of household heads practised some trade or craft, which was generally combined with small scale, subsistence agriculture.[20]

Although Brabant's social structure was polarized, the majority of its *handwerkers* were not fully proletarianized but had land and could achieve an element of self-sufficiency. The tripartite class division of the countryside into landlord, tenant farmer, and agricultural labourer was absent.[21] Whereas in England, agricultural labourers had no land of their own and found employment in a single occupation only, a multiplicity of occupations remained the norm in Brabant. *Handwerkers*' means of survival included not only their own labour and that of their wives and children, but if they were fortunate, their small plot of land. They covered their subsistence requirements through a multiplicity of gainful employments, raising cash crops on

[18] This name literally refers only to the fact that they worked with their hands, but contemporaries commented that they 'earned their living with daily work' ('hunnen cost met dagelijcx werck winnende'). In summer, they would be employed for weeding, mowing, harvesting, and threshing, whilst in winter they were occupied with digging, woodcutting, or making repairs on the farm.

[19] In western Brabant, '*handwerkers*' with two or more cows were called '*cossaerden*' or '*huyslieden*'. Their name referred to the cottages ('*koten*') they inhabited, but they were partly dependent on day labour nevertheless. See F. Vennekens, *La seigneurie de Gaesbeek (1236–1795)* (1935), pp. 134–6.

[20] My collection of probate inventories, which will be discussed at length below, shows 57 per cent of rural retailers and craftsmen were part-time agriculturalists.

[21] M. Overton, *Agricultural revolution in England: The transformation of the agrarian economy, 1500–1850* (1996), p. 195.

their plots, selling dairy products (butter in particular), engaging in rural industry, in extractive activity such as woodcutting and quarrying, and in intermittent work for large farmers. Labour opportunities were probably sufficient to absorb the supply of labour in the western and southern parts of the duchy of Brabant, where large farms measuring 15–20 hectares or more occupied 50 to 75 per cent of the arable land and pasture.[22] This specific social structure, however, generally had a detrimental effect on wages. The presence of a large, semi-landless peasantry is generally regarded as an incentive for intensification of agriculture. Peasant willingness to accept high rents and low wages under population pressure would have led to rising productivity of land at the expense of labour productivity during episodes of increasing population pressure. As Thoen has argued, this could lead to increased involvement in markets, but this involvement in markets was independent of market incentives and was always paralleled by decreasing standards of living. In this article, I will show how, next to producing for self-sufficiency, the market became a second driver of production on smallholdings and how increased commercialization of agricultural production allowed smallholders to expand their world of goods.

II

Probate inventories are an indispensible source for historians who apply a micro-level, household-centred approach. They provide a view of both the material culture and production activities of a household. This article contributes to a continuing historiographical tradition which was established in the 1980s.[23] It is based on a database of 420 probate inventories made between 1691 and 1796 drawn from the archives of the Lier aldermen's court, whose jurisdiction included the hamlets and villages surrounding the town, and several local aldermen's courts in central Brabant. These documents were made when the deceased left minor or incapacitated children. Customary law required that an inventory was recorded within six weeks after death of a parent in order to ensure the correct division of the inheritance between the surviving parent and the children. The estate of the deceased was assessed by two aldermen and recorded by the court's secretary.[24] In these documents, we find information on movable property only. Household goods, farming implements, cattle, crops in the field, and debts owed by or to the deceased are all described and valued, but the ownership of land, houses, and '*constitutions de rente*' (a popular type of mortgage) are rarely mentioned and never valued. Inventories from central Brabant were usually more detailed than those from the surroundings of Lier (goods are described room by room, for instance), but three-quarters of the sample comes from the rural district of Lier. Almost no probate inventories were found for villages in central Brabant before 1760. To make up for this lack, I collected an additional sample of 60 documents listing the goods of a deceased person sold at auction.[25] Their content was very similar to that of probate inventories, except for the enumeration of debts.

[22] S. Delaunois, 'Structure agricole d'un village Brabançon à la fin de l'Ancien Régime: Ittre' (unpublished MA thesis, Catholic University of Leuven, 1967); RAL, SGB, no. 9512.

[23] De Vries, *Industrious revolution*, p. 124.

[24] C. Casier, *Coutumes du pays et duché de Brabant: Quartier de Bruxelles*, II, *Coutumes diverses et turbes relatives aux coutumes de Bruxelles* (1873), pp. 42–4; G. De Longé, *Coutumes du pays et duché de Brabant: Quartier d'Anvers*, V, *Coutumes de Kiel, de Deurne et de Lier* (1875), pp. 490–1, 578–83.

[25] I deliberately left out those auction lists which

These documents were categorized according to the categories outlined previously. I used the presence and the number of livestock to differentiate between *handwerkers*' and *pachters*' households because the occupation of the deceased was rarely mentioned in the inventory. The use of livestock as a criterion for categorization of probate inventories is certainly not new. It has already been used by De Vries. 'In a predominantly livestock-raising province [Frisia],' he argues, 'this seems a useful criterion for distinguishing the overall economic status of households'.[26] Is this criterion also usable in a region in which mixed farming rather than animal husbandry was dominant? The general literature on European agriculture suggests it is. Horses and oxen provided the traction required for ploughing, harrowing, and carting, while cattle provided the manure that was indispensable for fertilizing the land.[27] Especially on the smallholdings on which the vast majority of households in the district of Lier and central Brabant subsisted, intensive application of manure was necessary to maintain the soil's productivity. Consequently, the correlation between the size of the holding and the number of livestock, especially cows, was very high.[28] This close relationship has led previous historians to divide the agrarian population into categories based on the livestock they owned. There is consensus amongst those agricultural historians who have studied the sandy areas of the northern Low Countries that households who owned one or more horses can be equated with commercial holdings.[29] In the Campine region and the Flemish Sandy Region, the correspondence between the minimum size of a holding on which a horse could be sustained and the threshold size for a commercial farm suggests this rule also applied in the southern Low Countries as well. Thoen and Vanhaute have placed these thresholds at four or five hectares.[30]

Ownership of horses and livestock was also an important criterion used by the local administrators responsible for drawing up tax lists and population censuses. This was formulated explicitly by the aldermen of Sint-Pieters-Leeuw, a village near Brussels, in a comment in the 1755 population census. *Pachters* (farmers), they said, possessed a horse. *Handwerkers* (smallholders) owned some cattle, but no horse. Those with two cows were called '*cossaerden*' or '*huyslieden*'. *Handwerkers* who owned one cow or no cattle at all, were considered 'the least amongst the villagers' ('de alderminste onder de gemeijntenaeren').[31]

Table 2 shows the distribution of the categories defined before in the probate inventories from

Note 25 *continued*
were clearly incomplete, as far as this could be judged from the *complete absence* of beds, chairs or other types of seating, chests or other types of storage furniture, cooking utensils and tableware. See also A. Schuurman, *Materiële cultuur en levensstijl: Een onderzoek naar de taal der dingen op het Nederlandse platteland in de 19de eeuw* (1989), pp. 63–5.

[26] De Vries, 'Peasant demand', p. 212.

[27] Slicher van Bath, *De agrarische geschiedenis*, pp. 309–10, 342.

[28] E. Thoen and E. Vanhaute, 'Handwerkers en peerdsboeren: De Vlaamse bouw op grote en kleine bedrijven in het midden van de 19de eeuw', *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis* 83 (2000), pp. 70–1; Vanhaute, *Heiboeren*, pp. 211–14.

[29] Slicher van Bath, *De agrarische geschiedenis*, p. 343; B. H. Slicher van Bath, *Een samenleving onder spanning: Geschiedenis van het platteland in Overijssel* (1977), pp. 442–66; J. L. Van Zanden, *De economische ontwikkeling van de Nederlandse landbouw in de negentiende eeuw, 1800–1914* (1985), pp. 375–7; J. Bieleman, *Boeren op het Drentse zand 1600–1910: Een nieuwe visie op de 'oude' landbouw* (1987), pp. 142–3, 149–50; P. Brusse, *Overleven door ondernemen: De agrarische geschiedenis van de Over-Betuwe, 1650–1850* (1999), p. 61.

[30] Vanhaute, *Heiboeren*, pp. 212–14, 222–3; Thoen, 'A "commercial survival economy"', pp. 111, 146.

[31] Quoted in F. Daelemans, 'Het Pajottenland in de 18de eeuw: Historisch-demografisch onderzoek', p. 64 (unpublished PhD dissertation, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 1979).

TABLE 2. Number of probate inventories in sample, 1691–1796

Period	*Handwerker*	*Pachter*	*Crafts and retailing*	*Total*
1691–99	5	6	3	14
1700–09	9	9	3	21
1710–19	9	12	5	26
1720–29	18	23	12	53
1730–39	21	22	7	50
1740–49	23	21	13	57
1750–59	14	14	2	30
1760–69	21	17	7	45
1770–79	16	17	11	44
1780–89	30	52	13	95
1790–96	13	25	7	45
Total	179	218	83	480
%	37	45	17	100

Source: SAL, OASL, nos 1833–84; SAL, OGA, nos 72–4; RAL, SGB, nos 738–7909; RAB, OGB, no. 19.

both samples. Households engaged in crafts and retailing usually also worked a plot of land and owned some cattle, but were classified in a separate category because their activities were explicitly market-oriented. If we compare the distribution of the probate inventories from the last row of Table 2 to Table 1, we find that households from all layers of rural society are included, although *handwerkers* are under-represented. One has to keep in mind, furthermore, that the *handwerkers'* households represented in the sample are representative only of the upper echelons of this social group, the ones best described as smallholders and who contemporaries sometimes called '*cossaerden*'. The proletarianized household, without livestock or access to land, is nearly completely absent from the sample, but made up 18 per cent of the households in central Brabant and 9 per cent in the district of Lier. The inventory sample covers, in other words, only the more prosperous smallholder with some assets. This social bias is, of course, inherent to any sample of probate inventories, because the source naturally excluded those without possessions.

III

Dérival wrote positively of the prosperity of the rural population in Brabant and the state of agriculture in the duchy. The period after 1750 has been characterized as a period of strong agricultural revival.[32] The positive effect of rising soil productivity and agricultural prices

[32] H. Van der Wee, 'The agricultural development of the Low Countries as revealed by tithe and rent statistics, 1250–1800', in H. Van der Wee and E. Van Cauwenberghe (eds), *Productivity of land and agricultural innovation in*

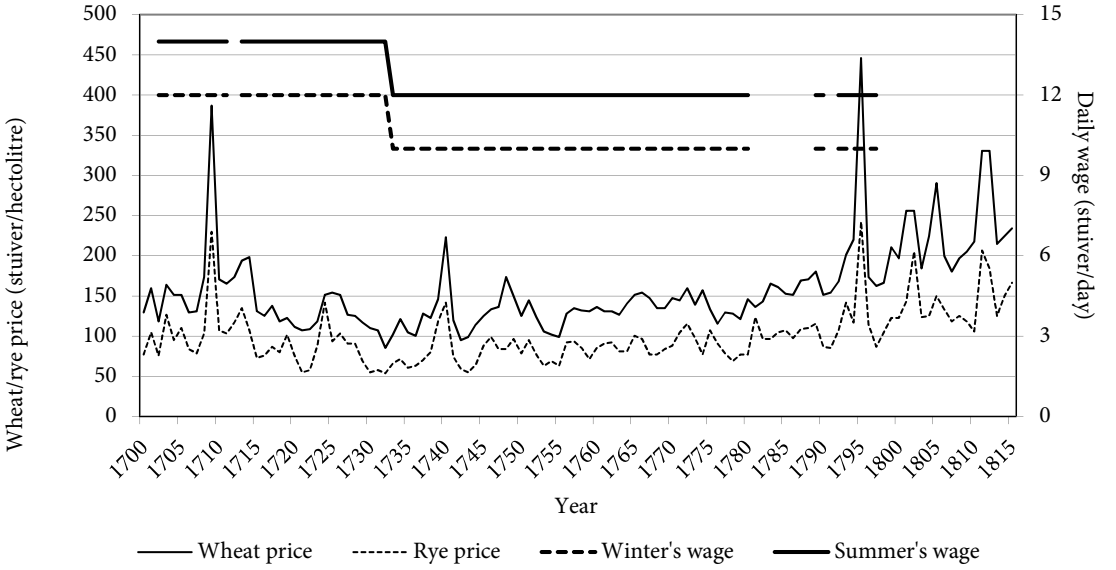


FIGURE 2: Wheat/rye price and men's daily wage in agriculture in the city of Antwerp and its rural surroundings (1700–1815)

Sources: J. Craeybeckx, 'De prijzen van granen en van brood te Antwerpen van 1608 tot 1817', in C. Verlinden (ed.), *Documenten voor de geschiedenis van prijzen en lonen in Vlaanderen en Brabant* (1959) I, pp. 504–22. E. Scholliers, 'Prijzen en lonen te Antwerpen en het Antwerpse (16e-19e eeuw)', in C. Verlinden (ed.), *Documenten voor de geschiedenis van prijzen en lonen in Vlaanderen en Brabant* (1965), II, pp. 848–940.

for the smallholders who worked the land, however, has been questioned more often than not. Vanhaute, for instance, labelled the eighteenth century as an era of 'rich agriculture and poor farmers'.[33] Figure 2 indeed seems to support such a pessimist view. In the second half of the eighteenth century, nominal wage stability coupled with rising food prices – especially after 1780 – impaired the smallholder's ability to improve his standard of living through wage labour. But Dérival pictured the Brabantine peasantry not as buyers, but as sellers of agricultural produce. If smallholders were indeed able to enter the market as sellers, they could take advantage of rising grain prices.

Although much more research into crop diffusion and distribution at the level of the agricultural holding is necessary before this hypothesis can be confirmed, the assumption is made here that the spread of potato growing and consumption (at least temporally) improved a smallholder's capability to enter the agricultural product market as a seller. The potato conquered the southern Low Countries from the west. Although Emperor Charles V had

Note 32 *continued*
the Low Countries (1978), pp. 1–23; G. Dejongh, 'Tussen immobiliteit en revolutie: De economische ontwikkeling van de Belgische landbouw in een eeuw van transitie, 1750–1850' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Catholic University of Leuven, 1999).

[33] E. Vanhaute, 'Rich agriculture and poor farmers: Land, landlords and farmers in Flanders in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', *Rural Hist.* 12 (2001), pp. 19–40. See also E. Vanhaute and L. Van Molle, 'Het einde van de overlevingslandbouw', in Y. Segers and L. Van Molle (eds), *Leven van het land: Boeren in België (1750–2000)* (2004), pp. 13–47.

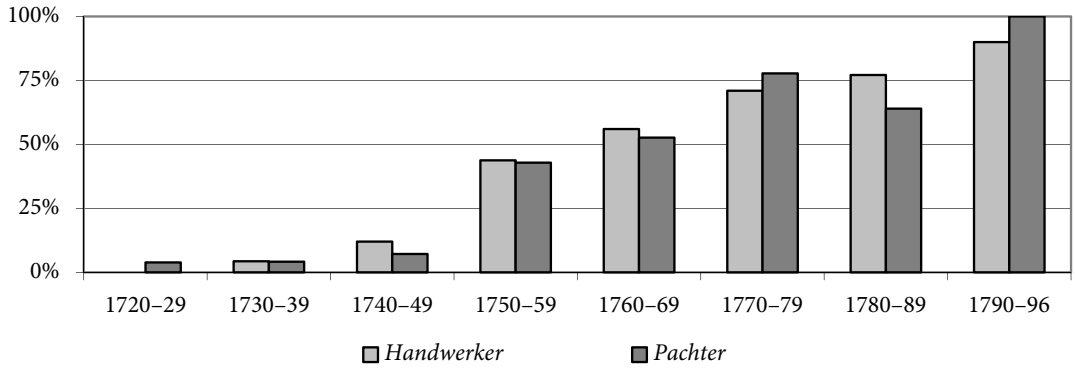


FIGURE 3: Presence of potatoes in probate inventories from rural Brabant, 1720–1796

Source: SAL, OASL, nos 1833–84; SAL, OGA, nos 72–4; RAL, SGB, nos 738–7909; RAB, OGB, no. 19.

decreed in 1520 that new crops were exempt from tithes, tithe collectors were determined to impose tithes every time a new crop became widely diffused. The first incidences of lawsuits regarding potato tithes in the duchy of Brabant were in the countryside surrounding Brussels in 1756–58. The area around Antwerp followed a few years later, in 1761–62. In 1770, potatoes were said to be planted every year by farmers, gardeners, and smallholders in the vicinity of Antwerp for their own consumption, although surplus produce was sometimes sold in nearby urban markets as well.[34] The diffusion of the potato is also evident in probate inventories (Figure 3). The first reference to the potato in a probate inventory comes in the inventory of Anthoni Vromans, a handwerker with two cows from the rural district of Lier, in 1716. It was not until the 1750s, however, that references to potatoes became more common. In the decades surrounding the tithe suits, potatoes were being mentioned in 50 per cent of inventories, either in storage or in the field. Potato growing and consumption gradually expanded during the 1770s and 1780s to become nearly universal by the end of the century. Both '*handwerkers*' and '*pachters*' seemed willing to add the potato to their crop rotation as well as to their diet. The diffusion of the potato was undoubtedly one of the most striking agricultural developments of the second half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century.[35] The area planted with potatoes grew year by year, and by the middle of the nineteenth century, the cultivation of potatoes for household consumption was universally practised.[36]

A small number of probate inventories from central Brabant offer insights into the acreage reserved for potato cultivation by both *handwerker* and *pachter* (Table 3). Inventories from the spring and summer, between planting and harvesting (May–September) probably give the best impression of the crop mix, but because they are few in number, I have also used inventories

[34] C. Vandenbroeke, 'Cultivation and consumption of the potato in the seventeenth and eighteenth century', *Acta historicae Neerlandica* 5 (1971), pp. 16–20; id., *Agriculture et alimentation dans les Pays-Bas autrichiens: Contribution à l'histoire économique et sociale à la fin de l'Ancien Régime* (1975), pp. 237–8, 638.

[35] M. Goossens, *The economic development of Belgian agriculture: A regional perspective, 1812–46* (1993), pp. 65–9, 84; Dejongh, 'Tussen immobiliteit en revolutie', p. 133.

[36] Thoen and Vanhaute, 'Handwerkers en peerdsboeren', p. 67.

TABLE 3. Acreage reserved for various crops according to probate inventories from central Brabant, 1742–96 (per cent)

	Handwerker		*Pachter*	
	May–Sept.	*Oct.–Apr.*	*May–Sept.*	*Oct.–Apr.*
Inventories (n)	17	5	5	7
Winter type cereal (all)	60.3	60.4	58.2	56.8
Rye	26.7	24.5	17.7	37.7
Wheat	18.4	29.4	37.5	18.3
Maslin	15.2	6.5	3.0	0.8
Spring type cereal (all)	14.8	0.0	14.5	4.5
Buckwheat	8.4	0.0	2.1	0.4
Oats	3.0	0.0	11.4	2.5
Barley	3.4	0.0	1.1	1.6
Fodder crops	10.5	23.3	14.0	23.0
Industrial crops	9.5	3.3	9.9	7.9
Potatoes	5.0	3.3	1.1	1.6
Rest	0.0	9.8	2.2	6.1

Source: RAL, SGB, nos 738–7909; RAB, OGB, no. 19.

from the autumn and winter (October–April). Although few crops, apart from turnips and clover, were recorded during winter, these inventories often contain valuable descriptions like 'land sown with wheat'.[37] Table 3 reveals that in the second half of the eighteenth century, the acreage planted with potatoes would have stood at five per cent amongst *handwerkers* and little over one per cent amongst *pachters*. In Brabant as a whole, the acreage planted with potatoes expanded from 1.3 per cent in 1760 to 5.8 per cent in 1812.[38] By adding potatoes to their diet, *handwerkers* were able to subsist on increasingly smaller holdings, because potatoes had a high nutritional value. They yielded at least twice the calorific value per hectare than cereal.[39] As a result, in the countryside of the southern Low Countries as a whole, consumption of grain was reduced by 30–40 per cent, from about 0.9–1.0 litre per day in the beginning of the eighteenth century, to about 0.6 litre in 1780 and 0.5 litre in 1812.[40] *Per capita* consumption of potatoes, on the other hand, can be estimated at 0.25 litre in 1760 and 0.5 litre in 1784. In 1812, it would have stood at 0.7 litre and in 1846 at 1.0 litre per person per day.[41]

[37] In these cases, the value of sowing seed and manure, as well as the cost for 'labour' ('*labeur*': ploughing etc) was estimated by the appraisers.

[38] In absolute terms, there was a fivefold increase in acreage planted with potatoes from 3,664 hectares in 1760 to 17,980 in 1812. Dejongh, 'Tussen immobiliteit en revolutie', p. 133.

[39] Goossens, *Economic development*, pp. 66, 88.

[40] Vandenbroeke, 'Cultivation and consumption', pp. 25–9; id., *Agriculture et alimentation*, pp. 252–8.

[41] Y. Segers, *Economische groei en levensstandaard: De ontwikkeling van de particuliere consumptie en het voedselverbruik in België, 1800–1914* (2003), pp. 258–9, 305; RAL, SGB, nos 738, 1,125, 5,752, 7,909.

After the introduction of the potato, land previously reserved for growing cereal for self-consumption could now be employed to produce cereal for sale at the market. On a holding of two hectares, a quarter of an acre planted with potatoes would yield 1,000–1,200 litre (800–950 kg) of potatoes annually or 200–240 litre per person in an average family of five. Given that 10 per cent would have been reserved as seed potatoes, about half a kilogram remained for daily consumption. This would yield 350 kcal per day. If we take into account that 80 percent of the calorific intake came from potatoes and bread, an average diet of 2,400 kcal per day would require an additional 1,570 kcal. This could be provided by half a kilogram of bread cereal per day or 875 kg for our average family of five. On an annual basis, their two hectare plot would produce 1,140–1,380 kg per year. With 10–15 per cent to be retained as sowing seed, they had a regular surplus of 125–350 kg. The actual surplus could even be greater, as we have not taken into account consumption of buckwheat. This was an important crop for subsistence farmers, especially on sandy soils where it would occupy at least 10 per cent of the acreage and could yield up to 50 per cent more than rye. On a daily basis, at least 0.2 litre was available per person. Without potato cultivation, a household such as this would have been balanced on the edge between entering the market as a seller or a buyer.

Other elements in the crop mix of *handwerkers* corroborate the hypothesis about increased commercialization of agricultural produce by smallholders. The relatively large part of the acreage reserved for wheat is striking. Unlike rye, wheat is generally regarded as a commercial crop when planted by farmers. Contemporary observations of rural diets stressed that smallholders only ate wheat bread on special occasions. They subsisted on rye bread and potatoes, while the majority of their wheat was sold in urban markets, where demand for wheat was rising in the second half of the eighteenth century.[42] In Antwerp, the ratio of wheat to rye processed by the city's bakers was 40:60 in 1784–85, 65:35 in 1825–29, and 86:14 in 1850–54. In Mechelen, wheat outweighed rye 60:40 in 1825–29 and 71:29 in 1850–54.[43] For Mechelen, no eighteenth-century data are available, but in the similar-sized town of Leuven, in 1755, 85 per cent of the grain processed by the town's bakers consisted of rye.[44] Agriculture in general reacted favourably to these changes by expanding the acreage planted with wheat. Between 1760 and 1812, cultivation of wheat expanded with 5,500 hectares in the southern part of the duchy (+ 13.6 per cent).[45] Evidence from probate inventories from the district of Lier also shows that *handwerkers* effectively grew more wheat after 1760. The proportion wheat took up in the estimated value of winter crops in the last four decades of the eighteenth century was ten times greater than before 1760 (Table 4).

[42] Dejongh, 'Tussen immobiliteit en revolutie', p. 140.

[43] Y. Segers, 'Oysters and rye bread: Polarising living standards in Flanders, 1800–1860', *European Rev. Economic History*, 5 (2001), pp. 320–1; Segers, *Economische groei*, pp. 305–8; B. Willems, *Leven op de pot: Krediet bij de Antwerpse middenstand in de achttiende eeuw* (2009), pp. 185–6.

[44] B. Dewilde and J. Poukens, 'Bread provisioning and retail dynamics in the southern Low Countries: The bakers of Leuven, 1600–1800', *Continuity and Change* 26 (2011), p. 421.

[45] Dejongh, 'Tussen immobiliteit en revolutie', p. 131.

TABLE 4. Value of bread cereals according to probate inventories from the rural district of Lier, 1691–1796 (per cent)

	Before 1760		*After 1760*	
	Handwerker	*Pachter*	*Handwerker*	*Pachter*
Inventories (n)	8	29	12	19
Maslin	11.1	0.6	2.9	5.7
Rye	86.1	73.7	67.2	62.4
Wheat	2.9	25.7	29.9	32.0

Source: SAL, OASL, nos 1,833–84; SAL, OGA, nos 72–4.

IV

A glance at the occupational structure of rural Brabant offers a first appreciation of the effect of the increased commercial opportunities for smallholders. The eighteenth century in general was a period of expansion for the service sector in the countryside. Table 5, which details the presence of certain occupations in different regions within the duchy of Brabant, suggests an increasing reliance on the market to provide a range of goods and services which were no longer provided by the household for itself. Not only craftsmen whose activities can be linked directly to agricultural work such as blacksmiths and cartwrights, but also tailors, shoemakers, and shopkeepers had become part of the basic *outilage* of a Brabantine village by the middle of the eighteenth century. This might be an indication of growing rural demand for consumer goods supported by a temporary increase in real wages during the first half century (see Figure 2). The relative number of craftsmen and retailers in Brabantine villages, however, grew further between 1755 and 1796 during the period of agricultural revival.[46] Were new commercial opportunities for smallholders responsible for maintaining the relative growth of the rural service sector? Did, in other words, the growing demand for consumer goods extend beyond the ranks of the *pachters* into the *handwerkers*? In this section, I will confirm this hypothesis by scrutinizing the social diffusion of incentive goods in rural households as recorded in the probate inventories.

For De Vries, the appropriation of an urban, more refined style of living by the rural population was an important stimulus for the development of industrious, market-oriented behaviour because it boosted demand for certain 'urban' luxury products.[47] The process described by De Vries has a parallel in the civilization process described by the German sociologist Norbert Elias many years before.[48] In the course of the early modern period, behaving in a refined, polite manner increasingly required control of the body and of bodily

[46] Growth might have been even more pronounced than Table 5 suggests, because of the heightened under-registration of non-agricultural occupations in the 1796 census.

[47] De Vries, 'Peasant demand patterns', pp. 220–2, 235–6.

[48] N. Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation: soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen* (1939).

TABLE 5. Craftsmen and retailers in villages east of Antwerp and between Antwerp and Brussels, 1702–1796

Occupation	*Percentage of villages with occupation present*					*Number per 1,000 inhabitants*		
	East of Antwerp		*Antwerp-Brussels*			*Brussels-Antwerp*		
	1755	*1796*	*1702*	*1755*	*1796*	*1702*	*1755*	*1796*
Number of villages	77	35	27	27	27			
Baker	42	69	44	56	63	1.4	2.0	1.9
Blacksmith	83	86	74	89	89	1.7	2.1	1.9
Butcher	22	20	7	44	52	0.2	0.7	0.8
Cartwright	75	83	59	82	79	1.4	1.7	1.4
Innkeeper	100	57	70	100	85	4.4	11.2	3.8
Shoemaker	91	94	56	82	74	1.5	3.3	3.9
Shopkeeper	87	100	52	85	82	2.2	4.5	4.9
Tailor	91	91	37	89	93	1.0	3.7	4.7
Weaver	–	89	52	74	89	1.5	6.1	11.4

Source: R. Van Uytven, 'Peiling naar de beroepsstructuur op het Brabantse platteland omstreeks 1755', *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis* 55 (1972), p. 189; J. De Belder, C. Gijssels, C. Vandenbroeke and L. Van der Straeten, *Arbeid en tewerkstelling in Antwerpen, 1796: Een socio-professionele en demografische analyse* (n.d.), *passim*; G. Leenders, 'De beroepsstructuur op het platteland tussen Antwerpen en Brussel', in F. Daelemans and J. Craebeckx (eds) *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van Vlaanderen en Brabant: Sociaal en economisch* (1983), p. 225.

functions.[49] Knowing how to control one's behaviour became a mark of social and cultural distinction, drawing boundaries between both the urban and rural population, and the upper and lower regions of society. One of the domains in which the new, civilized manners were introduced, was in dining practices. The introduction of polite table manners was accompanied by an extensive material culture which can be traced through probate inventories. One of the items which can serve as an indicator for the refinement of rural dining practices is the fork.

Table 6 shows the urban, refined style of living rooted fairly well in the rural district of Lier, as the percentage of households owning forks steadily increased over the course of the eighteenth century. Households from the crafts and retailing category took the lead in the adoption of this new item before 1729. *Pachter* and *handwerker* households followed during the second period (1730–59). By the third period, forks were found in about half the inventoried households in these categories. In the cities of Lier and Antwerp, the advance of the fork had occurred a few decades earlier. Already 42 per cent of urban inventories from the archive of the Lier aldermen's court made between 1695 and 1729 listed forks. During the rest of the century, this was around 75 per cent.[50] In Antwerp, the habit of eating with a fork spread during the

[49] R. Muchembled, *L'invention de l'homme moderne: Sensibilités, mœurs et comportements collectifs sous l'Ancien Régime* (1988), pp. 203–89.

[50] J. Poukens and N. Provoost, 'Respectability,

TABLE 6. Presence of forks in probate inventories from the rural district of Lier, 1695–1795 (per cent).

Category	*1695–1729*	*1730–59*	*1760–95*
Handwerker	0	26	56
Pachter	5	10	45
Crafts and retailing	27	35	67
Total	6	21	54

Sources: SAL, OASL, nos 1,833–84; SAL, OGA, nos 72–4.

second half of the seventeenth century and was already fairly widespread by 1730.[51] In Flanders, too, the spread of the fork in households other than those engaged in crafts and retailing has to be located at the end of the eighteenth century.[52] In the Holland countryside, the fork spread to the same degree as in the rural district of Lier during the second half of the eighteenth century. Johan Kamermans found evidence of forks in 23 per cent of inventories in 1700–29, 28 in 1730–64, and 45 in 1765–95 (this drops to 10, 15 and 40 per cent respectively if only those inventories with three or more forks are taken into account).[53]

Various historians have pointed to improvements in rural living conditions in the course of the eighteenth century.[54] The general north-west European trend was for rural housing to become more comfortably furnished, and the households from the rural district of Lier and from central Brabant were no exception to this general pattern. A growing number of households possessed tables. Stools and benches were replaced by chairs. Walls were decorated with paintings and mirrors. Curtains and chimney cloths prevented draught from entering. However, the introduction of colonial groceries is very striking. Unlike most objects that improved comfort and convenience, tobacco, tea and coffee were novelties. Several economists and historians have argued that the spread of popular luxuries like colonial groceries deeply affected consumer aspirations and shopping practices. Tibor Scitovsky argued that the

Note 50 *continued*
material culture and an expanding middle class in times of economic crisis: The case of Lier in Brabant, 1690–1770', *J. Interdisciplinary History*, 42 (2011), pp. 176–7.

[51] B. Blondé, 'Cities in decline and the dawn of a consumer society: Antwerp in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries', in B. Blondé, E. Briot, N. Coquery and L. Van Aert (eds), *Retailers and consumer changes in early modern Europe: England, France, Italy and the Low Countries* (2005), pp. 43–4.

[52] C. Schelstraete, H. Kintaert, and D. De Ruyck, *Het einde van de onveranderlijkheid: Arbeid, bezit en woonomstandigheden in het Land van Nevele tijdens de 17e en de 18e eeuw* (1986), p. 169.

[53] J. A. Kamermans, *Materiële cultuur in de Krimpenerwaard in de zeventiende en de achttiende eeuw: Ontwikkeling en diversiteit* (1999), pp. 112–14. Incidentally, Kamermans rejects the assumption that the spread of the knife and folk and the potato were positively correlated because the possession of forks was limited to the elite whereas the potato was a distinctly plebeian foodstuff (pp. 181–2). I am inclined to agree with Kamermans, but only because in these pioneering days, potatoes were probably consumed as part of the *potagie*, a kind of broth in which potatoes replaced turnips and other roots, and which would have been eaten with a spoon. See also S. Pennell, 'Recipes and reception: Tracking "New World" foodstuffs in early modern British culinary texts, *c*.1650–1750', *Food and History* 7 (2009), pp. 18–19.

[54] R. Sarti, *Europe at home: Family and material culture, 1500–1800* (2002); De Vries, *Industrious revolution*, pp. 126–9; Kamermans, *Materiële cultuur*, pp. 312–15; Schelstraete, Kintaert and De Ruyck, *Het einde van de onveranderlijkheid*, pp. 194–6.

discovery of novelty gives pleasure to the consumer. In time, however, the novelty wears off (as a habit forms) and the consumer has to look elsewhere for a new source of novelty in order to regain the initial pleasure.[55] According to Anton Schuurman, colonial groceries were one of the novelties that stimulated demand for new and exotic products. So, through their consumption, the rural consumer might become imbued by the 'Spirit of Modern Consumerism'.[56] Carole Shammas argued that mass consumption of groceries proliferated with the growth of country shops.[57] De Vries too has attributed colonial groceries with a prominent place in his theory of the industrious revolution. According to De Vries, the 'plebeian consumer' (a category which certainly includes rural labourers and smallholders) was of central importance for the development of a market for mass-consumed commodities.[58] Hence, measuring the diffusion of colonial groceries in rural households of different categories provides an excellent starting point for an evaluation of the role the market played in their lives.

Probate inventories provide abundant evidence for hot drink consumption through references to the utensils used for their preparation and serving, such as infusers, pots, cups, and saucers. Because they were new and exotic, they caught the eye of the appraisers and were consistently listed. As Figure 4 shows, the consumption of hot drinks spread, especially during the last four decades of the eighteenth century, in rural households in Brabant. Before the 1760s, their popularity was very limited. As far as the agricultural population goes, coffee or tea was drunk only by a handful of farmers. A few more households from the crafts and retailing category seemed to have enjoyed caffeinated drinks in the 1740s and 1750s, but these figures have to be interpreted with caution because they were based on a very small number of observations. It was not before the 1760s that hot drink consumption began to spread to households in the *handwerker* category. There is a slight and unexplained fall back in the 1770s, but the long term trend is very clear: ownership of utensils for hot drinks grew steadily amongst *handwerkers* from less than 10 per cent of inventories in the 1750s to just over 70 per cent in the 1790s. Compared to the *pachter* category, ownership of these utensils seems to have spread somewhat more slowly amongst *handwerkers*, but after 1790 they caught up with the *pachters*. Given the fact that some teapots or coffee cups were described under general headings like 'tin work' or 'earthenware', we can safely assume they were present in the homes of the entire sampled population. The majority of households in every category owned utensils for hot drinks at the end of the eighteenth century. Incidentally, the bulk of these referred to teapots, infusers, and tea wares, but it is possible that these were used for serving coffee as well. Import figures suggest coffee was more popular than tea after 1770.[59]

In the Brabantine towns of Lier and Antwerp, utensils for hot drinks were already found in

[55] T. Scitovsky, *The joyless economy: An inquiry into human satisfaction and consumer dissatisfaction* (1976); S. A. T. Rizvi and R. Sethi, 'Novelty, imitation and habit formation in a Scitovskian model of consumption', in M. Bianchi (ed.), *The active consumer: Novelty and surprise in consumer choice* (1998), pp. 199–202.

[56] C. Campbell, *The romantic ethic and the spirit of modern consumerism* (1987); A. Schuurman, 'Aards geluk: Consumptie en de moderne samenleving', in A. Schuurman, J. De Vries and A. Van der Woude (eds), *Aards geluk: De Nederlanders en hun spullen van 1550 tot 1850* (1997), pp. 22–5.

[57] C. Shammas, *The pre-industrial consumer in England and America* (1990), pp. 259–60.

[58] De Vries, *Industrious revolution*, pp. 149–85.

[59] Vandenbroeke, *Agriculture et alimentation*, Fig. XXVIII.



FIGURE 4: Presence of utensils for hot drinks in probate inventories from rural Brabant, 1720–1796

Source: SAL, OASL, nos 1833–84; SAL, OGA, nos 72–4; RAL, SGB, nos 738–7909; RAB, OGB, no. 19.

the majority of households in the 1730s and became nearly universal in the second half of the eighteenth century.[60] In the Flemish countryside, the introduction of hot drinks coincided with their spread in the rural district of Lier and central Brabant, but ownership of utensils for hot drinks was not taken up as widely.[61] In the Land of Alost, 25 per cent of all probate inventories provide evidence for the consumption of tea and 5.3 per cent for the use of coffee around 1790.[62] Outside the Austrian Netherlands, hot drinks spread earlier and more widely. Among the inhabitants of rural areas in Holland for example, utensils for the consumption of tea and coffee were already nearly universal in the middle of the eighteenth century. In the Krimpenerwaard, utensils for tea and coffee were present in 43 and 23 per cent respectively of inventories in 1700–29, 88 and 55 per cent in 1730–64 and 95 and 85 per cent in 1765–95.[63] In Weesperkarpsel, evidence for the consumption of tea and coffee was present in about 40 per cent of all inventories in the 1710s. By the 1740s, this percentage had risen to nearly 100 per cent.[64]

V

In the previous sections, I have shown that in the wake of a more refined, urban style of living, popular luxuries such as colonial groceries entered the consumer pattern of rural households. The last question that remains to be explored concerns the channels through which knowledge of innovations trickled down to rural households. Thijs Lambrecht and Reinoud Vermoesen

[60] B. Blondé and I. Van Damme, 'Retail growth and consumer changes in a declining urban economy: Antwerp, 1650–1750', *EcHR* 63 (2010), p. 645; Poukens and Provoost, 'Respectability', pp. 171–75.

[61] Schelstraete, Kintaert and De Ruyck, *Het einde van de onveranderlijkheid*, p. 169.

[62] R. Vermoesen, 'Markttoegang en commerciële netwerken van rurale huishoudens: De regio Aalst, 1650–1800', (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Antwerp, 2008), pp. 319–27.

[63] Kamermans, *Materiële cultuur*, pp. 117–21.

[64] H. Koolbergen, 'De materiële cultuur van Weesp en Weesperkarpsel in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw', *Volkskundig bulletin* 9 (1983), pp. 27–9.

have shown that farmers functioned as rural go-betweens.[65] For example, they collected agrarian output from smallholders (often in exchange for ploughing and carting services) and brought it to the urban market. As a result, direct contact between the urban world and the peasant household is likely to have been limited. Instead, we can speculate that innkeepers functioned as rural 'fashion brokers', and influenced consumer aspirations of rural households. They were an avant-garde in the appropriation of novel products. The first teapot in the inventory sample was found in the household of an innkeeper in 1704. Seventeen years later, the first owner of coffee wares was a victualler as well. In 1695–1729, one in five innkeepers from the rural district of Lier owned utensils for hot drinks, in 1730–59 one in two, and in 1760–95 every single one of them. In central Brabant, three-quarters of all innkeepers owned utensils for hot drinks. In the tavern, rural households could come into contact with new life-styles and innovations: not only because innkeepers invested increasingly in furnishings and decorations, but also because the tavern was the place were rural households met each other and their urban counterparts.

Often situated in the centre of the village, close to the church, the tavern was at the heart of rural social life.[66] Table five shows that more than one tavern was often found in each village. All contemporary observers agreed that the inhabitants of the southern Low Countries enjoyed frequent and long visits to their local tavern, especially on Sundays and Holy Days.[67] As opposed to what seventeenth-century genre-paintings from Antoon Brouwer or David Teniers the Younger might lead us to believe, probate inventories reveal that eighteenth-century rural taverns were comfortably furnished with tables and chairs, and also often decorated with paintings, mirrors, and chimney cloths. Tea pots, cups, and saucers frequently occupied a visible place in the tavern's interior. In some inventories, these objects were present in quite high numbers, which suggests tea and coffee were served to customers as well.

New consumer aspirations spread through imitation. Imitation is a powerful driver of innovation in consumer behaviour. People not only have an innate desire to 'imitate and conform to the behaviour of a group', but imitation can also serve an informational purpose.[68] In the tavern, the novelty-seeking individual could observe the choices of others, not only of the innkeeper, but also of other customers. In this respect, it is very relevant to consider that rural taverns were not only frequented by villagers, but also by townsfolk. For fiscal reasons, townspeople often preferred to drink outside the towns' walls.[69] There, beer and gin were exempt from town assizes. Although the number of taverns had declined by that time, the

[65] T. Lambrecht, *Een grote hoeve in een klein dorp: Relaties van arbeid en pacht op het Vlaamse platteland tijdens de 18de eeuw* (2002); T. Lambrecht, 'Reciprocal exchange, credit and cash: Agricultural labour markets and local economies in the southern Low Countries during the eighteenth century', *Continuity and Change* 18 (2003), pp. 237–61; R. Vermoesen, 'Paardenboeren in Vlaanderen: Middelaars en commercialisering van de vroegmoderne rurale economie in de regio Aalst, 1650–1800', *Tijdschrift voor sociale en economische geschiedenis* 7 (2010), pp. 3–37.

[66] Muchembled, *L'invention*, pp. 205–15; id., 'De kroeg als trefpunt', in P. Janssens (ed.) *België in de 17de eeuw: De Spaanse Nederlanden en het prinsbisdom Luik, Cultuur en leefwereld* (2 vols, 2006), II, pp. 355–62.

[67] Derival, *Le voyageur*, I, pp. 157–8; IV, p. 153; R. Van Damme, 'De Zuid-Nederlander in reisverhalen in de tweede helft van de achttiende eeuw' (unpublished MA thesis, Catholic University of Leuven, 1964), p. 124.

[68] Scitovsky, *Joyless economy*; Rizvi and Sethi, 'Novelty', p. 201.

[69] M. Leon, 'De visie van buitenlandse reizigers op het kerkelijk leven in de Oostenrijkse Nederlanden: Een bijdrage tot de religieuze geschiedenis van de XVIIIe eeuw' (unpublished MA thesis, Catholic University of Leuven, 1982), pp. 94–5.

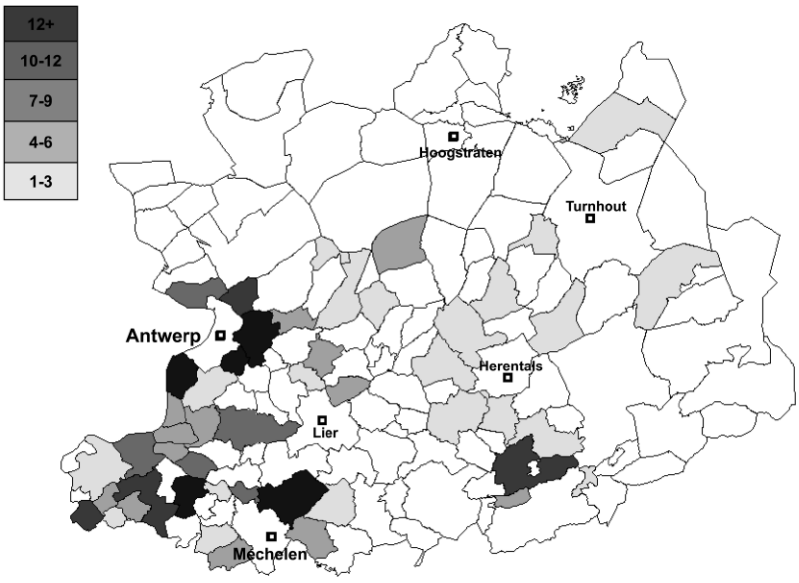


FIGURE 5: Number of taverns per village in the province of Antwerp, 1796

Source: J. De Belder, C. Gijssels, C. Vandenbroeke and L. Van der Straeten, *Arbeid en tewerkstelling in Antwerpen, 1796: Een socio-professionele en demografische analyse. Werkdocumenten* (undated), *passim*.

population census of 1796 still reflects this practice (Figure 5). The number of taverns in villages around Antwerp and Mechelen (13.6 and 8.5 taverns per 1,000 inhabitants respectively) was three to five times higher than the number of taverns in villages that did not share a border with a city (which was 2.7 taverns per 1,000 inhabitants). The number of taverns per 1,000 inhabitants for the entire province of Antwerp was 4.1. Increased transport on paved roads might also have intensified contacts between inhabitants of towns and villages in taverns. The increase of the number of taverns in the village of Kampenhout, situated in the middle of the triangle formed by Brussels, Leuven and Mechelen, is illustrative in this respect. In 1747, the village had five taverns.[70] In 1794, after the construction of the paved road and the canal that connected Leuven and Mechelen, this number had increased to 20.[71] Seven of these taverns were situated in the village and seven along the paved road and the canal (the other six were situated in various hamlets). Hence, the rural tavern functioned as an outpost of urbanity in the countryside. Through observation and conversation, villagers could acquaint themselves with new, urban forms of behaviour and consumption.

VI

In this article, I have shown that demand for tea and coffee spread to rural households in two areas in the duchy of Brabant after 1760. Utensils for the consumption of hot drinks were not only found in the probate inventories of market-oriented farmers who possessed one or more horses, but also in half of those households of *handwerkers* who possessed a few cows. Consumption of colonial groceries was presented here as a *pars pro toto* of new consumer aspirations which had

[70] State Archive Anderlecht, Staten van Brabant: Supplement, no. 810.

[71] RAL, SGB, no. 2,549.

already spread to the urban population by the middle of the eighteenth century and in which the pursuit of novelty took a prominent place. One might call this the seeds of consumerism in the countryside.[72] I have argued that the spread of so-called urban 'luxury' items could have been induced by the spread of a more urban-like style of living. The increased presence of forks, which can serve as a proxy for the diffusion of more refined manners, was evident in rural households from all categories from 1760 onwards. In the absence of modern retailing techniques, information about new commodities and desirable behaviour was probably spread through imitation. The local tavern was the obvious location for this exchange of information. Nearly every village had at least one tavern, and visiting the tavern was the favourite Sunday pastime of the rural population. Not only were innkeepers amongst the first rural consumers of novelty items, but the urban population also frequently visited taverns in the surrounding countryside and doubtless brought their expectations of civil consumption with them.

The diffusion of new consumer aspirations was accompanied by the breakthrough or consolidation of agricultural innovations which can be characterized as part of a process of commercialization. The introduction of the potato on a large scale *c.*1760 was pivotal in this process. Potato growing secured the household's subsistence, even at a time when holdings were shrinking due to population pressure. This was illustrated by the high percentage of smallholders' inventories with potatoes present. Land which was previously tied up in providing the household with bread cereal could now be used to grow crops for the market. The extension of wheat cultivation was one of the most conspicuous changes in the crop mix. Because of rising urban demand for high quality bread, this was a highly market-oriented produce. Together with steadily rising agricultural prices in the second half of the eighteenth century, these changes could have generated the necessary income to support their new consumer aspirations, which in turn resulted in the expansion of crafts and retailing activity in the Brabantine countryside as well as in cities and towns during the eighteenth century.

By the end of the eighteenth century, a larger proportion of agricultural produce was probably sold in the market, and a larger proportion of consumption was purchased. Van der Wee has already credited craftsmen and retailers with an important role in this process of rural commercialization.[73] I have shown that demand for their goods and services extended to the lower steps of the rural social ladder. This questions the pessimistic conclusion of neo-Marxist historians who have argued that consumption beyond the mere satisfaction of the needs of physical subsistence was absent in peasant households and commercialization in peasant households was inversely correlated to their standard of living. Based on these findings, we can offer a degree of confirmation of De Vries' hypothesis that market-oriented behaviour in rural households might have been induced by the desire for urban luxury goods. Although the possession of teacups and teapots cannot resolve the question of whether peasants were pushed or lured to the market, it is evident that the presence of these items makes the second option – that peasants were willing participants in the market for their own advantage – the more likely of the two.

[72] Stearns defines consumerism as 'a society in which many people formulate their goals in life partly through acquiring goods that they clearly do not need for subsistence or for traditional display. They become enmeshed in a process of acquisition – shopping – and take some of their identity from a procession of new items that the buy and exhibit'. P. N. Stearns, *Consumerism in world history: The global transformation of desire* (2001), p. ix.

[73] Van der Wee, 'Agricultural development'.

The management of agricultural estates in Catalonia in the nineteenth and early twentieth century*

by Ramon Garrabou, Jordi Planas and Enric Saguer

Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyse the management of agricultural estates in Catalonia during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, mainly through the analysis of the landlord expenditure recorded in estate accounts. The data comes from eight private archives, from which we have constructed ten series of accounts which describe groups of farms spread throughout the main agricultural zones of Catalonia. The changes in the contributions made by the landowners towards the running costs can help us to understand their role in the processes of growth and intensification of agricultural production. We show that, while the level of investment they made was modest, the landowners did not behave like absentee landlords who showed no interest in maximizing the productive potential of their estates.

What role did landowners play in the agricultural transformations of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? How rational were their decisions in view of the prevailing social and environmental conditions on their estates? Did they behave like absentee landlords careless about the management of their farms? Did their approach to management and the forms of land tenancy they employed hinder technological progress? In this article we try to answer these questions through an analysis of the management of rural estates in Catalonia, a Mediterranean region in the north-east of the Iberian Peninsula, during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth.

During this period, agriculture in Catalonia underwent a substantial transformation as industry and urbanization took on increasing importance in the regional economy. Although the results were not necessarily spectacular in terms of labour productivity or yield per unit area (especially when compared to Atlantic regions with fewer problems of water supply), agriculture showed a notable dynamism and responded to the stimuli generated by the phases of expansion and contraction. Overall, the evolution of Catalan agriculture does not conform to the general image of backwardness one associates with Spanish agriculture at this time, and

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the region's economic results were far better than those obtained in the interior and south of the peninsula. During the period examined in this article, the area under fallow fell considerably, the irrigated area increased 3.4 times to reach 16 per cent of the cultivated area despite the limitations imposed by climatic conditions, and livestock production expanded, becoming ever more integrated into the agricultural system and with major changes in the varieties bred.[1] But among all the changes, the greatest impact was due to the expansion of viticulture, which was clearly geared towards trade and export. The expansion of the vineyards began in the eighteenth century and intensified during the second half of the nineteenth century due to the phylloxera crisis in France. In the early twentieth century viticulture accounted for a third of the total value of agricultural production.[2] From the late nineteenth century onwards horticultural crops also progressed, so that by the 1930s vines and vegetables formed 55 per cent of the total value of agricultural production. Although certain labour-saving tools were introduced, mechanization had not progressed as much as in other European regions; nevertheless, in global terms the agricultural sector recorded a notable set of changes in line with the demand from a growing urban population, which in 1900 amounted to around 35 per cent of the total of Catalonia.

The available statistical information gives us a broad idea of the extent of this transformation. Considerable efforts have been made to reconstruct the process at both the regional level and for Spain as a whole.[3] However, it is not easy to explain precisely how these changes took place, or to identify the social groups which took part in them, or how they did so. The answers to these questions must be sought in sources that are often highly idiosyncratic and difficult to extrapolate to other settings. Clearly, this raises the question of how representative they are, but in general they are a useful complement to the macroeconomic data.

The accounting records of agricultural holdings are a notable example of such sources. These documents provide invaluable information on the different forms of administration, details of tenancy practices, the techniques used, the changes in production, the level of wages and the different ways in which people were employed, how closely the holdings followed market trends, the degree to which the landowner shared in the expenses and investments, and so on.

Obviously, the evidence the accounting records offer is based on individual cases, and we cannot treat the particular characteristics of one estate as if they were representative of general practices. It must also be borne in mind that the keeping of accounts was never widespread,

[1] R. Garrabou and J. Pujol, 'El canvi agrari a la Catalunya del segle XIX', *Recerques*, 19 (1987); J. Pujol, 'Les transformacions del sector agrari català entre la crisi finisecular i la Guerra Civil' (Ph.D. thesis, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 1988); id., 'Especialització i canvi tècnic en l'expansió del sector ramader català entre 1880 i 1936', *Recerques* 37 (1998), pp. 31–56; 'Cap a una nova interpretació del capitalisme agrari a Catalunya fins a la guerra civil', *Estudis d'Història Agrària* 15 (2002), pp. 19–56.

[2] On the expansion of viticulture in Catalonia, see E. Giralt, 'La vinya i el vi durant l'edat moderna', in E. Giralt (ed.) *Història agrària dels Països Catalans* (4 vols, 2004–8), III, pp. 295–460; J. Pujol, 'Les transformacions del sector agrari'; J. Colomé, 'L'especialització vitícola a la Catalunya del segle XIX. La comarca del Penedès' (Ph.D. thesis, Universitat de Barcelona, 1996); E. Tello, M. Badia-Miró, X. Cussó, R. Garrabou and F. Valls, 'Explaining vineyard specialization in the province of Barcelona (Spain) in the mid-nineteenth century', *Working Paper* 08/201 (UB, 2008).

[3] On the possibilities and use of Spanish statistical sources relating to the agrarian sector, see Grupo de Estudios de Historia Rural, *Estadísticas históricas de la producción agraria española, 1859–1935* (1991).

and the existence of these documents may produce a distorted view of the society as a whole because they were kept only by a certain type of landowner or farmer. Even so, with these provisos in mind, it is reasonable to assume that the accumulation of cases and the repetition of patterns and developments in the analysis of these documents can allow us to draw general conclusions.[4]

Among the many types of document that could be described as 'agricultural accounts', we shall only be concerned with the ones that provide information on major landowners. Our intention is to analyse the management of rural estates in Catalonia during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century using the expenditure registered in this type of documentation. The information collected comes from eight private archives,[5] and from them we have reconstructed a total of ten series of accounts which describe groups of farms spread throughout the main agricultural zones of the region.[6] As these series overlap, we have data covering the period from 1821 to 1945. As a result, in our opinion, our sample is large enough, and diverse enough, to support a study of this kind.

I

The organization of agricultural work has been considered one of the basic issues in the development of the sector. Adam Smith and many nineteenth-century economists held that the different forms of tenancy were crucial in boosting capital investment and in the adoption of more productive technical innovations. In accordance with these principles, it was believed

[4] A number of Spanish historians have made use of estate accounts in recent years, amongst them M. T. Pérez Picazo, 'Riqueza territorial y cambio agrícola en la Murcia del siglo XIX. Aproximación al estudio de una contabilidad privada (1800–1902)', *Agricultura y Sociedad* 61 (1991), pp. 39–95; J. Carmona, 'Las estrategias económicas de la vieja aristocracia española y el cambio agrario en el siglo XIX', *Revista de Historia Económica,* Año XIII (1995), pp. 63–88; J. Pujol 'Trabajo asalariado y actividad agraria en Can Codorniu: un caso excepcional de la explotación del viñedo catalán durante el primer tercio del siglo XX', in A. Carreras *et al.* (eds), *La industrialització i el desenvolupament econòmic d'Espanya* (2 vols, 1999), II, pp. 479–506; P. Pascual, *Els Torelló. Una família igualadina d'advocats i propietaris* (2000); J. Carmona, *La aristocracia terrateniente y el cambio agrario en España en el siglo XIX: la casa de Alcañices, 1790–1910* (2001); H. Casado and R. Robledo (eds), *Fortuna y negocios: formación y gestión de los grandes patrimonios (siglos XVI–XX)* (2002); R. Robledo and S. López (eds) *Interés particular, bienestar público? Grandes patrimonios y reformas agrarias* (2007).

[5] These archives correspond to the Sentmenat, Coll, Nuix, Bru, Negre, Maspons, Riba and Güell families, covering different types of major landowners. They include estates that had their origins in the feudal nobility, such as that of the marquis of Sentmenat, estates belonging to the lesser nobility of the region (Nuix, the barony of Perpignan), properties acquired by public officials (Coll) or families of peasants which emerged as a dominant group in many areas during the eighteenth century (known as *hisendats*).

[6] Previous studies have made use of these accounts, namely: R. Garrabou, E. Saguer and P. Sala, 'Formas de gestión y evolución de la renta a partir del análisis de contabilidades agrarias: los patrimonios del Marqués de Sentmenat en el Vallés y Urgell (1820–1917)', *Noticiario de Historia Agraria* 5 (1993), pp. 97–125; R. Garrabou, J. Planas and E. Saguer, 'Sharecropping and the management of large rural estates in Catalonia, 1850–1950', *J. Peasant Studies* 28 (2001), pp. 89–108; R. Garrabou, J. Planas and E. Saguer, *Un capitalisme impossible? La gestió de la gran propietat agraria a la Catalunya contemporània* (2001); J. Planas, 'Agrarisme i gestió de la propietat al primer terç del segle XX', *Estudis d'Història Agrària* 10 (1994), pp. 57–83; E. Saguer, 'La Acción Social en casa. Gestión patrimonial de un dirigente sindical (Pelayo Negre Pastell, 1924–1936)', in Robledo and López (eds), *Interés particular,* pp. 281–303.

that a large estate which was administered directly by the landowners or leaseholders using salaried labour was the best way to stimulate agricultural growth. Sharecropping, by contrast, was regarded as a less efficient contractual arrangement and its continued existence an obstacle to the development of the rural economy, given that the peasants lacked the capital and the knowledge required to introduce innovation.[7]

Agricultural literature and the press in Catalonia did much to spread these ideas and landowners certainly debated the ways to increase the yields of their lands by changing the form of production and farming directly.[8] However, no major modifications in the forms of tenancy used on large rural estates have been detected, and while direct farming of the estate was never entirely absent (especially in woods and grazing land, but also in some cultivation plots), sharecropping and other indirect forms of exploitation were invariably predominant throughout the nineteenth century. None of the landowners studied here moved decisively towards the direct farming of their estates with wage labour, and the overwhelming majority of their estates were leased in the traditional manner to sharecroppers, sometimes under the control of an estate steward.

The persistence of sharecropping in a dynamic agricultural system such as the one we find in Catalonia raises many questions. At a general level, many theoretical and empirical works have discussed the apparent inferiority of sharecropping in relation to other forms of land tenancy. Following Cheung's book, published in 1969, sharecropping returned to the attention of many economists concerned with agricultural development, especially in the third world, and this interest produced a literature largely dominated by neoinstitutionalist approaches, far removed from the assumption of a perfectly competitive market where a reasonable allocation of resources was supposedly achieved.[9] Much of this literature concludes that although sharecropping has achieved remarkable levels of efficiency, it was nonetheless a *second best*.[10] Moreover, understanding the preference of landowners for this land tenancy system also requires us to take into account the economic and social context in which this option was taken. This consideration is common in Marxist approaches[11] and, to some extent, coincides with neoinstitutionalist approaches which highlight the need to understand an institution in its socioeconomic context.[12]

[7] See N. Koning, *The failure of agrarian capitalism: agrarian politics in the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and the USA, 1846–1919* (1994).

[8] R. Garrabou, J. Pujol, J. Colomé and E. Saguer, 'La crisi finisecular i la recomposició del món rural a Catalunya', *Recerques* 26 (1992), pp. 107–34.

[9] The evolution of economic literature on sharecropping can be found in H. Binswanger and M. Rozenzweig, *Contractual arrangements, employment, and wages in rural labor markets in Asia* (1984), J. Roumasset, J-M. Broussard and I. Singh (eds), *Risk, uncertainty and agricultural development* (1979), S. N. S. Cheung, *The theory of share tenancy* (1969), P. Bardhan (ed.), *The economic theory of agrarian institutions* (1989) and J. Ph. Colin, *Figures du métayage. Étude comparée de contrats agraires au Méxique* (1995).

[10] R. Garrabou, J. Planas and E. Saguer, 'Sharecropping and the mangement of large rural estates', pp. 89–108.

[11] See, for example, R. Pearce, 'Sharecropping: Towards a Marxist View', *J. Peasant Studies* 10 (1983), pp. 42–70; T. J. Byres, 'Historical perspectives on sharecropping', ibid., pp. 7–40; J. Roemer, *A general theory of exploitation and class* (1982); E. Royce, *The origins of southern sharecropping* (1993).

[12] See D. G. Newbery and J. E. Stiglitz, 'Sharecropping, risk sharing and the importance of imperfect information', in Roumasset, Broussard and Singh (eds), *Risk, uncertainty and agricultural development*, pp. 311–39; P. K. Bardhan, *Land, labor, and rural poverty. Essays in development economics* (1984).

The records analysed here allow us to approach these issues from the perspective of the economic performance of landowners and the management of large agricultural estates. Although sharecropping had a long history in Catalonia, it was used not simply due to the weight of tradition, but because it also offered advantages. The Coll estates are a good example of this. Tomàs Coll was a customs official in Barcelona who bought a number of farms after the ecclesiastical confiscations (*desamortización*) of the early nineteenth century. He was, therefore, a new landowner for whom tradition counted for little; as such he was in a position to choose the form of land tenancy that would provide him with the greatest return on his investment. He initially considered the option of direct farming of the estates with wage labourers, only to decide, after examining the alternatives, that 'the desire and necessity of increasing income' obliged him to maintain the sharecropping system.[13]

Attempts to apply direct farming to an estate, or even part of it, produced poor results. Convinced that close supervision would yield better results than the sharecropping system, the marquis of Sentmenat tried to introduce direct farming on his estates in Urgell. But the experience did not bear out his expectations: gross income rose, but expenses more than quadrupled since permanent and temporary labourers had to be hired, and work animals and agricultural implements (production factors that in the traditional system were provided by the sharecropper) had to be purchased. As a result, the outcome of the seven-year experiment (1873–79) was a loss of 12,000 pesetas, and Sentmenat returned to the old system of tenancy. The Maspons family's experiment with direct farming also ended in failure. In 1912 the landowner planted fruit trees (especially almonds and hazelnuts) in the expectation of high profits, and employed farm workers in some of their plots. The results were disappointing: the landowner himself, after analysing his accounts, noted that his profits would have been greater had he leased out the land, and decided that the cause of his failure had been the cost of the wages.[14]

Experiences like these can explain why sharecropping and other forms of indirect exploitation not only persisted after the crisis at the end of the nineteenth century but actually strengthened their position as basic systems for managing large estates.[15] This situation is confirmed in several reports commissioned by the authorities and by an abundance of literature from the mid-nineteenth century onwards discussing the best system of tenancy for large estates.[16]

In our view, the fundamental reason for the continued reliance on sharecropping was technological. As long as agricultural production continued to be heavily labour-intensive, landowners farming directly were unable to provide their workers with significantly better equipment than that available to tenants or sharecroppers. And in the absence of higher technology, the theoretical advantages of direct farming would be outweighed by problems in the control and organization of labour. Since sharecroppers' remuneration depended upon the crop yield, they were clearly interested in putting in all the work needed to achieve the expected income. Moreover, efficient management of the estates could be hampered by

[13] Arxiu privat família Fina, Correspondència de Tomàs Coll.

[14] Pascual, *Els Torelló* describes a similar experience.

[15] An exception that can be attributed to the integration of a farm in an agro-industrial business in Pujol, 'Trabajo asalariado'.

[16] Garrabou, Planas and Saguer, *Un capitalisme impossible?*, pp. 15–62.

distance or by ignorance of the social conditions and techniques used in exploiting the land, and in some cases efficient control of work processes proved impossible.[17] But even in those cases where the landowner was technically proficient and aware of the social situation of the workers, or delegated the running of the estate to an able, honest administrator, the expense of maintaining permanent and temporary labourers placed such a burden on the current accounts that direct farming was not a viable option.

The use of sharecroppers provided the landowner with sufficient manpower while reducing the cost of administration and without requiring the landowner to forego his capacity to dictate farming practices. These forms of contractual farming entailed a certain degree of external control, for while the greater part of the day-to-day decisions were taken by the farmer, they also provided many opportunities for intervention: the landowner could decide on the use of the land, the technical means available for carrying out the tasks, whether to maintain or increase the productive capacity of the estate, and so on. Some sharecropping contracts clearly stated not only the varieties that the farmer had to plant (and prohibited those not wanted by the owner) but also prescribed in detail the operations that the farmer had to carry out and when. Clauses requiring the maintenance of the productive capacity of the farm were also common. The agroecological context also favoured the preferences of landowners for sharecropping, since it allowed the risk to be shared; throughout the period analysed the yields fluctuated considerably, especially in the south-west of Catalonia.

The making of leases of farms for money rents was practically unknown in Catalonia. The income registered in the account books under this head usually comes from the lease of small plots, the rent paid by the sharecropper for his home, grazing lands or activities not related to agriculture such as quarries. Sharecropping continued to form the backbone of the management of large landholdings until the implementation of a new technological model based on mechanization, agricultural chemistry and genetic innovation from the 1950s onwards.

II

In Catalonia there were two forms of sharecropping, which correspond with the environmental and agricultural conditions (Figure 1). In the north-eastern zone excluding the Pyrenean area, annual rainfall varies between 600 and 800 mm and the natural conditions are relatively favourable for arable crops, although the land is mountainous and there are few plains of any size. By contrast, the south-western zone has large plains, but its rainfall is low (400–500 mm) and is highly seasonable. Consequently, we start by distinguishing between the estates located in the areas of Catalonia with more rainfall (Gironès, Plana de Vic, Vallès Oriental, Vallès Occidental, Baix Llobregat), where the typical form of rural settlement was the isolated farmhouse (*mas*) and the most common type of contracts were those of *masoveria,* a form of sharecropping that included housing for the tenant, in which the landowner received one

[17] On the importance of efficiency in control and organization of labour for economic growth, see L. Toharia, 'Extracción de trabajo y cambio técnico: el caso de la fábrica McCormick de Chicago, 1880–1900', *Revista de Historia Económica* 2 (1984), pp. 105–26.

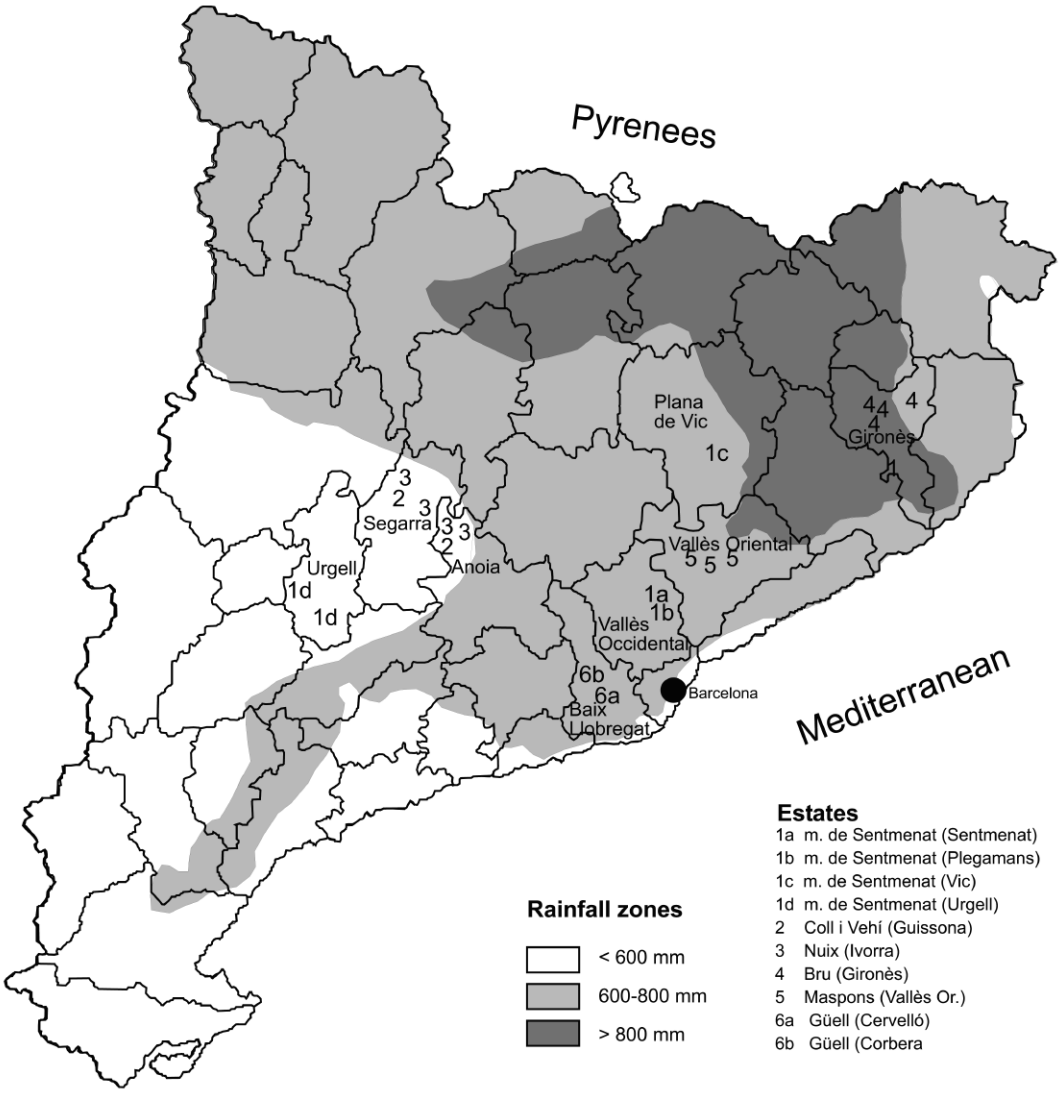


FIGURE 1. Location of the estates analysed

third of the harvest but played little part in the cost of running the farm, and the estates in the dry areas (Urgell, Segarra, Anoia) where settlements were more concentrated in villages. The form of sharecropping practised here was called *mitgeria*, a reference to the fact that the landowner received half of the harvest. In this case, because of the lower productive capacity of the land, the landowner had to take on a larger share of the running costs in order to achieve an acceptable return. Sharecropping contracts were a central element of all these estates, and the account books register only the parts of the running costs of which the landowner paid a share. They omit the most important production costs, especially those related to labour and basic inputs such as seeds and fertilizers, which were usually provided from the reuse of farm produce.

Even so, the landowners made regular financial contributions, although the sums involved were usually small. One part of these payments went towards what we could call the current expenditure, while the other part, which we call extraordinary expenses (the maintenance and investment expenditure), was spent on the upkeep and expansion of the productive capacity of the farms. The remainder consisted of tax payments, land charges and loans to sharecroppers, which we will disregard for now.

The changes in the subventions provided by the landowners towards the running costs can help us to understand their role in the processes of growth and intensification of agricultural production. The evolution of the running costs is shown in Figure 2, and reveals a number of common features despite the diversity of conditions and characteristics of each estate. There is a clear correspondence between the series during the nineteenth century, with a sequence of peaks and troughs that reflect the expansion and contraction of agricultural production in Catalonia.

We can identify the following phases:

1. An early period that stretched as far as the middle of the nineteenth century, when the crisis affecting the old social order was most severe and the new liberal institutions were established. The dominant characteristic of this period is the tendency of landowners to reduce costs by sustaining or reducing their contributions.

2. A second period of higher expenditure, with a major increase in the 1870s coinciding with a great expansion of vineyards in Catalonia.

3. A new cycle of reduction of landowners' contributions which lasted until the beginning of the twentieth century, reflecting the crisis in agriculture from the end of the 1880s onwards, when landowners once more reduced their expenditure in line with their falling income.

4. A period of moderate recovery of expenditure during the first third of the twentieth century, although with interruptions, and without reaching the level of the pre-crisis years.

We can safely assume that the periods of expansion led to a greater degree of liquidity due to the increase in gross income, which disposed the landowner to take on a greater share of the costs, but that this expenditure would shrink as income fell in periods of contraction. We see a spectacular increase in the running costs on the estate of the marquis of Sentmenat in Urgell during the 1870s, when viticulture was in expansion, because at the time the marquis was experimenting with the use of wage labour. However, with the crisis of the end of the century, the expenditure on the estate fell sharply and remained low until the early 1900s. The estates of the Güell family also registered a decline in expenditure in the 1920s which can be interpreted as a strategy to sustain income in a period of falling agricultural prices (especially severe in the case of wine) when there was little margin for increasing revenue from land. In some cases, the landowner withdrew gradually from direct involvement in the management of his estates, limiting his activity to collecting rents and maintaining the value of the land. In other cases, such as the Bru family, the landowner had to increase expenditure to counter the effects of the crisis.

A second observation can be made with regard to the scale of the financial resources

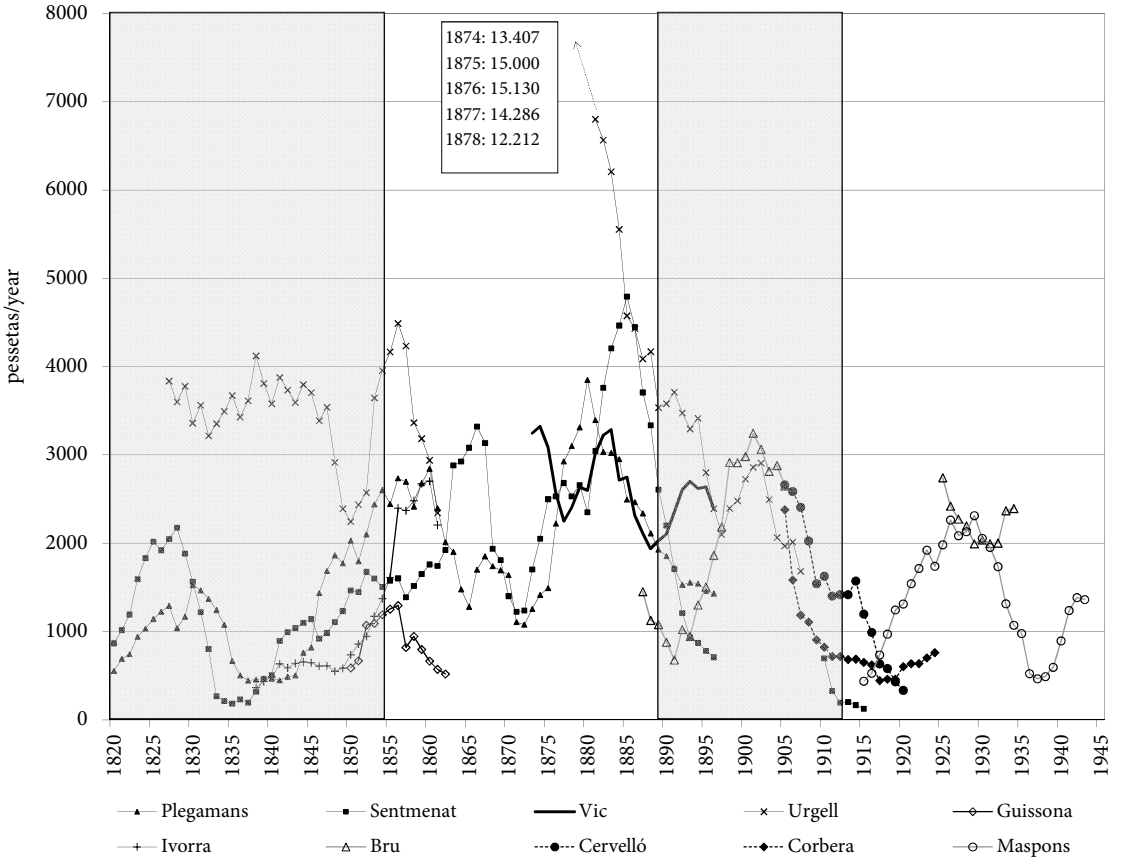


FIGURE 2. Evolution of total running costs (five-year moving averages in 1913 pesetas)

Sources: Palau, Sentmenat, Vic and Urgell: Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó, Patrimonials, Sentmenat, Documentació contemporània; Guissona: Arxiu privat família Fina; Ivorra: Arxiu Històric Comarcal de Cervera, fons Nuix, sense classificar; Bru: Arxiu privat família Masó; Cervera i Corbella: Arxiu Històric Nacional de Catalunya, fons Castelldosrius, inv. 167, caixes 53, 153, 154, 155 and 156; Maspons: Arxiu privat de can Maspons de la Vall

that landowners provided. While these might increase substantially in periods of expansion, occasionally doubling or tripling the amounts from previous periods, they continued to be relatively modest. There is nothing from the records of this period to suggest any spectacular shift that might have led to radical change in the tenancy regime. The annual expenditure of most of the estates analysed varied between 1,000 and 2,000 pesetas (at 1913 value), and only rose as high as 3,000 or 4,000 pesetas in exceptional circumstances.[18] These figures represent a relatively small outlay when compared with the gross income (20 to 30 per cent in the wetter areas and 40 to 50 per cent in the arid areas), as we can see in Table 1. This seems to confirm that the landowners' basic management strategy consisted in avoiding most of the running costs.

[18] The properties belonging to the marquis of Sentmenat in Urgell registered much higher expenditure in 1870s due to the experiment with hired labour described above.

TABLE 1. Total running costs as a percentage of gross income

	Marquis of Sentmenat				*Coll i Vehí*	*Nuix*	*Bru*	*Maspons*	*I. Güell López*	
	Sentmenat	*Plegamans*	*Vic*	*Urgell*					*Cervelló*	*Corbera*
1820–49	23	23		52	52	19				
1850–89	30	39	28	59	39	61	16			
1890–1913	23	15	20	38			22	4	38	48
1914–45		4					31	37	13	21

Masoveria area
Mitgeria area

Sources: See Figure 2

Although the criteria underlying our classification might be open to criticism, we have categorized individual items of expenditure in order to highlight the role of the landowner in the organization of the production process. First of all, we have grouped the items of current expenditure together, including wages and productive inputs for which the farmers were not liable, administrative costs (steward's fees, technical and legal services that were requested, and so on) and a number of other payments for luxury items, charitable causes, or religious concerns, although these were never large items of expenditure. These payments formed part of the paternalist role that many great landowners adopted (donations to charity, support for religious celebrations, local festivals, etc.) and may not have had any direct relation to production costs, but they reinforced the social standing of the landowner and contributed to the smooth running of the estate.

Although expenditure on maintenance and investment are clearly defined in the analysis, they are hard to distinguish in the account books, and so we have decided to include them together as extraordinary expenses.[19] Adding these extraordinary expenses to the current expenditure gives us the total running cost of the estate. As Figure 3 shows, the most important part of the landowner's contribution lies in the current expenditure. Throughout the nineteenth century, current expenditure accounted for between two-thirds and three-quarters of the total costs, gradually declining in the early years of the twentieth century. If we consider that the total running costs did not increase in the first third of the twentieth century, this decline in current expenditure might indicate the withdrawal of rural landowners which we mentioned above, and which was noted by contemporary observers.[20] The reduction in expenditure should be seen as a response to the conditions of the agricultural sector in the aftermath of the crisis of

[19] It was common for these two concepts to be combined in private accounts and in official documents (R. Perren, 'The landlord and agricultural transformation, 1870–1900', *AgHR* 18 (1970), pp. 36–51) as well as in the reconstructions carried out by historians (Pascual, *Els Torelló*).

[20] On this question see J. M. Lana, '¿Rutina, esquizofrenia o racionalidad? Los negocios agrícolas de los condes de Murillo en Navarra, 1712–1913', *Revista de Historia de la Economía y de la Empresa* 6 (2012), pp. 361–86.

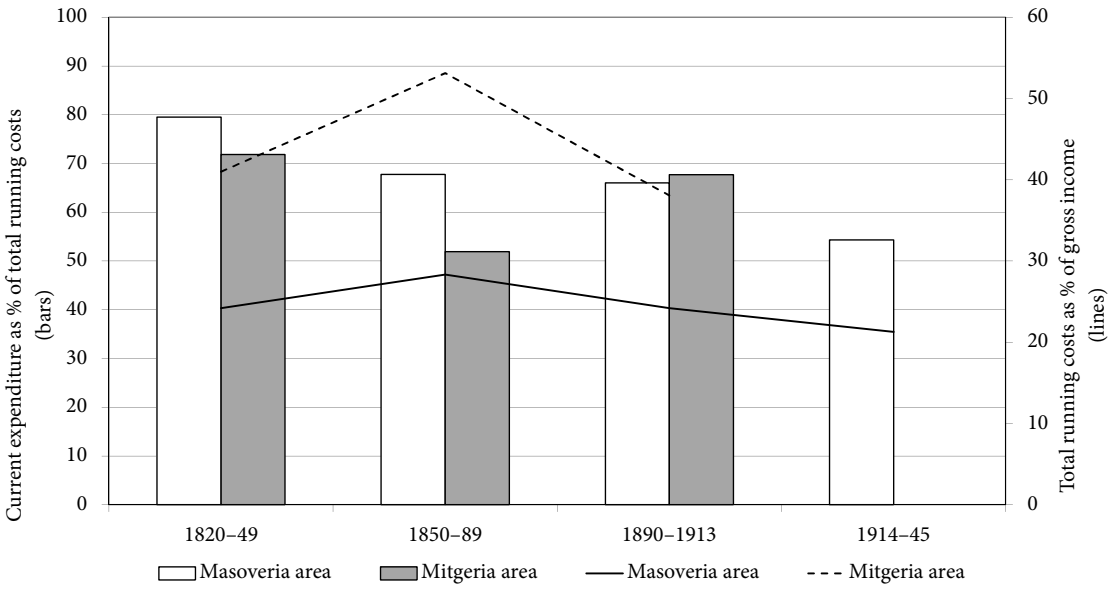


FIGURE 3. Current expenditure and total running costs

Sources: See Figure 2.

the turn of the century, with overproduction and a tendency for prices of agricultural produce to remain stable or fall.

Figure 3 shows that the decline in current expenditure is significant in the estates in both the *masoveria* area and the *mitgeria* area. However, the difference between the two areas is also significant: the evolution of current expenditure in the estates in the wetter area fell from 20 to 10 per cent of gross income, whereas in the estates in the dry area the fall was from 30 to 25 per cent (Figure 4). Again, because of the lower productivity of land, a greater contribution of landowners towards running costs was necessary.

(a) Wage costs

Although wage costs amounted to a significant part of the current account expenditure on some estates, they were always small in absolute terms. The fundamental premise underlying the dominant form of tenancy was that it avoided the problems of hiring and supervising the workforce, although this premise was applied in many different ways. As Figure 4 shows, the landowners who possessed properties in the areas where *mitgeria* was predominant had to assume a greater burden of wage costs. Contracts in these areas systematically included clauses which established that the landowner would contribute to the payment of labour costs during the harvest and sowing seasons. The wages for sowing, threshing, grape harvesting and wine decanting made up the largest portion of the wage costs that the landowner had to provide.

In the areas where *masoveria* was predominant, the cost of farm labour rarely fell on landowners and the overall expenditure on wages was vastly reduced. Most of the salary costs were associated with the attempts to apply direct farming already mentioned, or the

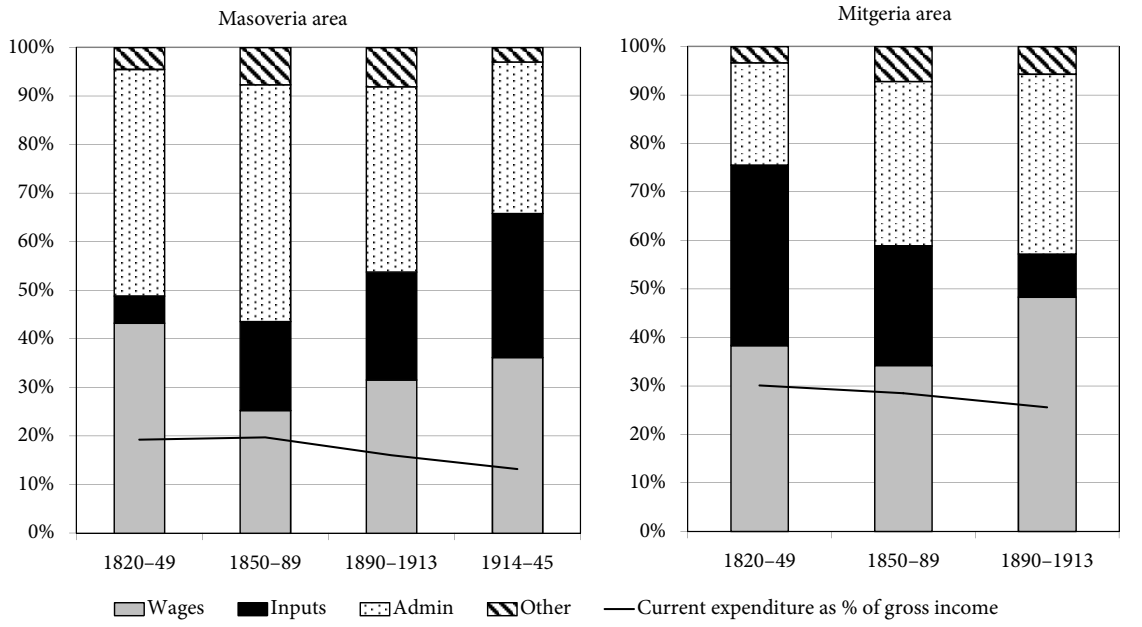


FIGURE 4. Composition of current expenditure

Sources: See Figure 2

management of non-agricultural resources such as woodlands (which, on the Maspons estate, for example, amounted to 46 per cent of the running costs).

There was a steady rise in wage costs in absolute terms from the middle of the nineteenth century until the 1870s and 1880s, but this increase does not indicate significant changes in the share of these wages that the landowners paid. In general, this increase was related to attempts to expand and intensify the specialization in wine growing. Instead, there was a tendency for landowners to contain and reduce these expenses in the aftermath of the crisis. If we take into account the inflation and spectacular increase in wages after World War I, on the one hand, and the need to intensify production on the other, we must conclude that the landowners passed the burden of these increased production costs onto the farmers.[21] Thanks to these indirect forms of land tenancy, the landowners could let the producers take the strain of adjusting to these new market conditions in which wages rose sharply, but were not balanced by a corresponding increase in prices for agricultural produce.

[21] On the changes in agricultural wages during the nineteenth century and the first third of the twentieth, see R. Garrabou, J. Pujol and J. Colomé, 'Salaris, ús i explotació de la força de treball agrícola (Catalunya, 1818–1936)', *Recerques* 24 (1991), pp. 23–51; R. Garrabou and E. Tello 'Salario come costo, salario come redito: il prezzo delle gironate agricole nella Catalogna contemporanea (1727–1930)', *Meridiana* 24 (1995), pp. 173–202; R. Garrabou, E. Tello and A. Roca, 'Preus del blat i salaris agrícoles a Catalunya (1720–1936)', in Carreras *et al.* (eds.) *La industrialització,* I, pp. 422–60.

(b) Expenditure on material inputs

As Figure 4 shows, this category of expenditure is much smaller than the previous one. Although these expenditures grew in periods of expansion and shrank in recessions, in both absolute and relative terms, they were of little significance. Again, the estates in the arid area of Catalonia showed a higher level of expenditure than the area of *masoveria*.

The *mitgeria* contracts established that the landowner would provide a part of, or, in some cases, all of the seed corn. While the usual practice was to use seed from the previous year's harvest, occasional poor harvests, poor quality seed or the advisability of renewing the seed stock sometimes made it necessary to acquire seed in the market. These purchases could represent a significant outlay, as on the estates that the marquis of Sentmenat possessed in Urgell in 1840, 1849, 1855 and 1882, when the cost of seed made up more than 90 per cent of the cost of inputs. The purchase of seed is also noticeable in the accounts of the Guissona and Ivorra estates. These purchases could be interpreted as an expression of the owner's interest in improving productivity by following the recommendation of the nineteenth-century agronomists to renew the seed stock on a regular basis. By contrast, during the nineteenth century expenditure in fertilizers was much more modest, and it was only after the beginning of the twentieth century that the purchase of mineral fertilizers by landowners came to be of importance. The system of contracts used in the arid areas of Catalonia did not prevent the introduction of this decisive technological innovation.[22]

In the areas of *masoveria*, expenditure on material inputs was far lower and was almost entirely related to the expansion of viticulture and wine production. In contrast, the landowner took hardly any responsibility for the costs of cereal production, in the same way as we saw in the case of wage costs. On the marquis of Sentmenat's estates in Vic, for example, where environmental conditions were unsuitable for vine growing, landowners' expenditure on material inputs was insignificant. On the Bru family estate there was a sharecropping contract for livestock that entailed successive purchases of cattle for breeding or fattening. In this case expenditure on inputs was more than half of the current costs for the landowner and it could easily reach 70 per cent of current costs. But this was a relatively rare endeavour among the large Catalan landholders.

(c) Administrative costs

Although all forms of tenancy shared the common purpose of transferring the cost and control of the workforce onto the farmers themselves, the landowners had to establish mechanisms of supervision. As they were only resident on their estates for short periods of the year, they were, on the whole, obliged to rely on their stewards.[23] It was the steward's job to ensure that the work of the tenant farmers and sharecroppers was satisfactory, to choose trustworthy

[22] J. Pujol, 'La difusión de los abonos minerales y químicos hasta 1936: el caso español en el contexto europeo', *Historia Agraria* 15 (1998), pp. 143–72; id., 'Los límites ecológicos del crecimiento agrario español entre 1850 y 1935: nuevos elementos para el debate', *Revista de Historia Económica* 3 (1998), pp. 645–75.

[23] On the activities of the stewards, see J. Carmona, 'Las estrategias económicas'; id., *La aristocracia terrateniente*; R. Garrabou, J. Planas and E. Saguer 'Administradores, procuradores y apoderados: Una aproximación a las formas de gestión de la gran propiedad agraria en la Cataluña contemporánea', in Casado and Robledo (eds), *Fortuna y negocios,* pp. 301–21; J. Carmona and J. Simpson, *El laberinto de la agricultura española. Instituciones, contratos y organización entre 1850 y 1936* (2003), pp. 191–202.

men to watch over the harvest, to collect emphyteutical and other rents and to create a close relationship with the local community in order to prevent conflicts. The documents confirm the presence of a landowner's agent on many of the estates studied.

The employment of a steward was relatively costly, as he would generally receive 10 per cent of the ordinary gross income. In certain cases, he would receive a lower fee, for example, for the sale of timber or in the collection of *laudemium* or unpaid rents. The remainder of the administrative costs comprised payments for legal services or an occasional technical report, insurance policies or small expenses such as visits to the estates by the steward or the landowner, or the building and conservation of boundaries to define the limits of the property.

Administrative costs were among the most important expenditures on many of the estates analysed, in some cases amounting to over 50 per cent of the total current expenditure. Although the percentage was lower in the area of *mitgeria* due to the greater importance of wage costs, the amounts paid under this heading were still relatively large, which confirms the importance that the landowners assigned to it.

Administrative costs remained relatively constant until the twentieth century, even in years of recession and reduction of the landowners' expenditure. They then began to decline or even practically disappear, especially on moderately sized estates where the landowner assumed the task of supervision, as the Bru or the Maspons families did from 1880s onwards. This shift in the landowner's behaviour coincided with a tendency to convert the *masoveria* contract into a leaseholder arrangement, so that the owner could reduce his involvement in managing the farm.

(d) Expenditure on maintenance and investment

Channelling the flow of economic resources into the improvement of productive capacity, increasing the fixed capital, and introducing new crops and new technologies are some of the ways in which contemporary agriculture has grown. One way of measuring the efficiency of a tenancy regime is to gauge the incentives or discouragements that exist for investments in productivity. It has been said that sharecropping in all its forms did not encourage the farmers to invest, as the benefits would not be felt in the short term. The length of their contracts was uncertain, and there was no legislation to ensure compensation for any improvements that they undertook. The logic of the system, at least from this point of view, meant that the responsibility for investments fell on the landowners. What can the accounting records tell us about the behaviour of the landowners with regard to this vital aspect of the management of agricultural estates?

Figure 5 shows the main trends. In most of the estates analysed there is a clear tendency for investments in fixed capital assets to increase from the middle of the nineteenth century. In some cases, the amounts doubled or tripled compared with the beginning of the century, but in the last decade they suffered a sharp decrease. Even so, in absolute terms the amounts were always modest, and there was no significant variation in the relative size of this expense in overall running costs. These expenditures barely reached 10 or 15 per cent of gross income, and only in very few cases reached 20 per cent. They fell sharply after the late nineteenth-century depression.[24]

[24] Some studies of Victorian England and Ireland indicate that this behaviour on the part of the investor was not an isolated historical quirk: J. V. Beckett, *The aristocracy in England, 1660–1914* (1986), pp. 171–82; B.A. Holderness, 'Landlord's capital formation in East Anglia, 1750–1870', *EcHR* 25 (1972); C. O'Grada 'The investment behaviour of Irish landlords, 1850–1875: some preliminary findings', *AgHR* 23 (1975), pp. 139–55.

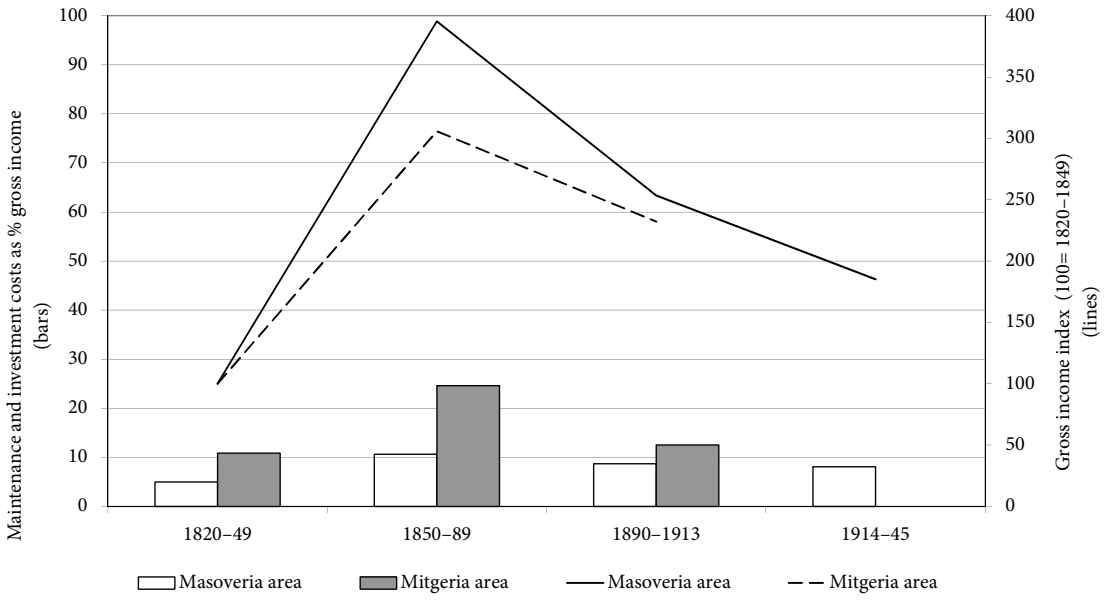


FIGURE 5. Maintenance and investment expenditure

Sources: See Figure 2.

The overall tendency and fluctuations of this expense closely mirror the development of vine growing. The expansion in the early phases recorded in Sentmenat, Plegamans, Guissona, Ivorra and, to a lesser extent, in Urgell, was closely related to the cost of planting vines. In Sentmenat, from 1851 to 1860, the cost of planting vines represented 80 per cent of all investment and, after a brief period of inactivity, rose again to 60 per cent of the total in the years between 1881 and 1890. The purchase of barrels, presses and other equipment for the production of wine and the construction of cellars also formed a significant part of the investment on estates that specialized in wine production. The prospects of the wine market generated huge expectations and the expansion of wine production continued to absorb a large part of the investment made until the 1880s.

After the late nineteenth-century depression, the amounts invested were smaller. This coincided with the tendency by landowners to diversify their investments (by the purchase of industrial or financial assets) as a response to the loss of profitability of agricultural investments, to spread risk and ensure greater stability of income. In places where investment in the farms continued to be significant, the money was used principally to improve housing and had little effect on production. On the Maspons estate, for example, maintenance and investment expenditure accounted for over half of the total running costs, but the greater part of this (53 per cent) went on renovating the landowner's farmhouse. While the value of the property increased, it had only a slight effect on the productive capacity of the estate, underlining its function as a reservoir of value. The owner of the Goy family estate spent a large part of the total income (about 35 per cent of the gross income) on maintenance and investment at the end of the 1920s and at the start of the turbulent 1930s. This amount was mostly spent on improving

the housing conditions of the tenants (*masovers*) and on building stables for livestock, from which the estate received no income.[25] In this case, the social and political context was probably a major influence, as was the ideology of the landowner, who had links with the currents of social Catholicism.

In the accounts analysed, there was hardly any investment in agricultural machinery except for the occasional purchase of a grape press or of tools for the mill. During the nineteenth century there was no guarantee that machinery would offer any great return, and in any case the reliance on sharecropping meant that the need for machinery to replace manual labour was low. As long as the farmers were responsible for nearly all the labour costs, landowners were understandably reluctant to pay for machinery which would yield little in the way of profit.

One final observation: a high percentage of the expenditure on investment and maintenance consisted of wages paid to farm labourers, builders, workmen and carpenters, and only a small proportion was spent on materials and tools. The increase in wages from 1914 onwards helps to explain why investment was so constrained during the first third of the twentieth century. The fact that most of the spending on investment was on labour costs meant that there was actually a greater likelihood that investment would be made on peasant holdings, where labour was relatively abundant and, to a limited degree, circumstances favoured improvements based on the use of the workforce.

III

We have seen that landowners preferred sharecropping and other forms of land tenancy to direct farming. Furthermore, the evolution of their expenditure shows that they were reluctant to spend anything other than modest amounts. This behaviour could lead to a situation where the resources available for farming were inadequate and less efficient than they might have been if other available technologies had been employed. All this might lead us to conclude that the landowners had little entrepreneurial spirit, and to associate sharecropping with outdated systems in which the lack of capital investment led inevitably to stagnation. However, no significant differences have been detected either in the technologies used or in the levels of productivity between sharecropped estates and those farmed directly by the landowner using family members or hired labourers. This suggests that the level of capital available for investment was sufficient to implement agricultural practices which were at least on a par with those in common use and which were considered most appropriate for each area.

It must be borne in mind that after the liberal reforms of the mid-nineteenth century, the ecclesiastical institutions were not replaced by an equivalent banking system and, therefore, the capital market was underdeveloped. Much of the credit was channelled through informal networks where high interest rates prevailed.[26] But again, it should be reiterated that the main

[25] The Torelló family estates provide another example: the expenditure on maintenance and investment shrank considerably in the beginning of the twentieth century, and was concentrated on improvements in the housing conditions of the sharecroppers (Pascual, *Els Torelló,* II, p. 196).

[26] The consequences of the weakness of the Spanish credit market in the development of some agricultural products has been highlighted by V. Pinilla and M. A. Ayuda, 'Foreign markets, globalisation and agricultural change in Spain, 1850–1935', in V. Pinilla (ed.), *Markets and agricultural change in Europe* (2009),

component in many investments was labour: the work to improve the land devoted to vines and other shrubs or trees, which represented the main investment in the period examined, required inputs of labour and, to some extent, animals. Therefore, the lack of capital or its high cost did not prevent the transformation of farms. In this regard, sharecropping was a highly functional tool for reducing monetary expenditure, shifting labour costs to the sharecropper.

Between 1820 and 1940, agriculture in Catalonia developed in a context of a certain rigidity of labour markets. The level of proletarization or dependence on monetary wages of agricultural labour force was limited, since many families had small farms, either owned or rented as leaseholders or sharecroppers, which provided some economic autonomy. The wage earners who depended entirely on their earnings were mainly children or youths in the early stages of their working lives.[27] In addition, the emergence of modern industry in the region created a competition for labour and affected the wage level in agriculture.[28] In these conditions, the use of hired labour or the lease of large estates to a single farmer created formidable difficulties. On the one hand, few leaseholders possessed sufficient resources to run a large estate; on the other, labour became more expensive, and any improvement in productivity gained through direct farming by the landowner was outweighed by the costs of labour and problems of supervision.

The introduction of machinery to reduce labour costs also came up against technical and financial problems. On the technical side, the introduction of large-scale mechanization onto the farms was not really viable until the twentieth century was well underway.[29] On the financial side, the low income from agriculture meant that the return on capital invested in machinery would probably be lower than that obtained in other sectors. So, in order to obtain the best return on capital, investors would naturally direct their funds to sectors that offered higher

Note 26 *continued*
pp. 173–199. On the credit market in rural Spain, see also A. Sabio, *Los mercados informales de crédito y tierra en una comunidad rural aragonesa (1850–1930)* (1996); A. P. Martínez Soto, 'Las vías de financiación de la agricultura murciana entre 1870–1936: el problema del crédito agrícola', *Agricultura y Sociedad* 84 (1997), pp. 49–106; P. Carasa Soto, 'Proyectos y fracasos del crédito agrícola institucional en la España contemporánea', *Areas: Revista de ciencias sociales* 21 (2001), pp. 95–122; Carmona and Simpson, *El laberinto de la agricultura española*, pp. 261–300; E. Tello, 'La transformació del crèdit hipotecari rural, entre els mercats del diner i de la terra', in Giralt (ed.) *Història agrària*, IV, pp. 325–43; R. Garcia Orallo, 'El Registre de la Propietat i la informació: el miratge de la modernització institucional espanyola (1861–1950)', in R. Congost (ed.), *Dels capbreus al Registre de la Propietat. Drets, títols i usos socials de la informació a Catalunya (segles XIV–XX)* (2008).

[27] R. Garrabou and E. Saguer, 'Capitalisme agraire sans prolétarisation. Les salariés agricoles en Catalogne (XIX–XXe siècles)', in R. Hubscher and J. C. Farcy (eds), *La Moisson des Autres. Les salariés agricoles aux XIXe et XXe siècles* (1996), pp. 57–75; P. Roca Fabregat, '¿Quién trabajaba en las masías? Criados y criadas en la agricultura catalana (1670–1870)', *Historia Agraria*, 35 (2005), pp. 49–92.

[28] R. Garrabou, E. Tello and A. Roca, 'Preus del blat i salaris agrícoles a Catalunya (1720–1936)' in Carreras *et al.* (eds), *La industrialització*, I, p. 422–60.

[29] D. Gallego, 'Transformaciones técnicas de la agricultura española del primer tercio del siglo XX', in R. Garrabou, C. Barciela and J. I. Jiménez Blanco (eds), *Historia agraria de la España contemporánea*, III, *El fin de la agricultura tradicional (1900–1960)* (1986), pp. 171–229; R. Garrabou, 'Sobre el atraso de la mecanización agraria en España, 1850–1933', *Agricultura y Sociedad* 57 (1990), pp. 41–77; J. I. Martínez Ruiz, 'La mecanización de la agricultura española: de la dependencia exterior a la producción nacional de maquinaria (1862–1932)', *Revista de Historia Industrial* 8 (1995), pp. 43–63; J. I. Martínez Ruiz, *Trilladoras y tractores. Energía, tecnología e industria en la mecanización de la agricultura española (1862–1967)* (2000); J. Simpson, *Spanish agriculture: the long siesta, 1765–1965* (1995).

returns than agriculture. Sharecropping and other indirect forms of land tenancy required minimal capital outlay from landowners and represented an efficient way of employing labour with low supervision costs.

Although these forms of tenancy placed the burden of the running costs on the shoulders of the farmers, landowners were willing to increase their share of the expenditure when the occasion demanded it, as happened on the marquis of Sentmenat's estates in Urgell. This landowner not only provided the money for the seed corn and a part of the labour costs, but often gave loans to his sharecroppers for the purchase of work animals or to pay harvesters. Moreover, he adopted farming with wage labour for a few years when the area under vines was being extended, but the experiment ended in failure.

The intensification of vineyards and orchards proved to be the most efficient way of increasing productivity in large areas of Catalonia in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It was not only the vineyards that enjoyed a spectacular expansion, but also the plantations of olives, almonds, hazelnuts and carobs. The expansion in this sector called for significant investment which sharecroppers and tenant farmers were rarely willing to undertake. This attitude is perfectly comprehensible when we take into account that their contracts, while always renewable, were usually valid for between one and five years, and offered no guarantee that they could recover the value of any investments they made. In these circumstances, the landowners had two possible courses of action. Firstly, they could pay all the costs of planting, or secondly, they could use longer contracts of 20 years or more that passed the costs of planting on to the farmers. We have seen from the account books that a significant part of the investments made in estates in vine-growing areas was due to the planting of new vines, but most of the landowners preferred to use long-term contracts such as the *rabassa morta*[30] (which terminated either after 50 years or when two thirds of the original vines had died) when they wanted to increase the area dedicated to these crops. We can deduce from this that the landowners sidestepped the limitations inherent in some forms of sharecropping by adopting other types of contract which were already in use in rural Catalonia.

This would seem to confirm the hypothesis that whilst the level of investment they made was modest, the landowning families did not behave like absentee landlords who showed no interest in maximizing the productive potential of their farms.[31] The examples we have analysed have given us some insight into the rationale behind some of the landowners' decisions and the diverse responses that they adopted according to the circumstances and the prevailing social and environmental conditions on their estates.

[30] J. Ferrer Alòs, *Pagesos, rabassaires i industrials a la Catalunya central (segles XVIII–XIX)* (1987); J. Colomé, 'Les formes d'accés a la terra a la comarca de l'Alt Penedès durant el segle XIX: el contracte de rabassa morta i l'especialització vitivinícola', *Estudis d'Història Agrària* 8 (1990), pp. 123–43; F. Valls-Junyent, *La dinàmica del canvi agrari a la Catalunya interior. L'Anoia, 1720–1860* (1996); J. Carmona and J. Simpson, 'The "Rabassa Morta" in Catalan viticulture: the rise and decline of a long term sharecropping contract, 1670s–1920s', *JEcH* 59 (1999), pp. 290–315.

[31] As a contrast, see J. Martínez Alier, *La estabilidad del latifundio* (1968).

Turmoil among the crofters: Evander McIver and the 'Highland Question', 1873–1903

by Annie Tindley and Eric Richards

Abstract

This article takes as its subject the later life and career of Evander McIver, estate manager or factor to successive dukes of Sutherland in the north-west of Sutherland for over fifty years. The dukes were amongst the richest landowners in Britain at that time, but they struggled with the damage inflicted on their reputation by the clearances of the early nineteenth century. It was the legacy of the clearances which partly informed the Crofters' War of the 1880s, which shook McIver's philosophical certainties and grip on management and estate 'discipline'. The article traces McIver's training, career and context, his dealings with the large crofter and cottar community and tensions with his employers before his retirement in 1895 and death in 1903. It is shown here he found it difficult to cope with changing attitudes to the crofters by the dukes and their administrators and rejected government intervention in crofting.

The Highland estate of the dukes of Sutherland in the late nineteenth century was divided for administrative purposes into three substantial districts which together occupied almost the entire county of Sutherland (Figure 1). The most remote was the Scourie factorship, located on the extreme north-west corner of the Scottish mainland, containing the parishes of Assynt, Eddrachillis and Durness. Much of the 300,000-acre Scourie district was rugged and largely inaccessible but increasingly attractive to sportsmen and tourists.[1] The disposition of its resources and people had been reshaped during the clearances executed in the first half of the century by the Reay estate and then by the dukes of Sutherland who had bought the estate in 1829.[2] The Sutherland family, one of the richest in Britain, invested considerable capital in the estates over many decades, seeking to develop its resources and rental and improve the welfare of the people. The returns were meagre and most of the estate income continued to derive from a small number of capitalist sheep farmers, especially after wool prices rose in the middle decades of the century.[3] By the end of the nineteenth century most of Scourie was devoted to massive sheep farms and sporting estates. At various points along the coasts, and in some

[1] E. Richards, 'Highland emigration in the age of Malthus: Scourie, 1841–55', *Northern Scotland* 2 (2011), pp. 60–2, 70.

[2] See E. Richards, *The leviathan of wealth: the Sutherland fortune in the Industrial Revolution* (1973).

[3] W. Orr, *Deer forests, landlords and crofters: the western Highlands in Victorian and Edwardian times* (1982), pp. 3–4, 12–14.



FIGURE 1. Map of the county of Sutherland (1832), by John Thompson

Source: Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland.

interior locations, subsisted about 5,000 crofters and cottars, a poor and generally congested population much larger than in pre-clearance times.

Scourie was managed as part of the extensive estates and variegated assets of the Sutherland family by a structure centred on London. This had been established earlier in the century under the supervision of James Loch (1780–1855), often regarded as the most influential land agent of the age.[4] At its apex was the duke's Commissioner, Loch being the first, who orchestrated the multifarious components of the family's properties, determining policies, controlling their finances and investments, calling-in reports from the far-flung estates, and visiting the properties annually. Loch had masterminded the Highland improvement policies from 1812 until his death in 1855 when he was succeeded by his son, George Loch, who gave the administration continuity until his own death in 1879.[5] There followed a more broken

[4] See D. Spring, *The English landed estate in the nineteenth century: its administration* (1963); for a contemporary account, J. Loch, *An account of the improvements on the estates of the Marquis of Stafford* (1820).

[5] A. Tindley, *The Sutherland Estate, 1850–1920: aristocratic decline, estate management and land reform* (2010), pp. 59–60; National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), Sutherland Estates Papers, Acc. 10225,

sequence of succession under first Sir Arnold Kemball (1879–86), then Robert Maitland Brereton (1886–89), after which time members of the duke's family assumed control of much of the management.[6]

Beneath the Commissioners were several layers of lesser management – the most important being the estate agents of the English estates (in Shropshire, Staffordshire and Yorkshire) and the three factorships in the Highland county of Sutherland. The Highland estate factors were invested with substantial local control, authority and autonomy, but they were nonetheless required to report with great frequency to the Commissioner, to whom they were closely accountable. They presided over a local body of employees, the ground officers and, of course, the estate tenancies and the population at large. The Sutherland estate administration was a stratified structure with well-defined responsibilities but which necessarily delegated much authority to the local agents in distant places. It was often beset by tensions between its parts.[7]

The management structure was capped by the dukes of Sutherland who even in the late nineteenth century, remained among the largest and wealthiest landowners in Britain.[8] The dukes were kept fully informed of events on the estates through a system of reporting devised by the elder Loch, but the detailed reports from the various estates often seemed to weary them, more immediately engaged as they were in London society and the royal court, governed by their own political and personal sensitivities.[9] Recurrently throughout the century the dukes were protected from the often fractious details of local estate business by their Commissioners and by the under strata of the management system. But no amount of cushioning could insulate them from the controversies which erupted in the northern Highlands in the 1870s. Much of this turmoil was vividly manifested in the life and career of Evander McIver (1811–1903), who occupied the Scourie factorship for virtually the whole of the second half of the nineteenth century. This paper examines his philosophy and responses to changing conditions during the turbulence which characterized the last decades of his extraordinarily long career.

I

McIver was a Lewisman, the son of substantial merchant and agent in Stornoway, and his first language was Gaelic. Educated in Edinburgh, he was well versed in rural economy and gained considerable administrative experience in Lewis, lowland Scotland and in the central Highlands before his appointment to the Scourie position in 1845.[10] He was a fully professional estate agent, a type increasingly influential in the administration of aristocratic estates

Note 5 *continued*
Policy Papers (hereafter PP), 216, McIver to Kemball, 12 Jun. 1886; E. Richards and M. Clough, *Cromartie: Highland life, 1650–1950* (1989), pp. 330–4.

[6] NLS, Acc. 10853, 34, Wright to MacLean, 18 Jan. 1890.

[7] On late nineteenth century conventions and varieties of estate administration, see J. V. Beckett, 'Agricultural landownership and estate management', in E. J. T. Collins (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales,* VII, *1850–1914* (2 vols, 2000), I, pp. 730–4.

[8] D. Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy* (1990), p. 770; E. Richards, 'An anatomy of the Sutherland Fortune: income, consumption, investments and returns, 1780–1880', *Business Hist.* 21 (1979), pp. 46, 52–3.

[9] Tindley, *Sutherland Estate*, pp. 167–8.

[10] E. McIver, *Memoirs of a Highland gentleman: being the reminiscences of Evander McIver of Scourie* (ed.) Rev. G. Henderson (1905), pp. 20–4.

in the late nineteenth century.[11] Moreover he was unusually well-grounded in local knowledge of West Highland conditions. His formidable personality and local authority dominated the Scourie district for fifty years. He is also remarkably well-documented in the dense estate correspondence which he conducted throughout his agency, being a man of forthright and outspoken expression. Moreover, towards the end of his life, he prepared a self-justifying account of his career in Scourie, entitled *The Memoirs of a Highland Gentleman,* sumptuously published soon after his death.[12] At the time of McIver's death, Lord Ronald Sutherland Gower, sometime MP for Sutherland and brother of the third duke, declared that McIver was, 'one of the finest, if not the finest specimen of a Highland gentleman that I have known'.[13] McIver's editor, the Rev. George Henderson, who may have chosen the title of McIver's verbose and repetitive autobiography, further justified the use of 'gentleman' by clarifying, 'By a gentleman I mean a knowing man with culture, culture of mind and body, of intellect and soul, of head and heart and hand'.[14] This opinion of McIver was far from universal: factors in the Highlands were often unpopular among the crofters and McIver was an extremely contentious figure in Scourie.[15] But McIver undoubtedly aspired to the idea and status of 'a Highland Gentleman' and his *Memoirs* were a testament to his philosophy and his ambition. Few photographs are known to survive of him, but Figure 2, which is taken from his memoirs, shows us McIver as an old man.

When McIver entered the service of the Sutherland family in 1845 most of the upheavals of the clearances were over.[16] The *status quo* which he inherited was relatively stable by mid-century. For the following fifty years he was deeply involved in the administration of Scourie, a district dominated by sheep farms and deer forests and densely populated communities of crofters and cottars.[17] In the first half of his career he had faced the immediate consequences of the clearances. McIver continued to reorganize the small tenantry, though on a lesser scale, and he encountered recurrent hostility and resistance from them.[18] By the 1870s, post-clearance

[11] I. H. Adams, 'Economic process and the Scottish land surveyor', *Imago Mundi* 27 (1975), pp. 13–18; id., 'The agents of agricultural change', in M. L. Parry and T. R. Slater (eds), *The making of the Scottish countryside* (1980), pp. 159–60, 167–9; T. M. Devine, 'The transformation of agriculture: cultivation and clearance', in T. M. Devine, C. H. Lee and G. C. Peden (eds), *The transformation of Scotland: the economy since 1700* (2005), pp. 79, 87; A. Tindley, 'They sow the wind, they reap the whirlwind': estate management in the post-clearance Highlands, *c.*1815–*c.*1900', *Northern Scotland* 3 (2012), pp. 66–85.

[12] McIver, *Memoirs.*

[13] Ibid., pp. 286–7 (letter dated 11 Apr. 1903).

[14] Ibid., prefatory note.

[15] The poor reputation of Highland factors as instruments of unpopular policies and as domineering figures in the local communities was recorded in evidence presented to the Napier Commission; see for example *the evidence given to the Napier Commission,* BPP, 1884, XXXII–XXXVI, *Report of Her Majesty's commissioners of inquiry into the condition of the crofters and cottars in the Highlands and Island of Scotland with appendices* (hereafter *Napier Commission*), pp. 167, 1738, 1645; J. Hunter, *The making of the crofting community* (1976); J. Shaw Grant, *A shilling for your scowl: the history of a Scottish legal mafia* (1992), pp. 137–41; J. Macleod, *None dare oppose: the Laird, the Beast and the people of Lewis* (2010), p. 256.

[16] E. Richards, *Patrick Sellar and the Highland clearances: Homicide, eviction and the price of progress* (1999).

[17] See the examination of his early career in E. Richards and A. Tindley, 'After the Clearances: Evander McIver and the "Highland Question", 1835–73', *Rural Hist.*, 23 (2012), pp. 41–57; Tindley, *Sutherland Estate*, pp. 12–19.

[18] M. Bangor-Jones, *The Assynt Clearances* (2001), p. 45.

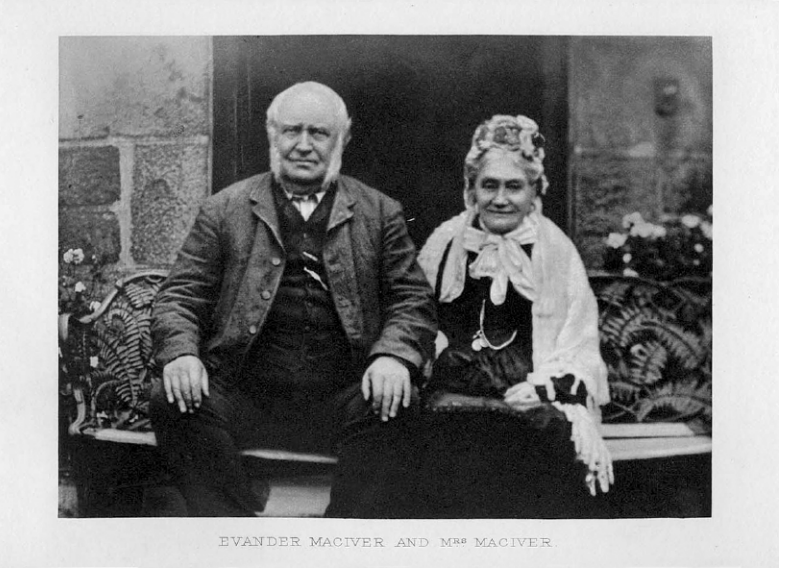


FIGURE 2. A photograph of Evander McIver and his wife (*c.* 1890), reproduced from his 'Memoirs of a Highland Gentleman' (1905)

conditions had further stabilized: the sheep farmers fared relatively well and the crofters clung on despite the alternation of good and bad years. Their rents changed little and prices rose quietly; the post-clearance population growth had come to an end and numbers began to decline very slowly.[19] But there was little economic advance on the estate at large and its reputation remained darkened by the legacies of the clearances and the continuing poverty of the majority of the people.[20]

In the last quarter of the century, estates in the Scottish Highlands faced unexpected challenges. Some of these problems derived from the decline and eventual collapse of wool and sheep prices and falling productivity, partly counterbalanced by rising income from sporting tenants.[21] More intractable was the 'crofter problem', expressed in the continuing poverty and vulnerability of the small tenantry, from 1873 heightened by their increasing political assertiveness in confrontation with Highland landlordism.[22]

The crofter's movement began to flourish from the 1870s, stemming from well-publicized resistance to landlord policies in Lewis and Skye, increasingly supported by sympathetic public opinion and vocal and influential champions in the central belt. Resistance to rent increases, evictions and the reorganization of lots began to feature commonly and landlords and their agents found little public or governmental sympathy. The episode faced by McIver at Clashmore,

[19] Hunter, *Crofting community*, pp. 119–21; *Census of Scotland*, *1911* (1912), p. 2233; R. N. Hildebrandt, 'Migration and economic change in the northern Highlands in the nineteenth century, with particular reference to 1851–1891' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Glasgow, 1980), pp. 336–7.

[20] On post-clearance circumstances in Sutherland, see also G. Baggott, 'Melness Farm, Sutherland: the Land Question and the Congested Districts Board, *c.*1866–1911', *J. Scottish Historical Studies*, 30 (2010), pp. 1–14.

[21] Orr, *Deer Forests,* pp. 31–4; Tindley, *Sutherland Estate,* p. 5.

[22] Hunter, *Making of the crofting community*, pp. 128–30, 132–3; E. A. Cameron, *Land for the People? The British government and the Scottish Highlands, 1880–1925* (1996), pp. 16–18.

Assynt, was part of this wider movement and illustrated the way in which crofters across the Highlands and Islands were increasingly ready to challenge their estate managements.[23] Many of the conflicting ideas about Highland estate management were exhibited at Clashmore. Here there was a collision of philosophies between an estate which wished to remodel the lands of the small tenants, but opposed by crofters who demanded to be left undisturbed and who obdurately opposed any change in their attachment to the land. It was a confrontation which widened to include many parts of the west Highlands and which eventually prompted governmental intervention, first by the might of the law (backed by the military) and then in 1883 by a Royal Commission into the conditions of the crofters and cottars chaired by Lord Napier. These events eventually introduced unprecedented measures of governmental regulation over the operation of land rights in the region.[24]

Evander McIver was at the centre of these changing circumstances and deeply perplexed and angered by them. In this paper we follow his story through this radically altered context, as he continued to manage the district of Scourie and its increasingly turbulent population. Most of all we explain the basis of his understanding of the 'Highland Question' and his reaction to the events which preceded and followed the intervention of the Napier Commission in 1883. McIver's situation was filled with philosophical tensions whereby he found himself administering a system in which he had no conviction. Yet it was also a system which was running out of control, challenging his capacity to maintain its order and expectations. This was the cause of his intense frustration, which expressed itself in his dealings with both the tenantry and his employers. In these years he witnessed, almost helplessly, the reinstatement and preservation of the crofting system, which he regarded as absurd and unworkable. For a believer in the inevitable march of rational progress, the maintenance and, after 1886, the protection of the crofting system was a disaster.

II

At the centre of McIver's thinking were two issues governing the management of Scourie. One was the economic integrity and sustainability of a great aristocratic estate, linked to his own accountability to the landlord, the duke of Sutherland.[25] The second was his responsibility for the welfare of the common people and their poverty. Here he saw his mission as reducing the burden the crofters posed to themselves and to the estate.[26] There were two entwined dangers in estate management: one was the likely breakdown of discipline over the congested population of crofters; the other was the likelihood that the level of dependence of the small tenantry would

[23] Cameron, *Land for the People*, pp. 27–8, 31–6; A. Newby, *Ireland, radicalism and the Scottish Highlands, c.1870–1912* (2007), pp. 48–9, 52.

[24] On the genesis of protest and the politicization of the crofters and the land question in the Highlands in the 1880s, see E. A. Cameron, 'Poverty, protest and politics: Perceptions of the Scottish Highlands in the 1880s', in D. Broun and M. Macgregor (eds), *Miorun Mor nan Gall, The Great Ill-Will of the Lowlander: Lowland perceptions of the Scottish Highlands* (2009), pp. 218–31 and the evidence given to the Napier Commission.

[25] Tindley, *Sutherland Estate*, pp. 167–71.

[26] This was a common aim among estate managers in the mid-nineteenth century: see T. M. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine: hunger, emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the nineteenth century* (1995), pp. 178–82.

undermine the economic return on the entire estate. When sheep rents began their long decline in the 1870s and the crofters girded their collective will, McIver's fears turned into reality.[27]

McIver had had no faith in the small tenant system from the very start of his career; in 1841 he had been alarmed at the burden to be imposed by the new Poor Law and predicted the 'annihilation of the Highland proprietors'.[28] In the following thirty years the buoyancy of sheep rents sustained estate finances but the problem of crofting poverty remained undiminished. McIver's philosophy, despite the tensions on either side of him, was not shaken across half a century, although their context was. Indeed, his views hardened further and he concluded at the end of his career that, 'The crofter system has not within it the seeds of prosperity or of profit … it is a living from hand to mouth, and it is difficult under their circumstances to keep the wolf from the door'.[29] McIver regarded the unreformed crofting system as unable to provide families with even a primitive standard of living.[30]

In the first half of his career at Scourie, McIver had kept a firm hold on the crofters and, though sometimes resisted in his attempts to execute small reorganizations, he had maintained control over the small tenants of the estate. From the start he had experienced tension with his employers regarding his methods and his insistence on rigour in his control of the crofters. His rigidity remained undiminished as the decades passed, but the views of his superiors shifted towards a more liberal and compromising frame of mind, alarming McIver. In the 1870s the problem of controlling the crofters worsened at a time when the upper management and direction of the Sutherland estate began to lose his confidence. It was a recipe for frustration and disappointment, both of which marked the latter half of his career.

During the heated public discussion about the future of the crofters in the 1880s, the third duke of Sutherland and his senior advisors, in advance of many other Highland landowners, became increasingly responsive to their demands for more land and to developing a gradation of holdings among the small tenants. But McIver resisted all such ideas, declaring that, 'there is none of the present tenants or crofters of Assynt able to take sheep farms – and the crofters of the sea side have neither skill or knowledge in sheep management, nor have they capital'.[31] This became a critical moment in the evolution of the management of the Sutherland estates and McIver, for all his declared sympathy for the people, refused to see any rational sense in granting them more land. They simply did not know how to use the land: they had 'no knowledge or acquaintance with sheep and their management', and he became increasingly angry and sarcastic on the question, particularly when his superiors were inclined to accommodate the crofters' views.[32]

[27] Orr, *Deer Forests,* pp. 15–17. Falling rents were not unique to the Highland estates – for instance, the Sutherland properties in the English Midlands experienced serious rent reductions in the years 1870–90; see R. Perren, 'The effects of the agricultural depression on the English estates of the Dukes of Sutherland, 1870–1900', (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Nottingham, 1967).

[28] BPP 1841, *First report from the committee on emigration, Scotland* (1841), p. 126.

[29] McIver, *Memoirs,* p. 76.

[30] Commentators commonly viewed crofting as 'a malignant agricultural system': see Cameron quoting *Scotsman*, 8 Dec. 1877 in, 'Poverty, protest and politics', p. 221.

[31] Staffordshire Record Office [hereafter SRO], D593, K/1/3/70, McIver to Kemball, 2 May 1884. McIver was not alone in his aversion to land grants to crofters; see Baggott, 'Melness Farm, Sutherland', p. 3.

[32] For example, when the 'Duke's Memo' scheme was established in 1884 offering land extensions to crofters; SRO, D593/K/1/3/70, McIver to Kemball, 2 Jun. 1884.

At the foundation of McIver's thinking about the crofting system were two propositions. The first was that the problem pre-dated his own involvement in the estate: he had had no involvement with the original clearances and had simply inherited the difficulties which derived from an earlier era. Secondly, he consistently asserted the view that crofting was an utterly derelict system which could never be improved, but instead could only be diminished by most of the crofters emigrating which, he conceded, was unlikely to occur in the short term or even in his own lifetime.

McIver persisted in these views over the five decades of his factorship and he gave them forthright public ventilation when he faced two Royal Commissions on Highland conditions: the Napier Commission (1883–84) and the Royal Commission on the Highlands and Islands (1892–95).[33] Testifying at the Napier hearings at Kinlochbervie on 26 July 1883, he confronted detailed allegations regarding current practice in his estate management and broad retrospective and prospective questions regarding the welfare of the district as a whole. He refused to be drawn on the history of the estate before his own appointment even though much of the agenda of the Commission was directed to past events, most of all to the record of the clearances and their alleged consequences.[34]

When asked about the past McIver always claimed that all he knew came from old people. When asked about the Strathnaver removals in the 1810s, he declared adamantly, 'that is going back to a time before you or I was born, and it is a subject upon which I have no knowledge whatever. There has been no such removal in my time'.[35] Pressed for his opinion, he remarked, 'I think if the people were living in a bad climate and poor circumstances, where they could not support themselves, it was not such a cruel thing to remove them to where they could live better'.[36] He did, however, testify to the feelings of negativity among the people. He said that although the people complained that they were worse off, this was not true, though he admitted that the current year (1883) was certainly a difficult one.[37] Population had fallen somewhat in the last two decades, which McIver saw as a very good thing.[38]

[33] *Napier Commission*; BPP, 1895, XXXVIII–XXXIX, *Royal Commission, Highlands and Islands, 1892, Report of Evidence, 1895* [hereafter *Deer Forest Commission*].

[34] The Sutherland estate officials agreed amongst themselves not to discuss the clearances in their evidence: Tindley, *Sutherland Estate,* pp. 168, 171.

[35] *Napier Commission, Evidence*, pp. 1706–8, 1768–9. McIver stated that the people of Assynt had been desperately poor and distressed when he first arrived in 1845; this was reflected in the rents, which were very low. He was notably vague about the number of cottars in Assynt, over whom, he claimed, the landlord had no control. When he took up the Scourie factorship the tenants did not have lots – it was all runrig: 'one of my first anxieties was to place the matter on a better footing, and make lots throughout the parish', and this was done. Of earlier evictions he denied all knowledge, though he was acutely aware of the tradition, especially 'a very disagreeable riot in Durness', back in 1841. He was asked: 'You don't hold yourself or your noble constituent responsible for it?' 'That is so.' 'You don't justify what occurred?' 'Oh dear no.' 'Still the people have their grievance?' 'Yes – I can easily understand that this is a very sore subject with them.' When he was asked, 'Can you say as much for the clearances we were told about today in the fifty townships of Assynt enumerated?' he answered, 'that I also wash my hands of personally; it was done about the time I was born'. The Durness riots are described in E. Richards, *The Highland Clearances: people, landlords and rural turmoil* (new edn, 2008), pp. 319–24.

[36] *Napier Commission, Evidence*, p. 1708.

[37] Cameron, 'Poverty, protest and politics', p. 219.

[38] *Napier Commission, Evidence*, p. 1706.

McIver summarized the income trends in his district which, according to the 1881 census, had a population of 5,293 people. Their rents in 1839 had totalled £2,001 but in the following years significant rent arrears had been accumulated until abatements of £5,068 had been made by the estate. The rental of the small tenantry in 1878 was £2,227, a rise of £226 in 39 years. McIver was perfectly straightforward in his description of his efforts to prevent population growth on crofts; this entailed the prevention of young married couples living on already occupied crofts.[39] He acknowledged that his efforts had failed. 'There is nothing more trying than a poor tenantry to a proprietor', he declared.[40]

His proposed solution to the 'Highland Question' was the same in 1883 as it had been in 1845: emigration. His own family had adopted it, including his seven sons: 'They went to India and Australia, the Cape of Good Hope and to England; they went to fight their battle in the world, and I would recommend very strongly to the crofters that their families should go and do the same'.[41] Population control was, he said, 'the most trying subject with the management of this district', and the west Highlands generally.[42] He had been thinking of encouraging 'middle class farms', as exemplars for the crofters, but this would require a significant thinning of the population.[43]

This plan reflected the essential purpose of estate management in McIver's view: the efficient and profitable use of landed resources, which in the decades of McIver's administration meant almost entirely sheep and sport. There were good times from 1832 to 1880, after which sheep and wool prices fell by 50 per cent by 1900; cereal prices also tumbled, all put down to the great imports under free trade, especially trade from the colonies.[44] Rents fell heavily and yet 'the condition of the masses and working class is undoubtedly better', said McIver.[45] The effect on Highland proprietors, however, was devastating and in some parts rents hardly exceeded rates. In these conditions sporting rents were increasingly the salvation of Highland estates. McIver spoke warmly of the sporting tenants for creating employment for many of the crofters. Without them the poor and desolate parts of the Highlands would scarcely be worthy possessing, and the sporting rents allowed proprietors to treat the rest of their tenants more liberally.[46]

When McIver gave evidence ten years later to the Deer Forest Commission, he reiterated these opinions almost unchanged. He again declared that the crofters simply could not occupy the land profitably in small units: 'if you put a large number such as there were before, they would be just as miserable, their possessions would be too small'.[47] Enormous sums had been spent by the estate developing the shootings and their rents were at least double any alternative use. For McIver it was common economic sense to protect commercial shootings from the spread of crofting.[48]

McIver was horrified by the development of the crofter movement in Scourie in the 1880s

[39] Ibid. He said 'We have done all we could – we have resorted to depriving the tenant of his lot for taking in a married couple; but it is almost impossible to check it'.

[40] Tindley, *Sutherland Estate,* pp. 73–4; M. Bangor-Jones, 'The History File', *Am Bratach* 224 (Jun. 2010).

[41] *Napier Commission, Evidence*, p. 1709.

[42] Ibid., p. 1710.

[43] For example, at Clashmore, Assynt: ibid., p. 1706.

[44] Orr, *Deer Forests,* pp. 20–2.

[45] McIver, *Memoirs,* p. 125.

[46] Ibid., p. 131.

[47] *Deer Forest Commission, Evidence,* p. 718.

[48] Ibid.

and 1890s, as his private and public pronouncements made clear. Not even the combined efforts of government commissions, the crofters and cottars and his own superiors and employers would change these views, and this led, inevitably, to conflict. By the time of his public appearances in the 1880s and 1890s, McIver was sounding out-dated and illiberal on the 'Highland Question'; his reputation for dominance ('factorial tyranny') was already well known beyond the borders of Scourie, and this was reflected in some hostile questioning from the Napier commissioners.[49] He was unbending in his views, however, refusing to concede to the more liberal perspectives of the government, the crofters or his own employers.

III

Despite the unremitting pressures associated with his factorship, McIver maintained a position of relative wealth and privilege in his west Highland domain. He was regarded as the sole instrument of frequently unpopular estate policies, exercising arbitrary authority among the local population.[50] He ruled Scourie mostly as he himself determined which made him an isolated figure of authority. In Sutherland, and even beyond, he acquired a negative reputation for his exercise of overbearing and oppressive power, and was widely regarded as a bully and tyrant in the crofting community. On the other side, his relations with his colleagues and superiors were subject to bouts of serious disagreement. He was quick of temper, often emotional, but never sentimental.[51]

The third duke eventually felt impelled to exert his own beliefs in the solutions of 'the Highland Problem' and by the early 1870s was intervening directly in the practical operations on his Highland estates, indeed setting in motion massive development projects in McIver's own territory. The continuing blight of poverty and destitution on the crofting community was reported to the duke with wearying regularity in letters from his managers: as well as the practical burden this represented, the increasing pressure on his reputation as one of Britain's wealthiest men was one he wanted to resolve, permanently if possible. The duke was keen to improve the condition of the crofters by modernizing methods in the most remote corners of his estate. In part such inclinations were actuated by the painful awareness of the unpopularity of Highland lairds in general, and his own immediate predecessors in particular.[52] His sensitivity to political and social opinion in London, not least his awareness of events in Ireland, accentuated his instinct to make better use of his Highland estates.[53]

[49] Highland factors were invested with substantial local and arbitrary authority and McIver was far from alone in his unpopularity. Other Highland factors faced similar levels of hostility, for example Alexander Macdonald of Skye; see *Napier Commission Evidence,* pp. 1703, 1709–10, 1763.

[50] SRO, D593, K/1/3/71, McIver to Kemball, 7 Dec. 1883; see also contemporary views of other Highland factors such as Donald Munro of Lewis, MacLeod, *None dare oppose*, p. 256.

[51] For example, NLS, Sutherland estates papers, Acc. 10225, Factor's Correspondence, 1941, McIver to Janet Mackenzie, 18 Aug. 1870.

[52] Tindley, *Sutherland Estate,* pp. 167–8; K. Marx, 'The Duchess of Sutherland and Slavery', 9 Feb. 1853, pr. in J. Ledbetter (ed.) *Dispatches for the New York Tribune: selected journalism of Karl Marx* (2007), pp. 113–19; H. Beecher Stowe, *Sunny memories of foreign lands* (2 vols, 1854); D. MacLeod, *Gloomy memories in the Highlands of Scotland versus Mrs Harriet Beecher Stowe's sunny memories* (1888); Loch, *Account of the improvements*.

[53] The third Duke was made painfully aware of these wider circumstances when a bomb threat was made

The duke's interventions were much more pronounced in McIver's Scourie management than they were in the Dunrobin and Tongue managements due both to local conditions and McIver's redoubtable personality. McIver was not persuaded of the economic sense in these initiatives, but followed instructions sent from London, after bluntly pointing out their flaws.

The heightened public debate at the time of the Napier Commission in the early 1880s exposed the depth of acrimony in estate relations.[54] McIver's entrenched views of estate management came under fire, not only from his superiors and colleagues, but also from vociferous external critics. These conflicts were based on diametrically opposed views of the nature and exercise of authority, the value of the crofting system, and the fundamental rationale of Highland estates. For McIver, the great estates existed to serve the interests of their owners, to whom McIver was devoted, even if he was occasionally in conflict with what those owners conceived as their best interests. In the eyes of the crofter champions, figures such as McIver gave Highland estate administration a bad name, and more than that, were significant precipitants of the crofter agitation of the 1880s.[55] The extent to which McIver was out of step with moderate opinion even among land managers was highlighted by the increasing coherence of the land management lobby under important figures such as George Malcolm, factor for Ellice of Invergarry.[56] The agitation ran parallel with shifts in the attitudes of the senior management of the Sutherland estates, including the third duke himself. They were tending towards compromising policies regarding the redistribution of grazing lands to crofters, motivated at least in part by fear of Irish violence spreading to Scotland.[57] McIver regarded any concession to the crofters as weakness: such a policy was anathema to the welfare of the estate, its owners and the public interest.

Throughout his career McIver acted as the instrument of unpopular estate policies, including the enforcement of rent collections and the constant, though piecemeal reorganization of lots and townships. In order to do this, McIver, like most factors, kept a social distance between himself and his crofter constituency which McIver felt he had to maintain even though he sometimes felt great sympathy for the sufferings of the people.[58] The sympathetic side of

Note 53 *continued*
against his London house, a note dropped through the door warning that 'the house and property of all evicting landlords is condemned. Three weeks warning is hereby given to all of you to leave this house which is sentenced'; SRO, D593, P/24/1/6, 'Note addressed to the servants', Stafford House, St James, 17 May 1882. The note does not seem to have been regarded in a serious light, but it did clearly link the more violent Irish agitation, particularly, the Phoenix Park murders of May 1882, to that in Sutherland; Newby, *Ireland, radicalism and the Scottish Highlands,* pp. 54, 67.

[54] For instance, Baggott, 'Melness Farm, Sutherland', pp. 5–6.

[55] Ibid., p. 5.

[56] NLS, Ellice of Invergarry papers, Acc. 12560, 2, letters to Edward Ellice, 1883; Acc. 10225, Factor's correspondence, 1497, Box to Wright, 13 May 1893; E. A. Cameron, 'The political influence of Highland landowners: a reassessment', *Northern Scotland* 14 (1994), p. 33.

[57] See Newby, *Ireland, radicalism and the Scottish Highlands,* p. 54; the third Duke was deeply involved in the turmoil facing of Irish landowners at this time, being chair of the Mansion House Committee for the Defence of Property in Ireland; SRO, D593, P/24/7/B, papers of the Mansion House Committee for the defence of property in Ireland.

[58] For example, during the destitution of the 1860s; A. Tindley, '"Actual pinching and suffering": estate responses to poverty in Sutherland, 1845–1886', *Scottish Historical Rev.*, 90 (2011), pp. 236–56.

McIver's actions was rarely on display to the crofting community; outwardly, he enforced his authority, often in an abrasive and overbearing fashion.[59]

McIver came close to being dismissed in 1888 but remained in post until his retirement in 1895. When his end came in 1903, the *Highland News*, a newspaper traditionally hostile to the Sutherland family and estate, announced the 'Death of a Highland factor: one of the Old Type', suggesting that McIver and his style of administration had become a relic of an unlamented past.[60] McIver had always rejected such thoughts: looking back over his career he asserted that for 30 years his management had been benign and settled, the crofters always treated with kindness and benevolence: 'They had confidence in my sense of fairness and justice as their factor; they were easily managed in the Scourie agency'.[61] His surviving correspondence reveals no such tranquillity.

IV

In reality the Scourie agency was a nightmare for much of the second half of McIver's career. He fulminated against the times, and increasingly against his superiors.[62] These managerial tensions derived from a fundamental disagreement about how to cope with the crofters, their poverty, their grievances and their rebellion, which moved like a bushfire through the region, causing McIver great unhappiness.[63] It was the moment when his conception of the 'crofter problem' came into sharpest definition and when he found himself in repeated confrontation with his own superiors in the Sutherland estate management.

McIver lived through disturbing changes in the structure of the management hierarchy of the Sutherland estates, reflecting the changed personalities and polices of his ducal masters. This structure passed though four phases in these years. McIver had begun his services at Scourie in the last days of James Loch (1812–55) and then under his son George Loch (1855–79), who had been a fully co-ordinating Commissioner, a clever, prudent and active man until he died in 1879.[64] His two successors, Sir Arnold Kemball (1879–86) and R. M. Brereton (1886–89), McIver came to regard as entirely unsatisfactory, a situation not improved when the duke became his own Commissioner in 1889.[65] This, together with the endless aggravation over the crofters' revolt, created an uncomfortable context for all the estate administration in the last two decades of the century. McIver, looking back in his *Memoirs*, condemned both managerial incompetence and proprietorial stupidity.[66] It was a story which exposed the radically opposed philosophies the family and their local managers brought to crofter discipline.

Among the crofter population, every attempt to reorganize their lands was immediately

[59] Many factors behaved in this way with impunity until the 1870s and 1880s; see the account of the downfall of Donald Munro of Lewis for example. The case was extensively reported in the local and national press; Shaw Grant, *A shilling for your scowl*, pp. 151–2, 164; E. A. Cameron, 'Journalism in the late Victorian Scottish Highlands: John Murdoch, Duncan Campbell and the *Northern Chronicle*', *Victorian Periodicals Rev.*, 40 (2007), p. 284.

[60] *Highland News*, 17 Jan. 1903; *Northern Times*, 15 Jan. 1903.

[61] McIver, *Memoirs,* p. 78.

[62] Ibid., pp. 279–81.

[63] Richards and Clough, *Cromartie,* p. 330.

[64] McIver, *Memoirs*, p. 120; Richards and Clough, *Cromartie*, pp. 330–4.

[65] SRO, D593, P/24/3/2, Lord Stafford to third Duke, 23 Jun. 1889; NLS, Acc. 10853, 34, Henry Wright to Donald MacLean, 18 Jan. 1890.

[66] McIver, *Memoirs*, p. 281.

denounced as a new clearance and deemed to be opposed to their interests. In March 1880, for instance, McIver attempted to relocate five tenants, none to be evicted, at Ardmore. Their story quickly reached the London newspapers and the duke felt obliged to intervene and countermand the removals.[67] This was one example of a kid-gloved approach to crofter management which, according to McIver, could only hamstring the local factors in their dealings with the crofters and undermine their decision-making authority. By contrast, McIver had always insisted on 'firmness and decisive effort in dealing with this class of tenant'.[68] He noted bitterly that the good years had passed by and the crofters were now, 'bewitched by foolish expectations that could never be realised'.[69] They had been infected by mad ideas: delusions of comfortable homes, large lots, money from the government to stock their farms, fine furniture: 'in short an earthly paradise these poor people will never see'.[70]

McIver believed that the agitation and turbulence of 'the Crofters' War' was exerting a devastating effect not only on relations between landlords and tenants in the Highlands, but also on the position and authority of the factors. He regarded movement towards reform of the land laws, and more especially, the individuals promoting those changes, as dangerous and revolutionary.[71] Even small changes, he argued, would have a long-term negative impact on the ability of the Highland factor to maintain discipline over the crofting and cottar population. He expressed these feelings of unease to his colleague John Crawford, factor in the neighbouring management of Tongue, in the wake of the first rent collection after the visit of the Napier Commission:

> I have only just come back from Assynt where the rents have not been well paid. I found that the Commission has left its mark decidedly on the minds and manners of the people and that they look upon Factors with jaundiced eyes and smirks, it is the teaching the people have received from their masters![72]

McIver necessarily accepted the new context as part of a difficult job, but as further problems erupted he felt he was being isolated and criticized not only by the crofters but by his superiors in the estate management. The crisis in relations was first precipitated by the initiatives taken by the new Commissioner, Sir Arnold Kemball, who by 1884 was attempting to lead the estate towards moderate reform in favour of the crofters.[73] McIver felt that his entire ideology,

[67] SRO, D593, K/1/3/66, McIver to Kemball, 22 Mar. 1880.

[68] SRO, D593, K/1/3/66, Kemball to all factors, 9 Mar. 1881.

[69] McIver, *Memoirs*, p. 280.

[70] Ibid., p. 280, quoting a letter to a friend in Texas whom he advised against returning home to Sutherland; see also Baggott, 'Melness Farm, Sutherland', p. 7.

[71] For example, NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 214, McIver to Kemball, 13 Jun. 1882, 14 Dec. 1882; C. Whatley, 'An Uninflamable people?', in I. Donnachie and C. Whatley (eds), *The manufacture of Scottish history* (1992).

[72] NLS, Acc. 10225, Factor's Correspondence, 1954, McIver to Crawford, 8 Dec. 1883.

[73] Tindley, *Sutherland Estate*, pp. 76–80. The episode demonstrated the changed milieu in which the management had to operate. In 1881, in advance of the Napier Commission, Kemball enunciated a new set of rules of management on the estate, by which the factors were to be bound. Thus, 'No rent is ever raised upon the actual incumbent during his life or during the lifetime of his Widow if she be in a position to succeed to the occupation of the lot'. Any improvements were to be compensated by the estate after being independently arbitrated. In particular, insisted the new regulations, 'evictions are practically never enforced on the Estate, though sometimes, but rarely threatened where warnings should have failed to put an end to quarrels, dissension or disorder'. SRO, D593, K/1/3/66, Kemball to all factors, 7 Mar. 1881.

everything he had worked towards for nearly forty years, was being undermined and his experience disregarded in favour of rash changes. Moreover, he regarded the agitation of crofters and cottars, so prevalent in his management, as simple lawlessness that must be curbed to maintain discipline, rather than rewarded by conciliatory reforms.[74]

The situation was complicated by the fact that the great sheep farms were losing tenants and rent: in direct market terms the rational move was their simple conversion into deer forests, which continued to yield high and reliable income.[75] But the crofters asserted their own claims: thus at Inverkirkaig a party of small tenants made application for more pasture. McIver appeared not unfavourable to the plan but pointed out that it would reduce the value of Glencanisp Forest, impeding crucial deer movements, and his advice was eventually against it.[76] The intermittent conversion of sheep farms into deer forests and the parallel claims of the crofters, especially in the mid-1880s, became a critical dilemma for estate management. He repeatedly asserted that the current tenants and crofters, even if they possessed capital, were simply ill-equipped to operate sheep farms on an economic basis.[77] This was McIver's constant refrain in his adamant opposition to the crofters' demands during these years. He had no other response to the unsatisfactory *status quo*.

The Sutherland estate became increasing liberal in a context of declining sheep farm rents and heightened public debate about landlordism and crofting, associated with illegal land invasions and occupations. McIver was opposed to this view, but had no alternative solution to the problem of land hunger in Scourie.[78] Instead of concessions, McIver had pressed for a return to stringency in the enforcement of rent arrears and the eviction of individual crofters who broke estate rules.[79] He also recommended that the cottar population – the most marginal of the community – should be drawn into the formal administration of the official rental which would render them more easily pursued and managed within the law. He was seriously out of kilter with his betters in the upper management who were much more concerned about the political impact of current events in the Highlands and the operations of the Napier Commission.[80] In 1885 McIver described the times as 'out of joint'. There were bad harvests, low prices and rents went unpaid: 'It is disagreeable work being a factor in these circumstances, and very trying for an old man as I am'.[81]

Throughout the political crisis the Sutherland family and its advisors were increasingly inclined towards concessions, especially Lord Stafford, later the fourth duke.[82] McIver characteristically believed that the duke was being misled and that the crofters were losing all respect

[74] Tindley, *Sutherland Estate,* p. 170.

[75] Orr, *Deer Forests,* pp. 90–4; *Deer Forest Commission Evidence*, pp. 717–18; the changing composition of the Sutherland estate rentals can be tracked through NLS, Acc. 12173, Dunrobin Rental Abstracts, 89 (1862), 94 (1867), 99 (1872); Acc. 10853, Dunrobin Rental Abstracts, 81 (1882), 85 (1886), 92 (1893), 97 (1898), 105 (1906), 113 (1914); Acc. 12173, Tongue Rental Abstracts, 114 (1862), 119 (1867), 124 (1872); Acc. 121273, Scourie Rental Abstracts, 140 (1862), 145 (1867), 150 (1872).

[76] NLS, Acc. 10225, Factor's Correspondence, 1954, McIver to Kemball, 27 Jan. 1882.

[77] SRO, D593, K/1/3/74, McIver to Kemball, 26 Feb. 1886.

[78] McIver claimed it was virtually impossible to prevent subdivision of land by crofters; indeed, he said of his own management record: 'I confess I have failed', *Memoirs*, p. 210.

[79] NLS, Acc. 10225, Factor's Correspondence, 1960, McIver to Gunn, 28 May 1890; 30 May 1890; Cameron, *Land for the people*, p. 50.

[80] NLS, Acc. 10225, Policy Papers, 216, McIver to Brereton, 1 Mar. 1887.

[81] McIver, *Memoirs*, p. 280.

for their betters.[83] Kemball tried to persuade McIver of the need to change, but he resisted with a mixture of truculence and hurt:

> It is very true – too true – that times are changed, for the worse I fear and that we must bend to circumstances … [but there will be] … injury to the authority of the landlord and … the authority of His Grace's agents in the management and being wholly destructive of the rights and dignity of the Estate Proprietors.[84]

This difference of opinion about the maintenance of discipline on the estate inflamed feeling within the estate administration and rumbled on until Kemball's hurried retirement in mid-1886. Kemball had been determined to bring in moderate reform, at the behest of the third duke and Lord Stafford, in the teeth of entrenched resistance from McIver (though not the other factors, who took a more moderate and pragmatic approach). By the mid-1880s McIver was completely isolated from both his superiors and his equals in the management. For McIver, much was at stake: the maintenance of discipline in a remote and poverty-stricken management, as well as his own professional standing and style of administration, as the increasingly personal note of reproach that entered into his correspondence demonstrated:

> I cannot conceal from you that I feel deeply hurt and consider myself unfairly and unkindly spoken of … I have ever considered it a kindness towards the crofter population of the district to treat them with firm decision as well as with justice and even with kindness, but to let them understand that they must submit to rule. They are Celts and by no other system can order be preserved among them.[85]

A long, nervous and heated correspondence was conducted between McIver and Kemball from 1884. This tension came to a head in mid-1884, when Kemball wrote a strongly-worded letter to McIver, condemning his poor attitude and firmly suggesting that he fall into line:

> The negative answer [you have] given to every scheme for the amelioration of the condition of the crofters without alternative proposal to the same end is disappointing the expectations of those who entertain moderate and reasonable views of the situation … Moreover, as I before warned you, the effect of continued inaction on our part must be to bring in outsiders, and deprive the Duke's responsible advisors of the control which is essential to a satisfactory issue.[86]

McIver gradually became aware that his view of the crofting system and its future was opposed to that evolving among the upper management and ducal family.[87] He was becoming an embarrassment in a new era and an obstacle to estate-sponsored reform, pre-empting changes likely to emerge from the Napier Commission, in the form of extensions of land to

[82] Tindley, *Sutherland Estate*, pp. 65–6, 94.

[83] SRO, D593, K/1/3/74, McIver to Kemball, 26 Feb. 1886.

[84] NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 215, McIver to Kemball, 19 May 1884.

[85] NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 215, McIver to Kemball, 22 Jan. 1886.

[86] NLS, Acc. 10225, Crofters ZN/a, Kemball to McIver, 3 Jul. 1884

[87] SRO, D593, K/1/3/70/c, McIver to Kemball, 8 Jul. 1884.

the crofters.[88] Conflict flared up. McIver was used to autonomy in decision-making: now he saw his decisions overturned and his ideology rejected.

Reforms regarded as only moderate in the eyes of Kemball and the ducal family were deemed absurdly radical by McIver.[89] 'Assynt is crushed with rates wholly caused by the number of small tenants and cottars', he wrote in 1886,

> and to begin a new colony [of crofters] would just be adding a still larger burden already groaning under the assessments for poor, education, roads etc … Emigration is the only true remedy for congested townships and nothing should be done to discourage or prevent the people from applying their minds to go the way of our Colonies.[90]

Again and again he wrote to Kemball to stress that the extension of crofters' holdings in the Scourie management was simply a recipe for further poverty, and that emigration was the only real solution. But even McIver knew better than to suggest the estate management be seen to be actively encouraging emigration in such a volatile and hostile political context, adding to his sense of frustration and helplessness.

V

McIver's truculent resistance to the crofters' demands derived from his lifelong scepticism regarding the crofters' capacity to use the resources of the Highlands to any advantage – to themselves or anyone else. This adamantine attitude placed him in a position of severe tension with Kemball and the duke. When Kemball resigned in 1886 he was replaced by R. M. Brereton upon whom McIver poured similar contempt. Brereton, 'a Norfolk gentleman', had been an engineer in India and North America. In Sutherland, 'he became a perfect nuisance, asking for information on all sorts of subjects, many of them trivial and absurd'. According to McIver, Brereton possessed no tact or judgment.[91] McIver's collision with him exceeded all previous tensions between the upper and middle layers of the estate management. In his later *Reminiscences*, Brereton openly condemned the state of thinking in the Sutherland properties. Without naming McIver outright, he denounced the management of the crofter community, describing how

> some of the factors had been holding their local dictatorial authority over the crofters for nearly a life-time, so that the factorial authority was bitterly hated and resisted by the crofters generally at this period. The factors were being consistently abused and insulted; one of them was doused with rotten eggs.[92]

[88] Tindley, *Sutherland Estate*, pp. 76–7.

[89] NLS, Acc. 10225, Crofters ZN/a, Kemball to McIver, 3 Jul. 1884.

[90] NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 216, McIver to Brereton, 8 Sept. 1886.

[91] Tindley, *Sutherland Estate*, pp. 86–8.

[92] Robert M. Brereton, *Reminiscences of an old English civil engineer, 1858–1908* (1908), p. 35. Kemball had received similar denunciations of the Sutherland factors from John Mackay of Hereford, a campaigner for crofter interests. Mackay almost certainly had McIver in mind when he asked rhetorically, 'Why should the factors make themselves so unpopular? Is there any necessity under the sun for it? Have they to do with uncivilised beings who must be repressed with a high hand? What can be the cause of all this friction? Want of tact, want of knowledge of human nature in factors … They sow the wind, they reap the whirlwind!'

Brereton had been appointed to the Scottish estates in May 1886 (on £1,500 per annum) and he immediately devoted himself to 'going about freely and fearlessly among the crofters and face to face to listen to their alleged grievances and wants and assist, so far as my powers and duties to the estate permitted, in the well being of the crofter community. This policy did not please the factors'.[93] But it was popular with the crofters, and all the other tenants. Throughout his term of office, he claimed, he received no disrespect from the crofters and they became quieted in their attitude to the landlord. He had specifically cultivated a less aristocratic tone of administration, and encouraged a more democratic spirit.[94]

Brereton's appointment coincided with the climax of the crofters' agitation, a time when McIver was beside himself with anger, frustration and contempt: 'their minds are diseased', he fumed.[95] In the face of Brereton's liberalizing policy, McIver became exceedingly critical, asserting that the crofters and Brereton himself were entertaining totally absurd and unreasonable ideas which were against the interests of the estate.[96] The disagreement with Brereton became more damaging because Brereton attacked McIver's entire mode of estate management, past and present. In the process his authority and his ability to uphold the remnants of his factorial discipline over a chaotic, congested and radicalized agency were undermined. Their philosophical differences became focussed on the problem of Clashmore, the only place in Sutherland which had seen sustained crofter agitation since 1882 and had therefore attracted Brereton's particular and highly critical scrutiny.[97]

Clashmore was a crofter community on the Stoer Peninsula in Assynt which had been subjected to several partial reorganizations in the mid-century. In the late 1870s the Duke chose Clashmore as one of the sites for an expensive experiment to create new larger farms, partly as an example to the poorer sections of the estate population, partly to stimulate improved methods of production.[98] The plan required the relocation of crofters to new lots in the vicinity. In the outcome there was persistent, co-ordinated, physical resistance accompanied by noisy publicity beyond the estate. This popular resistance came early in the emergence of crofter revolt which spread widely across the Highlands and Islands in the following decade, heralding a serious politicization and radicalization of the crofters at large. Ultimately it sparked governmental intervention in the tenurial relations in the Highlands. Clashmore was a vital moment in the operations of the Sutherland estates and McIver found himself at the centre of the dispute which exacerbated his anger with the crofters and multiplied the problems of control in his own district.

Note 92 *continued*
SRO, D593, K/1/3/70/a, MacKay of Hereford to Kemball, 24 Jun. 1882.

[93] Brereton, *Reminiscences,* p. 24.

[94] For example, NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 198, Brereton to McIver, 26 Feb. 1887; PP, 181, Brereton to John Box, 26 Feb. 1886.

[95] SRO, D593, K/1/3/74, McIver to Kemball, 28 Dec. 1883.

[96] SRO, D593, K/1/3/74, McIver to Kemball, 27 Feb. 1886.

[97] Tindley, *Sutherland Estate,* pp. 101–2.

[98] These changes were associated with controversial land reclamation investments in Kildonan and Shinness which rivalled the investments of the first Duke at the time of the clearances in the early part of the century. In their outcomes these later well-intentioned and widely publicised enterprises turned out to be total disasters in virtually every respect. McIver privately declared that they were foolish extravagances, adding as an aside, 'My advice was thrown away'. A. Tindley, '"The Iron Duke": land reclamation and public relations in Sutherland, 1868–95', *Historical Res.,* 82 (2009), pp. 304–6. McIver, *Memoirs,* p. 119.

From head office in London, Brereton repeatedly demanded from McIver a detailed account of the removals at Clashmore in the early 1870s. When at last he received the original correspondence about the Clashmore scheme, he asked pointedly: 'Why is it that there is more discontent and more bad feelings shown in the Stoer district than in any other portion of the Sutherland Estate? … May it not be fairly traced to the clearances made … in Clashmore and to the fact that the people who were removed had a real grievance'.[99] The two men's ideas about estate management were incompatible. Brereton became increasingly exasperated by McIver's obstinacy and obstruction to all change, but there were also principled differences over the essential purposes of estate management.[100] Brereton lectured McIver:

> It is the duty and business of the Estate Management to try and find out what is the best for the people as well as for His Grace's interests, both present and future. Nothing can be worse for the estate than a chronic feeling of discontent and spirits of mischief … Your gospel appears to be no forgiveness, no enlargement of existing crofts and nothing but the cold steel. This won't do in the present age.[101]

This was heavy criticism not only of McIver's current management, but also of his record over the past forty years, and served as a measure of the complete breakdown of relations between McIver and Brereton.

Brereton made his disapproval of McIver painfully and publicly obvious during his visits to the Scourie district in 1887 and 1888. On these occasions Brereton chose not to inform McIver of his visits, refused to meet him or to stay as his guest. It was a rupture of protocol unprecedented on the Sutherland estate, sending McIver into fury.[102] Until this time the working relationship between McIver (and all the Sutherland factors) and the Commissioners was principally carried on by post, rather than in person. The Commissioner traditionally spent little more than two weeks a year visiting the northern domains of the Sutherland family, making any personal visits very important and rare occasions, especially in the remoter Scourie management. Brereton's three visits in 1887–88, prompted by the turmoil afflicting Assynt, unsettled McIver who was unused to such microscopic attention. More importantly however, by refusing to stay with McIver, Brereton was distancing himself from the old factor and removing any lever of influence McIver might have hoped to hold over him. McIver complained in strong terms: his authority as factor had been snubbed by the Commissioner, but he was equally concerned that the crofters would be emboldened to air their grievances against his entire management:

> I feel hurt that you did not inform me of your intention, as I would have asked to accompany you and hear and see what was said and done … You could not have done anything more calculated to injure my authority and position here – it is sure to be construed as a want of confidence … You will forgive me for addressing thus to you, but this being the first time during the 42 years I have been here that either Landlords or Commissioners came to any

[99] NLS, Acc. 10225, Farms, 25, Brereton to McIver, 11 Feb. 1888.

[100] NLS, Acc. 10225, Farms, 25, Brereton to McIver, 11 Feb. 1888.

[101] NLS, Acc. 10225, Farms, 25, Brereton to McIver, 8 Feb. 1888.

[102] NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 216, McIver to Kemball, 14 Mar. 1887.

> part of the district without informing me of their intention and asking me to visit them you must not be surprised that I felt your doing so as a slight and likely to injure my authority and my usefulness here.[103]

Brereton was evidently freezing him out of the Sutherland management, particularly in the development of policy. It was a clash of authority and personality, but it was also fuelled by McIver's refusal to accept the new political and legislative context of Highland estate management from 1886. Neither Kemball nor Brereton was able to explain, cajole or force McIver to come to terms with the powers of the 1886 Crofters Act and the Crofters Commission it established to fix rents and arrears and grant land extensions.[104]

The Crofters Act marked a discontinuity in the Highlands at large and it divided the men who managed the great estates. McIver maintained his opposition despite the liberal tendencies of his superiors and colleagues. For Brereton and the duke, some degree of active co-operation with the work of the Crofters Commission was in the interests of the estate. As Brereton never ceased to point out to McIver, 'I find you do not clearly follow my view of the action we should follow in these matters. I wish to avoid playing into the hands of the Land League Agitators, and to work as much as we can upon the lines of the Crofters Act of 1886'.[105] McIver held a diametrically opposite view; he felt that every application brought by the Scourie crofters to the Crofters Commission should be contested, in the interests of the estate: 'I think there are many objections to the Duke's appealing to the Commissioners to fix fair rents *for the whole of his crofter holdings*. My opinion is that the Duke desires the pecuniary benefit from the crofters'.[106] Thus opposed in fundamentals, by 1888 the unresolved conflict between McIver and Brereton threatened to paralyse the entire estate administration.

Clashmore remained the point of greatest contention and sensitivity. Brereton continued to probe the past circumstances relating to the original clearances executed in order to reclaim Clashmore farm in the early 1870s, and he was highly critical of them.[107] McIver disagreed but found that Brereton's views were gathering the support of the Duke and Lord Stafford, no doubt affected by the continuing agitation among the crofting and cottar community and their supporters in the press. He wrote to Brereton in surprisingly vulnerable vein in January 1888 during the height of the opposition there, confiding,

> I cannot help feeling very anxious about all matters connected with this farm, considering how much I have been mixed up with it I must be much interested in all that occurs regarding it, and the future action of His Grace's advisors in regard to it.[108]

McIver, most of all, did not want to sacrifice his own reputation on the altar of crofting reform. He reminded Brereton a month later that he had done nothing at Clashmore without

[103] NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 216, McIver to Brereton, 7 May 1887.

[104] That is, McIver remained effectively immovable until the end of his career, and fought intensely against the 'decline and fall' faced by his ducal superiors; McIver, *Memoirs*, p. 82; D. Cannadine, *Decline and fall,* pp. 25–32; Cameron, *Land for the people*, p. 40.

[105] NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 198, Brereton to McIver, 9 Apr. 1887.

[106] NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 216, McIver to Brereton, 1 Mar. 1887 (italic is underlined in the original).

[107] NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 198, Brereton to McIver, 6 May 1887.

[108] NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 216, McIver to Brereton, 23 Jan. 1888.

the approval of the Commissioner, George Loch, and ultimately the Duke: 'There is one thing certain that nothing was done without the knowledge and authority of Mr Loch, who no doubt kept His Grace informed fully, and if there were errors made I cannot be held liable for them – it is easy to find fault now for the past, as it will be for those who come after us to pick holes in what we are doing'.[109] This extraordinary statement was a direct repudiation of the assumed factor's responsibility to absorb all managerial unpopularity. It was a reversal of protocol and a sign of the intensity of the administrative breakdown. Ultimately it was a conflict over the very nature and diagnosis of the 'Highland Problem'. McIver was caught between the upper management and the crofters, and found this an extremely uncomfortable position.[110]

Since the 1840s the political and economic context of land reform in the Highlands had shifted decisively. McIver's views on the crofters and crofting economy remained unmoved, but those of Brereton and the ducal family had shifted towards a more moderate position in favour of reform. It was surprising that, in 1888, the ageing McIver survived (and remained in his post until 1895) and the third duke dismissed Brereton.[111] The duke expressed his regret but couched the decision in terms of Lord Stafford being keen to get into harness. It was an astonishing decision, taken at a time when the government began to intervene decisively in the administration of Highland estates. It may have reflected the duke's appreciation of McIver's long and loyal service but also recognition that the authority of the local estate management had to be upheld.[112] Brereton himself blamed 'the hostile element working against my democratic policy in the management, which had made false statements to Lord and Lady Stafford'.[113]

McIver's unlikely survival paralleled the somewhat unexpected consequences of the changes ushered in by the Crofters Act of 1886. The outcome was substantially less radical and disruptive than many landlords had feared.[114] For himself, McIver had been extremely anxious about the first visitation of the Crofter Commissioners in the wake of the 1886 Act. He described his appearance before them as 'a great responsibility'.[115] Each occasion was an ordeal in which he faced recurring accusations against his management, especially concerning Clashmore farm, which shocked him more than he could express.[116] Even more surprising to McIver was the way in which the Crofters Commission had been ready to make concessions to the crofters, 'against my will and opinion'.[117] Clearly, McIver was unable to accept that his opinions were to be rejected and the demands of the crofting community to be treated with greater credence by the new government agency in the Highlands. This rejection of his personal authority and reputation was more difficult for him to accept than the legislative principles introduced by the Act.

In the upshot, the practical results of government reform after 1886 were relatively minor, as

[109] NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 216, McIver to Brereton, 14 Feb. 1888.

[110] NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 216, McIver to Henry Wright, 17 Jan. 1888.

[111] NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 200, Brereton to McIver, 19 Jun. 1888; PP, 200, Wright to McIver, 6 Jun. 1888.

[112] Tindley, *Sutherland Estate*, p. 89.

[113] One allegation related to a scheme for selling local woollen products at Golspie which slurred Lady Stafford. The accusation was groundless according to Brereton, but he nevertheless left the management: Brereton, *Reminiscences,* pp. 35–8.

[114] Tindley, *Sutherland Estate*, p. 100.

[115] NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 216, McIver to Brereton, 5 Jun. 1888.

[116] NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 216, McIver to MacBrayne (Clashmore's tenant), 7 Dec. 1888.

[117] NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 216, McIver to MacBrayne, 7 Dec. 1888.

had become clear by the early 1890s.[118] The main consequence for the Scourie management was that the Crofters Commission in 1888 determined on enlargements to townships totalling 6,500 acres, but in practice these enlargements were paralysed by the inability of the crofters to fence their new land, and in many cases, pay the higher rents as determined by the Commission.[119] Nevertheless, McIver was still preaching resistance to the crofters into his retirement, remaining the 'King of Scourie' to the end.[120]

VI

Evander McIver died in 1903, aged 92, having outlived most of his contemporaries and all but one of his own children. In his will and testament he left £3,140 9*s*. 3*d*., which suggests that, while far from poor, he had not grown rich in his long career in Scourie.[121] He had spent fifty years wrestling with the essential contradictions built into the Highland economy and estate management from the end of the period of clearances to the dawn of the twentieth century.

Under the early Loch regime the great experiment to revolutionize the Sutherland estate had been implemented, with the creation of massive sheep farms and the parallel development of a diversified coastal economy for the crofters.[122] The intellectual and financial commitment to 'Improvement' had been unrestrained but, ultimately, the results were at best equivocal. Several generations of Sutherland factors and managers had to cope with the problem that remained, namely a crofting system which left most of the population trapped in poverty. Meanwhile the large farms, and later, commercial sport, prospered and kept the finances of the estate afloat.

McIver and his contemporaries therefore inherited a broken-backed system in which they had little faith.[123] He openly condemned the crofting system as a complete failure, entrenching a vulnerable, poverty-stricken, anachronistic, self-perpetuating community, further exacerbated by the uncontrolled proliferation of the cottar population.[124] With little or no capital, and a benevolent landlord who rescued them from the periodic economic crises that descended, they possessed no resources or incentive to better their position and too little enthusiasm for emigration.

[118] Cameron, *Land for the people*, pp. 52, 54–5, 59–61; Tindley, *Sutherland Estate,* p. 100.

[119] BPP, 1890–1, LXIII, *Report of the Crofters Commission*, 31 Dec. 1888–31 Dec. 1889, and BPP, 1896, LXVIII, *Report of the Crofters Commission*, 31 Dec. 1894–31 Dec. 1895. In 1891, the Commission again attempted to resolve the issue, and McIver crowed with pleasure over the outcome: 'No decisions were amended … The Commissioners are very much annoyed and incensed by the conduct of the parties who did not erect the fences as ordered, and they laid down the strongest rules and fixed dates for the completion of these fences intimating that if they did not complete the work on these dates they would reconsider the former assignation of land and deprive them of the land altogether … I think this visit of the Commissioners will do good in Assynt, Sheriff Brand [Chairman of the Crofters Commission] was very decided with the crofters'. NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 217, McIver to Wright, 17 Jul. 1891. McIver interpreted the actions of the Commission as an official re-assertion of traditional 'discipline' over the crofters and, within three years of the Act, it became perfectly clear that the consequences were far less radical than had been anticipated by either side of the campaign.

[120] McIver, *Memoirs*, p. 310.

[121] National Archives of Scotland, SC9/36/10, will and testament of Evander McIver, 30 Mar. 1903.

[122] Tindley, *Sutherland Estate*, p. 167.

[123] Ibid., p. 32.

[124] SRO, D593, K/1/3/70/c, McIver to Kemball, 2 May 1884.

In the bluntest terms, McIver declared repeatedly that the crofter system, which he was required to manage, was rotten to the core. This was the crucial and tragic contrast between McIver and his predecessors; he did not believe in the improvability of the small tenantry, and their best course was to evacuate the region.[125] Consequently, McIver defined his responsibility as being to manage a hopeless and unworkable system. In reality this meant keeping control over its excesses, curbing its losses and limiting the tendency of a poverty-stricken population from increasing. It meant tidying up some of the holdings, of regularizing the squatters, actively discouraging improvident marriages, and bringing the people of Scourie under discipline even if their rents were paltry.

McIver always talked about the extreme difficulty of management in Assynt in particular, 'with its swarm of Crofters and Cotters'.[126] In retrospect it seems unlikely that the interests of the community were best served by a man who had only contempt for the crofting system and for which he accepted no original responsibility. He never believed that crofting was a viable system; instead he was convinced that he was dealing with a moribund institution, an illogical and uneconomic system with no possible future.[127] In November 1885 he asserted that, 'the crofter system is rotten; it is impossible under it for the people ever to be happy or prosperous'.[128]

Throughout his extraordinarily long service to the Sutherland estate McIver sustained this consistent and forthright philosophy on 'the Highland Question'. The drama of the crofters' agitation and the intervention of the Crofters Commission in the 1880s multiplied all of McIver's fears and accentuated his disdain. When the crofting system was protected and later extended in law by the 1886 Crofters Act, he resisted on all possible grounds, and felt events had taken a ruinous turn for the worse for the landed classes and Highland region generally.[129] It seemed to give official sanction to a system in which he had no faith. He faced the turmoil and then the triumph of the crofters. He exhibited all the symptoms of frustration, despair, cynicism and anger. He was in effect now forced into a new role of Highland factor: namely working alongside government agencies in the management of Highland estates, an idea he found abhorrent and which probably contributed to his retirement in 1895.

Indeed, throughout his life McIver sustained a long argument about the past, present and future of the northern Highlands which brought him into conflict not only with the common people of Scourie but with other estate administrators. His own public reputation among the people over whom he reigned had suffered and worsened and he faced undercurrents of opposition from above and below, even to the point of outright hatred. The final ignominy for McIver was the spectacle of the dismemberment of the great Sutherland estate when the fourth duke sold off large swathes of land from the late 1890s. He declared at the end, 'I am vexed and broken in spirit by the sale of so much of this fine estate that I cannot think, speak or write about it with patience'.[130] He perhaps died a sad and disappointed man.[131] He

[125] NLS, Acc. 10225, PP, 217, McIver to Wright, 21 Jun. 1890; *Napier Commission, Evidence*, p. 1707; McIver, *Memoirs*, p. 213.

[126] SRO, D593, K/1/3/71, McIver to Kemball, 2 Sept. 1885.

[127] Others thought the same: see Cameron, 'Poverty, protest and politics', pp. 220–1.

[128] McIver, *Memoirs,* p. 180.

[129] Ibid., p. 280.

[130] Ibid., p. 281; Tindley, *Sutherland Estate,* pp. 171, 91, fn 22.

[131] Tindley, *Sutherland Estate,* p. 171.

was certainly demonized, the very personification of the overbearing Highland factor of the north-west Highlands.[132]

Yet in his last years McIver claimed that the crofters had settled into a more peaceful condition and were contented in their lots. They were in a calmer frame of mind and their living standards, under the continuing paternalism of the aristocratic owners, were somewhat improved. The world had righted itself and somehow proved him correct in his deepest judgements. Certainly the Crofters Commission had not solved the Highland problem.[133] In his *Memoirs* he noted the improvement of living standards, despite everything:

> The population of our parishes was becoming smaller each decade since I came here, by the migration southward of young people and the emigration yearly of a few, and no doubt this tendency to leave home will increase as Education spreads and the ability to talk English increases. This is a healthy result and will I think produce good effects tho' it is a slow process.[134]

This was his solution to the crofting problem and it was only partially achieved in his lifetime. The irony of McIver's defeat in the argument about crofting was the fact that, after the reforms of the Crofter Commission were introduced, in the years 1891 to 1921, the population of Scourie at last began to diminish at an accelerating rate.[135]

Ultimately, despite the *sturm und drang* of the warring times, the core of the 'crofting problem' remained. McIver had conceded that he had not been able to rationalize or reduce the crofting population. In reality the crofters had resisted the changes sought by the estate and the factors; indeed, despite their poverty and isolation, they had persisted into the twentieth century, clinging on against all odds.[136] It was, in some ways a triumph of their spirit or, less progressively, a triumph of inertia.[137] The old equilibrium survived, despite McIver, despite poverty.

[132] See for instance, I. Grimble, *The trial of Patrick Sellar* (Saltire Society, Edinburgh, 1993; first edn, 1962). Grimble characterized McIver as a 'buffoon', a 'lickspittle', and a 'snob;' a man who delighted in, 'fawning on his foreign masters', while he guided them though, 'the romantic splendour of his devastated country', pp. 143, 145, 149–50. Even his most fervent supporter, the Rev. George Henderson, the Established minister of Eddrachillis, testified to McIver's 'hasty temper' and 'love of rule', while explaining that these characteristics were mellowed by his 'inborn sense of the mean between excess and defect'. McIver, *Memoirs*, pp. 329–30.

[133] Cameron, *Land for the people,* pp. 55–7; Hunter, *Crofting community*, pp. 162–4.

[134] NLS, Acc 10225, Factor's Correspondence, 1954, McIver to eighth duke of Argyll, 24 Oct. 1883

[135] Tindley, *Sutherland Estate,* 169; Assynt experienced a 44.2% decrease in population between 1891 and 1911; *Census of Scotland*, *1911* (1912), p. 2233.

[136] Tindley, *Sutherland Estate,* p. 21.

[137] A much later success was registered in the acquisition of the North Lochinver Estate in Assynt by the resident community in 1993: see John MacAskill, *We have won the land* (1999).

Agricultural adjustment on the Berkshire Downs during the recession of 1921–38*

by R. B. Tranter

Abstract

Following a review of the policy and market background facing agriculture in England and Wales during 1921–38, the changes in the make-up of the industry and its financial performance are detailed. Then, the position of farming on the Berkshire Downs is discussed and various case-studies presented to show how farmers adjusted to the agricultural recession. Finally, it is shown that farmers there were much harder hit by the recession than their counterparts across the country because of the thin, poor chalk soils and a lack of moisture and nutrients, despite their strenuous efforts to adjust through changing land uses and diversifying into new enterprises.

Whilst agricultural historians still disagree about the detail of cause and effect, it is undeniable that following the advent of a *laissez-faire* agricultural policy in 1921, British agriculture went into serious recession until 1938. This was despite the re-introduction of guaranteed prices in the early 1930s and the creation of Marketing Boards for a range of farm products which did a little to stem the effects of cheap foreign food and feed imports. Perhaps not surprisingly, historians and agricultural economists disagree about the severity of the recession and whether it provided opportunities for revival for British farmers.[1]

Agricultural economists have devoted considerable effort to analysing how farmers adjust to changing market and policy pressures. For example, Tony Giles, an eminent farm management expert, devised a framework explaining how farmers can seek to maintain or increase profit in

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[1] This summary of the policy and market background is drawn from the treatments provided by: E. F. Nash, 'Changes in external factors affecting British agriculture', in G. McCrone and E. A. Attwood (eds), *Agricultural policy in Britain* (1965), pp. 31–45; A. F. McCalla 'Protectionism in international agricultural trade, 1850–1968', *Agricultural Hist.* 43 (1969), pp. 329–44; E. H. Whetham, *The agrarian history of England and Wales,* VIII*, 1914–1939* (1978); M. Tracy, *Government and agriculture in western Europe, 1880–1988* (1989), pp. 147–62; M. J. Smith, *The politics of agricultural support in Britain* (1990), pp. 57–86; R. Perren, *Agriculture in depression*, *1870–1940* (1995); and P. Brassley, 'British farming between the wars', in P. Brassley, J. Burchardt and L. Thompson (eds), *The English countryside between the wars* (2006), pp. 187–99.

one or more of four ways: first, by increasing gross margins from existing enterprises; second, by reducing fixed costs such as labour or machinery per unit area; third, by modifying systems towards intensifying production; and, fourth, by diversifying into new or off-farm enterprises, or taking up off-farm employment.[2]

John McInerney, a leading agricultural economist, has described agricultural adjustment since the 1970s as 'groping, coping and hoping'. Although that is long after the period examined here, his points are still pertinent. They can be summarized as farmers 'groping' to find the path ahead in an uncertain future, 'coping' by rewarding themselves by taking less wages, making capital resources last longer, reducing regular labour either completely or by cutting their hours, and 'hoping' and machinating through their Members of Parliament and farming unions and other pressure groups for the introduction of more protectionism for agriculture.[3] Such adjustment was typical during 1921–38 as will appear when we discuss changes in agriculture in both England and Wales and in more detail for the Berkshire Downs.

Following a review of inter-war agriculture in the first and second sections, we outline the Berkshire Downs (Section III), compare the land price data for the country as a whole with that for the Berkshire Downs (Section IV) and then, following an outline of farming systems on the Berkshire Downs and changes in cropping and stocking and labour use over the study period, the financial performance of several case-study farms is discussed. Next, in Section VI, conclusions are drawn as to how farming on the Berkshire Downs fared compared with the rest of the country. In the following section (VII), possible evidence of dereliction is also presented. A conclusion follows in Section VIII where an assessment of whether the Berkshire Downs was worse hit by the recession than the country as a whole in terms of financial performance is made.

Before proceeding with the main thrust of the paper, it is necessary to ask why studying agricultural adjustment on the Berkshire Downs over the period is worthwhile. It can be argued that the case is clear for the accepted view is that two types of farming were especially hard hit: arable farming on heavy and difficult to work clay soils (such as Essex and Huntingdon) and hill farming (in upland Britain) where output was limited by climate, altitude and poor soil as well as lessening demand for wether mutton and beef from older cattle.[4]

Farming on the Berkshire Downs was hit at the same time in both the ways that these areas were – falling arable product prices and falling demand for their specific livestock products. In addition, on the downs, lack of soil moisture was always a limiting factor for both arable and livestock farming. As such this might go against the conventional wisdom that regards the downlands of southern England as a relatively prosperous farming region at that time. It should also be mentioned that the agricultural recession of the 1870s has been much more widely studied than that of the 1920s and 1930s and, for the latter period, few regional studies such as that presented here have been carried out.

[2] A. K. Giles, 'No fixed address – Presidential address', *J. Agricultural Economics* 38 (1987), pp. 383 and 390.

[3] J. P. McInerney, *Economic adjustment in agriculture: groping, coping and hoping* (2005), pp. 3, 11 and 15.

[4] E. H. Whetham, *British Farming, 1939–49* (1952), pp. 7–8.

I

The trigger which brought about prolonged recession was the sudden repeal of the Agriculture Act, 1920 (the so-called 'Great Betrayal'). The act had promised four years of guaranteed prices for wheat and oats. On the basis of this perceived security, many tenants bought their farms from their landlords. The government felt forced to repeal the act as world prices fell dramatically after the War, leading to a growing deficiency payments bill for the Treasury. As farmers faced the fall in prices for their products, Britain became a dumping ground for food. By 1925, 27 per cent of world wheat exports were imported into Britain and 20 per cent of the feed grains; in 1913 the equivalent figures were 20 per cent and 16 per cent respectively.[5] Imports of meat, butter and cheese also rose substantially. Despite farmers' clamour for assistance, successive governments stood fast with their *laissez-faire* policies.

Following the 'Great Crash' of 1929, agriculture was not the only industry in depression. However, it was further affected by the fall in demand for agricultural products: between 1929 and 1931, agricultural prices in the UK fell by 20 per cent. This time, in contrast to what happened in 1921, livestock farmers were also badly affected and not just cereal growers. Despite this, the Labour Government of 1929–31 refused to help farming as they were somewhat influenced by doctrinal beliefs against landowning.[6]

A National Government was formed in 1931 which included a significant number of Tories. They introduced, probably unwillingly, and fairly slowly, a policy of protection and subsidised support. Tariffs and quotas were imposed on imported foods although the so-called Ottawa agreements of 1932 gave preference to specified quantities of some food imports from the British Empire. So, whilst this spared the British producer from the full effects of world competition, he still had to operate under unfavourable conditions. The Agricultural Marketing Acts of 1931 and 1933 enabled the setting up of producer-controlled cartels. Marketing Boards were formed for hops (1932), milk (1933), pigs (1933), bacon (1933) and potatoes (1934). Finally, guaranteed prices were introduced for cattle in 1934, for wheat in 1932 and for oats and barley in 1937.

Figure 1 shows the overall agricultural land use change between 1921 and 1938, for England and Wales. These can be summarised as: first, the total agricultural area declined slightly due to urbanisation and forest planting; second, the area of arable crops, fallow and short-term grasses declined by over 2 million acres as cereal prices fell; third, the area of permanent grass rose by some 1.3 million acres; and, fourth, the area of rough grazing rose by about 880,000 acres. The rise in less intensive grassland and rough grazing land was because livestock prices held up better than those of crops and cereals. Furthermore, not only did the area of rough grazing land increase, but the state of farms and their buildings and field boundaries became poor. Indeed, maintenance hardly happened and scrub moved in according to some who were around at the time.[7]

[5] Viscount Astor and B. S. Rowntree, *British agriculture: the principles of future policy* (1938), p. 113; M. J. Smith, 'Changing agendas and policy communities: agricultural issues in the 1930s and the 1980s', *Public Administration* 67 (1989), p. 156; Perren, *Agriculture in depression*, p. 42.

[6] Smith, *Politics of agricultural support*, p. 59.

[7] J. Cherrington, 'Introduction', in A. G. Street, *Country calendar* (1986 edn), p. xi.

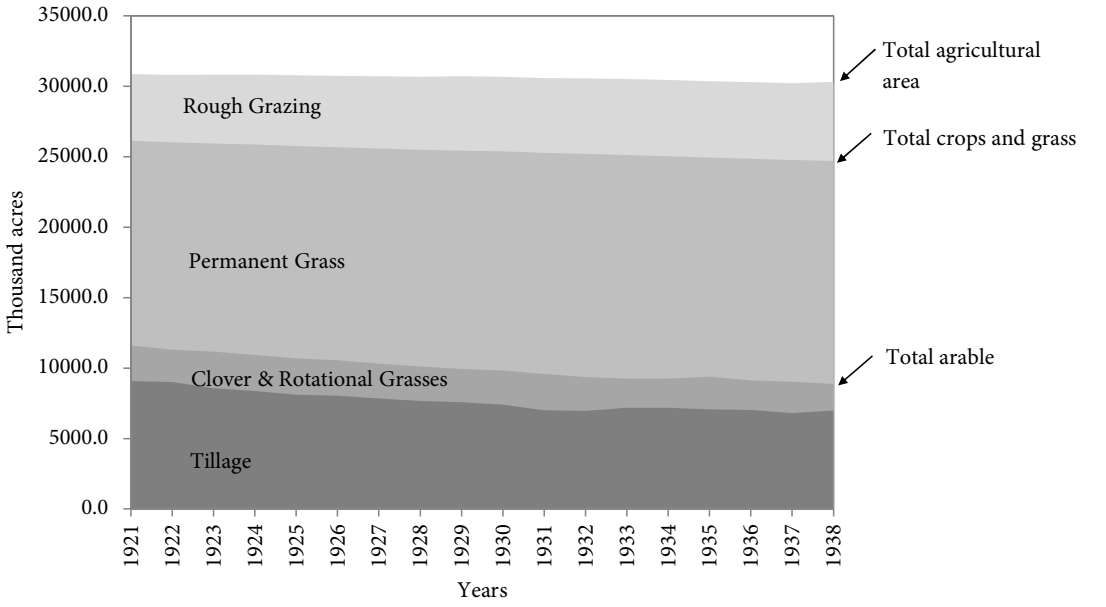


FIGURE 1. Agricultural land use, England and Wales, 1921–38.

Sources: Derived from Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, *Agricultural Statistics, 1921–38* (1922–39).

II

Following the above summary of changes in the background affecting British agriculture for 1921–38, two economic indicators that illustrate how serious the agricultural recession was at the national level became will be discussed. First, how the value of agricultural output and farming income changed and, second, how farmers' 'terms of trade' worsened over most of the period.

Taking Net Farm Income (NFI) first, Table 1 shows how NFI for the UK fell between 1920 and 1934 in real terms to around a third of the original level. When the column detailing agricultural output is examined, it will be seen that it was the large fall in output that was responsible. In the five years after this, things improved somewhat so that the real NFI became some 60 per cent of that in 1920–23 in 1935–39. This was as a result of the various support measures government took, causing both the volume and value of output to rise.

Now, let us turn to an examination of the terms of trade for farmers over the period shown in Table 2, which is for England and Wales, whereas Table 1 for output, costs and income was for the UK. Terms of trade is a ratio that economists calculate to examine the ratio between product prices received and prices of inputs used in producing the product. It can be seen how the prices farmers received for their products fell at a sharper rate than the prices they had to pay for the inputs they used to produce the various products – a 13 per cent fall, in fact, over the period 1921–38. In other words, they were having to produce more and more just to maintain their incomes. Again, as with output, costs and income, the recovery in terms of trade started to improve around 1934.

TABLE 1. Agricultural output, costs and Net Farm Income (NFI), UK, 1920–39

Years	*Output (£M)*	*Costs (£M)*	*NFI[a] (£M)*	*NFI (£M in real 1986 terms)*
1920–23	409	275	134	2,151
1924–29	284	247	37	727
1930–34	245	212	33	747
1935–39	293	233	60	1,313

Note:
[a] Net Farm Income results from the subtraction of total farming costs from farming output; in essence, it is a measure of 'profit'.
Source: Derived from P. Brassley, 'British farming between the wars', in P. Brassley, J. Burchardt and L. Thompson (eds), *The English countryside between the wars* (2006), p. 198.

TABLE 2. The terms of trade for farmers, England and Wales, 1921–38 (1911–13=100)

Years	*Product prices*	*Input[a] prices*	*Ratio of product to input price[b]*
1921–23	182	180	102
1924–26	157	158	99
1927–29	145	154	94
1930–32	124	144	86
1933–35	115	135	85
1936–38	128	144	89

Notes:
[a] This index is weighted according to farmers' estimated annual purchases of seven categories of input: feed, fertilisers, store cattle, seeds, machinery, rent and labour.
[b] The ratio of product price to input price is over 100 when product prices are high relative to input prices and less than 100 when product prices are relatively low compared to input prices.
Source: Adapted from C. J. Holmes, 'Science and the farmer: the development of the agricultural advisory service in England and Wales, 1900–39', *AgHR* 36 (1988), p. 84.

This deterioration in farmers' terms of trade is probably the main reason why there was a steady rise from 1921–33 in the numbers of farmers going bankrupt (Table 3). However, after 1933 the numbers of insolvent farmers each year fell back down almost to the level experienced at the start of our study period. Average liability also fell. Nevertheless, to put this into perspective, at no time between 1921–38 were more than one in 500 farmers going bankrupt each year.[8] In other words, the vast majority were 'coping' with the situation. Furthermore, this rate is much lower than that found during the recession in farming in the 1980s.[9]

[8] R. S. G. Rutherford, 'Bankrupt farmers between the wars', *The Farm Economist* 4 (1943), pp. 95–6.

[9] A. Harrison and R. B. Tranter, *The recession and farming: crisis or readjustment?* (1994), p. 38.

TABLE 3. Farming bankruptcies, England and Wales, 1921–38

Year	*Numbers*[a]	*Average Liability (£)*	*Year*	*Numbers*[a]	*Average Liability (£)*
1921	328	2,605	1930	419	2,240
1922	461	1,775	1931	588	2,050
1923	533	1,955	1932	687	2,005
1924	418	1,717	1933	532	1,700
1925	454	1,672	1934	366	1,475
1926	414	1,795	1935	367	1,202
1927	552	2,250	1936	336	1,195
1928	554	1,780	1937	392	1,440
1929	419	1,805	1938	355	1,435

Note:
[a] Defined as 'Farmers, Gardeners and Dairymen, excluding Small Holders, Poultry Keepers and Market Gardeners'.
Source: Adapted from R. S. G. Rutherford, 'Bankrupt farmers between the wars', *The Farm Economist* 4 (1943), pp. 95–6.

Not surprisingly, considering the financial pressure detailed above, both rents and farm land prices fell during the study period. For rents, there was little movement until 1925 when they were around £1.26 per acre. By 1931, they fell by some 16 per cent to £1.06 per acre and, by 1938, by around 10 per cent to £0.95 per acre.[10] However, these broad trends, derived from non-governmental sources and based on a small sample, hide a large range in rent levels from those relatively high ones for rich vegetable growing land in East Anglia to those for hill land and very heavy or light soils in lowland England.[11]

The changes in farmland prices for England and Wales were not as clear cut as for those of rents. What figures that are available for 1921–38 are taken from auction results, so care needs to be taken in interpreting them. No private treaty sale prices are available nor is the area sold by either method and land quality, or collated location information, is also not available. In addition, these auction results do not distinguish between land sold with, or without, buildings and with, or without, vacant possession.[12] Table 4 below shows details for the period. However, it can be summarised that land prices fell between 1921 and 1931 from £28 per acre by about 18 per cent, and then a period of gradual recovery followed to 1938 where prices reached £25 per acre.[13]

There is some evidence that, after the First World War until about 1928, many farm sales, perhaps up to 25 per cent, were to existing tenants as landowners grew tired of the low rents

[10] H. T. Williams (ed.), *Principles for British agricultural policy* (1960), pp. 75–6.

[11] Perren, *Agriculture in depression*, p. 45.

[12] D. K. Britton, 'The sale value of farm land between the wars', *The Farm Economist* 6 (1949), pp. 126–7; J. T. Ward, 'Farm sales prices over a hundred years', *Estates Gazette,* 3 May 1958, p. 47.

[13] S. G. Sturmey, 'The sale value of farm land and the long-term rate of interest, England and Wales, 1918 to 1950', *The Farm Economist* 8 (1955), pp. 22–3; Ward, 'Farm sale prices', p. 48.

TABLE 4. Farm sale prices[a] on the Berkshire Downs[b] compared with England and Wales[c], 1921–38 (£/acre)

Period	*Berkshire Downs*	*England and Wales*	*Period*	*Berkshire Downs*	*England and Wales*
1921–25	15	28	1928–32	21	21
1922–26	12	28	1929–33	23	20
1923–27	11	28	1930–34	16	22
1924–28	10	27	1931–35	16	22
1925–29	18	25	1932–36	16	23
1926–30	19	24	1933–37	No sales	24
1927–31	21	23	1934–38	9	25

Notes:
[a] Five year moving averages.
[b] Berkshire Downs prices relate to 45 sales of 11,296 acres in total.
[c] England and Wales prices are for 5,202 sales totalling 650,250 acres.
Sources: Berkshire Downs prices were extracted from: The Estates Gazette, *The land and house property year book for 1921 and 1922* (1922 and 1923) and The London Auction Mart, *The Estate Exchange year book for 1923–1938* (1924–1939). England and Wales prices are derived from: D. K. Britton, 'The sale value of farm land between the wars', *The Farm Economist* 6 (1949), pp. 125–33; and J. T. Ward, 'Farm sale prices over a hundred years', *Estates Gazette*, 3 May 1958, pp. 47–9.

they were receiving and sought better yielding investments. Some also faced death duties and had lost sons and heirs who in happier circumstances would have taken over the management of the family estates.[14] Their tenants had a very good reason to buy as, despite the recession, they were worried that owners might put the farm up for sale on the open market.[15] Furthermore, in those days, they only had one year's security of possession.[16]

Table 5 presents the main official metrics for agriculture in England and Wales for 1921, 1930 and 1938 for agricultural land use; livestock; agricultural workers; and agricultural holdings. Taking land use first, it can be seen that, as shown in Figure 1, the area of all arable land fell by 2.7 million acres (–23.6 per cent) over the period. However, the pace of change for the two components of the total arable area were very different for, whilst tillage fell relatively more between 1921–30 than for 1930–38, the area of clover and rotational grasses fell relatively more for the second part of the period when compared with the first. The reason for this disproportionate fall was the large drop in cereal prices during 1921–30 whilst the fall in livestock product prices was not as pronounced.[17] To some extent the fall in arable area was offset by the

[14] The Estates Gazette, *The land and house property year book for 1921* (1922), Introduction; Whetham, *Agrarian Hist.*, VIII, p. 122; D. Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy* (1989); Perren, *Agriculture in depression*, p. 41; J. Beckett and M. Turner, 'End of the Old Order? F. M. L. Thompson, The land question and the burden of ownership in England, *c.*1880–*c.*1925', *AgHR* 55 (2007), pp. 269–70; F. M. L. Thompson, 'The land market, 1880–1925: A reappraisal reappraised', ibid., pp. 289–90.

[15] Perren, *Agriculture in depression*, p. 45.

[16] K. Cowling, D. Metcalf and A. J. Rayner, *The resource structure of agriculture: an economic analysis* (1970), p. 168.

[17] See, for example, Perren, *Agriculture in depression*, p. 43.

TABLE 5. Agricultural land use, farm livestock, agricultural workers and agricultural holdings in England and Wales, 1921, 1930 and 1938

	Years			*Change 1921–38 (%)*
	1921	*1930*	*1938*	
Agricultural land use ('000 acres)				
Tillage	9,069	7,409	6,976	–23.1
Clover and rotational grasses	2,549	2,424	1,901	–25.4
Total arable	11,618	9,833	8,877	–23.6
Permanent grass	14,526	15,548	15,833	9.0
Total crops and grass	26,144	25,380	24,710	–5.5
Rough grazing	4,732	5,294	5,615	18.7
Total agricultural area	30,876	30,674	30,325	–1.8
Livestock numbers ('000 head)				
Total cattle	5,517	5,850	6,714	21.7
Total sheep	13,832	16,316	17,913	29.5
Total pigs	2,505	2,310	3,564	42.3
Total fowl	24,816	47,901	52,539	111.7
Agricultural workers[a] ('000 head)				
Regular whole-time	685	630	513	–25.1
Casual[b]	184	112	80	–56.5
Total workers	869	742	593	–31.8
Agricultural holdings ('000 holdings)				
Between 1 and 50 acres	278	255	226	–18.7
Over 300 acres	13	12	12	–7.7
Total holdings	420	396	366	–12.9

Notes:
[a] Excluding the occupier or principal partner and his wife, groundsmen and gardeners.
[b] Including regular part-time workers.
Sources: Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, *Agricultural Statistics, 1921, 1930 and 1938* (1922, 1931 and 1939).

gradual increase in cereal yields that occurred over the period.[18] The decline in the arable area was largely taken up by an increase over the period of 9 per cent in permanent grass, especially during 1921–30 and a rise in rough grazing land of around 19 per cent; the rise in these two categories of less intensive grassland was concentrated in the period 1921–30.

Turning now to movements in livestock numbers shown in Table 5 it is not surprising that

[18] P. Brassley, 'Output and technical change in twentieth-century British agriculture', *AgHR* 48 (2000), pp. 66–72.

with the rise in less intensive grassland, numbers of cattle and sheep rose over the period by some 22 and 30 per cent respectively. Interestingly, the main rise in cattle numbers was in 1930–38 after the imposition of tariffs and the introduction of the Milk Marketing Board in the early 1930s.[19] For 1921–30, although cattle numbers rose, they were held back by the level of beef and dairy produce imports in that period. Sheep numbers rose to take advantage of the increase in permanent grassland and rough grazing and, later in the period, sheep producers received some protection from the re-introduction of tariffs. Whilst pig numbers rose by 42 per cent over the study period, in 1921–30 their numbers actually fell; the substantial rise in their numbers after 1930 must only be due to the introduction of tariffs affecting imports from, especially, Denmark. Some of this 'new' production was outdoors on the increased areas of permanent grassland.

The livestock that showed the largest rise during the study period was fowl, whose numbers rose by 112 per cent. Much of this was made up by free range flocks for both meat and eggs, because of their increasing role in substituting for beef in the public's diet. Poultry production also provided ideal low capital-intensive diversified enterprises for farm family members to take up, often starting in a small way.[20]

Movements in agricultural workers over the period were also substantial. The number of regular whole-time workers fell, and it should be appreciated as footnotes of Table 5 clarify, that these figures do not include the 'occupier or principal partner and his wife', i.e. the main decision-maker and his/her partner/wife. Bearing in mind this proviso, numbers of regular whole-time workers fell by 25 per cent over the period, with the most pronounced fall of such labour being in 1930–38; it should also be remembered that this category included all the other family workers other than the 'principal partner and his wife' and so it is not surprising that the falling trend was less than that overall (at some 32 per cent), probably because it was easier to 'let go' non-family members than family members such as sons and daughters. Thus, Table 5 shows that the fall in 'casual' workers, which included regular part-time workers, was 57 per cent over the period, with most of these losses being in the first part of the study period. Interestingly, this was the opposite position for that of regular full-time workers whose main fall was in the second part of the study period. This can be explained by it being easier to save such a fixed cost by reducing regular part-time workers first, before dispensing of full-time employees which would mean family workers.

Finally, in this 'snapshot' of the main descriptive metrics of British agriculture over the period, we turn to changes in the number of agricultural holdings shown in Table 5. Over the period, the number of holdings, which are a proxy for 'farms' or 'farm businesses', fell by around 13 per cent, or 54,000 holdings.[21] Some of this will have been caused by bankruptcies, but most will have been retirements, particularly where no heir was available to take over.

[19] See, for example, Williams, *Principles*, pp. 14–15; Nash, 'Changes in external factors', p. 38; and R. J. Moore-Colyer, 'Farming in depression: Wales between the Wars, 1919–1939', *AgHR* 46 (1998), p. 179.

[20] W. M. Elkington, 'Poultry in agriculture', *JRASE* 90 (1929), pp. 141–62.

[21] In A. Harrison, 'Some features of farm business structures', *J. Agricultural Economics* 16 (1965), p. 330, a farm is defined 'so as to embrace such farming activities as fall within the compass of a given fund of capital'. He also found that farms amounted to only 85% of the number of holdings as some larger farm businesses consisted of more than one holding.

When the size of holdings is scrutinised, it can be seen that there was a fall of more than twice as many 'small' holdings than 'large' ones, with the former being delineated as being between one and 50 acres and the latter being 300 acres and over. This suggests that, with the low land prices discussed above, and detailed in Table 4, existing owner-occupiers were buying up smaller holdings, especially those in financial trouble. There will also have been some tenants who took advantage of buying any small pieces of land whether they came on the open market or not, including some of these 'small' holdings.

So, as a reaction to financial pressure, we have seen that farmers cut their fixed costs, especially labour, and changed their farming systems and land use where they could to minimise the financial impact of the recession. Or, in John McInerney's words, they were adjusting by 'groping, coping and hoping'![22]

III

Little has been written about the Berkshire Downs or, indeed, is known about them. For example, Massingham wrote regarding the area: 'When a given county is fairly familiar to most people who take an intelligent interest in the English countryside, it is sure to have a book written about it, called "Unknown Blankshire", simply because they are genuinely unknown … This is the more singular in view of the fact that they stand accessible between the Midlands and the South and, as landscape, are highly individual'.[23]

What we shall loosely call the Berkshire Downs, the area of examination here, is in general terms, a rectangle of up to 120,000 acres bounded by the market towns of Wantage in the north and Newbury to the south (see Figure 2). At the western extreme are the villages of Ashbury and East Garston and, in the east, those of Aldworth and Ashampstead. Most of the land lies at between 400–500 feet in a series of undulating rounded hills or 'downs' as they are commonly called.

The Countryside Commission and English Nature published the results of their Landscape Character Assessment of England in 1996 which divided the country into a series of Landscape Character Areas.[24] This work was continued by the Countryside Agency and, even though it was written around 80 years after the period we are now examining, it is useful for setting the study area in context.[25] To paraphrase from the assessment, the Berkshire Downs can be seen as a distinctive area encompassing broad expanses of open downland dissected by numerous dry valleys, richly-farmed vale landscapes with areas of extensive woodland. There is a dramatic scarp (of about 600 feet high) at the northern edge with much of the original chalk downland being replaced by very large arable fields. The clumps and belts of trees were planted in an attempt to provide shelter for crops. Horse training gallops are a common feature linked to the numerous racing stables.[26]

[22] McInerney, *Economic adjustment*, pp. 3, 9 and 15.

[23] H. J. Massingham, *English Downland* (1936), p. 90.

[24] Countryside Commission and English Nature, *The character of England: landscape, wildlife and natural features* (1996), p. 116.

[25] The Countryside Agency, 'Berkshire and Marlborough Downs', in *Countryside character,* VII, *South East and London* (1999), pp. 89–93.

[26] D. Boyd, *The running horses. A brief history of racing in Berkshire from 1740* (1978), p. 26, shows nine concentrations of trainers on the Berkshire Downs in the first part of the twentieth century.

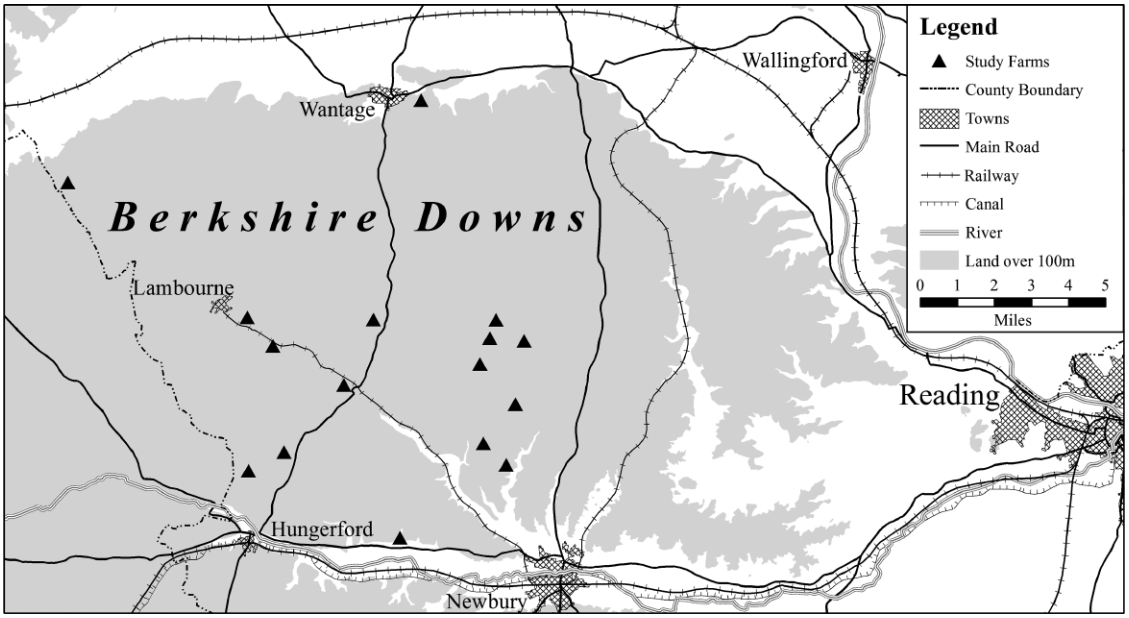


FIGURE 2. The study area in the 1930s

The few who have written about the Berkshire Downs regarded them as a special place: 'The chalk of Berkshire is less than half the county. But it has enough beauty to fill a continent'[27] and

> There is no time of year, and there are probably few days, when this piece of country and its cultivation do not show some aspect which attracts. There is something in the open spacious country broken by its rise and fall and in the aspect of the good, active farming that prevails, which compels interest and admiration.[28]

In very simplified terms, at the beginning of the study period, much of the Berkshire Downs was under mixed 'corn and sheep' farming, with the corn (cereal) crop, usually barley, being preceded by roots and followed by leys of grass and clover mixtures folded off to sheep of the traditional heavy Down breeds. These sheep, whose dunging and treading was regarded as essential for fertility management, also used the widespread rough grazing areas on the Downs. There were few hedges or fences and most farms were large even by modern standards. Rectangular shaped farms were common with the farmhouse and associated buildings being in the valley bottom with the rest of the farm running up to grazing land on the down.[29]

Generally, the type of farm varied as one traversed from north to south across the study area and can be classified into four general groups.[30] First, the north-west Berkshire Downs.

[27] Massingham, *English Downland*, p. 102.

[28] C. J. Boyd-Orr, *Agriculture in Berkshire: a survey made on behalf of the Institute for Research in Agricultural Economics, University of Oxford* (1918), pp. 24–5.

[29] E. Thomas, 'Agriculture in the south and south Midland counties', in J. P. Maxton (ed.), *Regional types of British Agriculture* (1936), p. 10; Boyd-Orr, *Agriculture in Berkshire,* pp. 24–6; Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, *Markets and fairs in England and Wales,* IV, *eastern and southern markets* (1929), p. 28; and C. J. Smith, *Ecology of the English chalk* (1980), p. 406.

[30] Boyd-Orr, *Agriculture in Berkshire*, pp. 24–39; S. L. Huthnance, 'Farming in Berkshire and Oxfordshire', *JRASE* 110 (1949), pp. 10–12.

Many farms here were up to 1,000 acres in long narrow strips running from the clay in the north up onto the Downs. Dairy herds were down on the clay and the downlands had barley. Second, the chalk proper where again 1,000-acre farms were common, but geared up to grain production. Very large fields prevailed with almost no hedges but some bushes. Later on in the study period, some outdoor milking bails came to be used on these farms. Rotations were commonly: wheat or barley, barley, clover ley, wheat or barley, barley and then fallow. Third, the next group of farms going south were on red loam containing many flints overlaying the actual chalk. These farms were smaller than the previous group, being some 300–500 acres in size. As it was easier on these loam soils to establish leys, more dairy cows were found than in the two more northerly groups. Fourth, the final group of farms were on the chalk slope sloping down the southern face of the ridge, going down to the Kennet Valley between Hungerford and Reading. This was fairly heavily wooded with a wide mix of soils. Farms were medium to small in size with much milk production, particularly from pedigree herds.

A further impression of the size of the farms on the Berkshire Downs at that time can be derived from Boyd-Orr's *Agriculture in Berkshire*, in which he discusses 17 specific downland farms whose average size in 1918 this author calculated as 1,685 acres.[31]

IV

In Table 4 data on farm land prices for the Berkshire Downs are presented. They are drawn from the same source as the prices for England and Wales discussed in Section II above, and the same provisos apply.[32] Because of the relatively few (45) sales for the Berkshire Downs listed for the study period, prices are presented in a series of five-year moving averages in order to try to make it easier to detect a trend. It can be seen that for no five-year period was the average price over £23 per acre; from 1921 to 1926 prices fell by some 30 per cent; from 1926 to 1931 they rose again to £23 per acre; and from 1931 to 1938 they fell again. Three further observations should also be made about these figures for farm sale prices on the Berkshire Downs. First, whilst it is clear that they are low when compared with those for England and Wales as a whole, because they are the result of open auctions, they almost certainly are much higher than private treaty sales and those between landlords and their former tenants – the so-called 'arms lengths' sales. Second, at some 250 acres on average, the farms sold on the Berkshire Downs listed in Table 4 were twice the size of those sold by auction for England and Wales as a whole. Third, only three of the 45 sales were labelled as from an estate, the rest appearing to be individual owner-occupied farms. However, there may have been farms put up for sale by estates that did not sell or were 'bought-in', having not reached a satisfactory selling price.

V

In Table 6, cropping and stocking levels, as well as the numbers of agricultural workers and holdings, are detailed for 1921, 1930 and 1938 for 27 key parishes on what can be described as the Berkshire Downs 'proper', i.e. parishes no part of which was in the lower-lying Vale of the

[31] Boyd-Orr, *Agriculture in Berkshire*, pp. 24–39.

[32] See n. 12 above for sources.

White Horse in the area north of the Berkshire Downs or to the south in the Kennet Valley. This parish level data is taken from the parish summaries of the compulsory annual June census returns which all occupiers of farm land had to complete. (To preserve confidentiality about individual holdings, only summaries at the parish level have been retained.) When using this source, great care needs to be taken to allow for changes in thresholds of inclusion over time (such as in minimum size of holding) as well as in definitions, for example, of rough grazing land. The proportionate change over the study period is shown in the right-hand column. The total area in agricultural use in these key parishes was just over 70,000 acres and, in the first year of comparison (1921), it included 441 agricultural holdings.

Over the study period, the number of all holdings on the Berkshire Downs fell by almost 20 per cent. However, whilst smaller holdings (those between 1 and 50 acres) fell by some 34 per cent, large holdings (over 300 acres) only fell by seven in number (8.9 per cent) presumably as some of the smaller holdings were incorporated into them. It should be remembered though, as pointed out above, that holdings do not equate with 'farm businesses' or 'farms', so these figures should be treated with a degree of caution. Despite this proviso, in 1921 the average area of a holding was 160 acres, in 1930 182 acres and, in 1938, 199 acres, a rise over the period of 24 per cent.

Looking at agricultural land use first, it can be seen that the total arable area fell by some 15,000 acres (–30.4 per cent) over the period; the proportionate fall in the two components that made up this was higher for clover and rotational grasses than for tillage. The area of permanent grass more than doubled over the period and the area of rough grazing went up by 40 per cent as farmers gave up arable farming as cereal prices were so poor, went into milk production and, also, to a certain extent, virtually 'hibernated' some of their land whilst the recession was on.

Over the period, total cattle numbers rose by almost 5,000 (120 per cent) with most of this rise being between 1930 and 1938, probably as cattle feed was by then relatively cheap, tariffs against imports having been re-introduced and the Milk Marketing Board set up.[33] Sheep numbers on the Berkshire Downs hardly changed over the period but both pigs and poultry rose in number by over 100 per cent. However, this overall movement hides some important changes over the period. For example, pig numbers fell between 1921 and 1930 but then more than doubled between 1930 and 1938 as the newly introduced tariffs helped protect against pig meat imports from Denmark. Much of this increase in pig numbers was probably outdoors on the Downs. Pig production benefitted from the fall in the price of feed as cereal prices fell overall. For fowl, the main rise in numbers occurred between 1921 and 1930 when numbers increased by some 35,000, whereas after this the rise was only some 11,000 head. Most of this increase in the numbers of fowl was outdoor production on the increasing area of permanent grassland highlighted above.[34] Proximity to London helped this good example of diversification and some markets in Berkshire flourished from this increase in the production of eggs and poultry meat.[35]

The number of agricultural workers on the Berkshire Downs fell by nearly 700 (–37.6 per cent) over the study period, although this overall figure masks some interesting changes in

[33] See n. 19 above for sources.

[34] Thomas, 'Agriculture in the south', pp. 11–12.

[35] Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, *Markets and fairs*, IV, p. 29.

TABLE 6. Agricultural land use, farm livestock, agricultural workers and agricultural holdings on the Berkshire Downs[a], 1921, 1930 and 1938

	Years			*Change 1921–38 (%)*
	1921	*1930*	*1938*	
Agricultural land use (acres)				
Tillage	40,445	32,004	29,348	–27.4
Clover and rotational grasses	10,924	8,260	6,426	–41.2
Total arable	51,369	40,264	35,774	–30.4
Permanent grass	13,072	22,559	26,569	103.3
Total crops and grass	64,441	62,823	62,343	3.3
Rough grazing	6,146	8,218	8,602	40.0
Total agricultural area	70,587	71,041	70,945	0.5
Livestock numbers (head)				
Total cattle	4,165	5,722	9,157	119.9
Total sheep	20,155	23,193	22,388	11.1
Total pigs	2,720	2,376	5,752	111.5
Total fowl	43,361	78,328	89,054	105.4
Agricultural workers[b] (head)				
Regular whole-time	1,477	1,281	1,040	–29.6
Casual[c]	280	98	56	–80.0
Total workers	1,757	1,379	1,096	–37.6
Agricultural holdings (number of holdings)				
Between 1 and 50 acres	237	187	157	–33.8
Over 300 acres	79	79	72	–8.9
Total holdings	441	390	356	–19.3

Notes:
[a] 27 parishes totalling just over 70,000 acres in agricultural use.
[b] Excluding the occupier or principal partner and his wife, groundsmen and gardeners.
[c] Includes regular part-time workers.
Sources: TNA, MAF 68/3014, MAF 68/3500 and MAF 68/3859.

the component labour types. For example, 'casual' labour, which included regular part-time workers, fell by 80 per cent over the period, most of which was in the early part (1921–30) of the period whilst regular whole-time labour declined more gradually for the reasons put forward earlier for England and Wales. Using the figures in Table 6, a crude calculation reveals that, if one excludes the occupier or principal partner of the holding and his wife, on the Berkshire Downs each worker looked after 40 acres in 1921, whereas by 1938 it was around 65 acres.

TABLE 7. Financial performance on four case-study Berkshire Downs farms, 1925–38 (£)

	Case-study Farm 1[a]				*Case-study Farm 2*[b]			
Harvest Year	*Output*	*Costs*	*Net Margin*	*Net Margin per acre*	*Output*	*Costs*	*Net Margin*	*Net Margin per acre*
1925	–	–	–	–	1,961	1,658	303	0.89
1926	–	–	–	–	1,728	1,795	–67	–0.20
1927	–	–	–	–	1,610	2,020	–410	–1.21
1928	–	–	–	–	2,249	1,893	356	1.05
1929	–	–	–	–	1,072	1,524	–452	–1.33
1930	1,573	1,653	–80	–0.24	1,958	1,356	602	1.77
1931	2,204	1,889	315	0.95	782	1,105	–323	–0.95
1932	2,212	1,656	556	1.68	1,613	1,475	138	0.41
1933	3,229	2,807	422	1.28	1,736	1,474	262	0.77
1934	2,598	2,653	–55	–0.17	1,993	1,608	385	1.13
1935	3,297	2,766	531	1.61	–	–	–	–
1936	3,401	3,025	376	0.95	–	–	–	–
1937	3,878	3,109	769	1.94	–	–	–	–
1938	4,022	2,973	1,049	2.65	–	–	–	–
	Size: 330 acres to 1935; 396 acres from 1936. Enterprises: milk, cattle, sheep (from 1932), pigs and cereals. Tenure: rented.				Size: 340 acres. Enterprises: cattle, pigs, cereals and poultry (from 1930). Tenure: mainly rented.			

Notes:
[a] Halfway Farm, Kintbury.
[b] North Hidden and Old Hayward Farms, Leverton.
[c] Home Farm, Charlton.
[d] Idstone Farm, Idstone.
Sources: For case study farms 1–4 respectively MERL, FR BER 14, FR BER 18, FR BER 33 and FR BER 34.

Whilst some of this change can be explained by the rise of the tractor, most of it was due to farmers cutting their fixed costs to cope with the recession.[36]

Table 7 summarises the financial performance of four case-study farms on the Berkshire Downs for various years between 1925–38, derived from material in the Farm Records collection of the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL), University of Reading. Their locations are shown in Figure 2. Data from account books, farm diaries and other financial records were used to calculate annual financial output and costs totals which then enabled the derivation of a net margin (or profit or loss figure) for each of the case study farms. These net margins are presented as a total for each farm for each year the records were

[36] E. H. Whetham, 'The mechanisation of British farming, 1910–1945', *J. Agricultural Economics* 21 (1970), pp. 320–1.

TABLE 7. *continued*

	Case-study Farm 3[c]				*Case-study Farm 4*[d]			
Harvest Year	*Output*	*Costs*	*Net Margin*	*Net Margin per acre*	*Output*	*Costs*	*Net Margin*	*Net Margin per acre*
1925	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1926	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1927	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1928	964	1,209	–245	–0.82	3,780	3,723	57	0.10
1929	863	902	–39	–0.13	3,716	3,606	110	0.18
1930	638	793	–155	–0.52	2,968	2,871	97	0.16
1931	–	–	–	–	2,380	2,571	–191	–0.32
1932	–	–	–	–	3,354	2,772	582	0.97
1933	–	–	–	–	3,869	3,277	592	0.99
1934	1,111	1,211	–100	–0.33	3,862	4,157	–295	–0.49
1935	–	–	–359	–1.20	3,503	3,374	129	0.22
1936	–	–	–331	–1.10	3,584	3,434	150	0.25
1937	–	–	–361	–1.20	4,036	4,261	–225	–0.38
1938	–	–	226	0.75	4,879	4,031	848	1.41
	Size: 300 acres. Enterprises: cattle and cereals. Tenure: rented.				Size: 600 acres. Enterprises: milk, cattle, sheep, pigs and cereals. Tenure: mixed tenure.			

available and, also, as a per acre figure. It should, however, be appreciated that these four farms might be unusual for the time in that, not only did their operators keep fairly good financial records, but also they, or their successors, made the decision to deposit these records at MERL for public viewing.

No particularly noticeable trend can be observed from Table 7 except to say that the annual net margins, even when positive, were very low both per farm, and on a per acre basis. Indeed, of the 38 annual farm financial performance summaries presented, in only one case was the net margin per acre over £2, and only in 21 of the 38 years positive. Of the 21 positive net margins, 10 were less than £1 per acre. Furthermore, only nine of these were as high as £1 per acre. It also appears that case-study Farms 2 and 3, which did not have a milk enterprise, performed worse financially over the period than did case-study Farms 1 and 4 which did have a milk enterprise. The fact should also be pointed out that each of the case-study farms were rented, or mainly rented, with all the consequent financial ramifications that this entailed, such as not being able to control their rent levels.

From the records at MERL, we have attempted to piece together in more detail than Table 7 exhibits a sense of how the four case-study farms 'coped' with the recession whilst 'hoping'

for better days to come. What was common to all four was that their landlords reduced their rent somewhat whilst, for two of them, paying for repairs that would usually have been the responsibility of the tenant.

Case-study Farm 1 made two strategic decisions to counter the recession. First, they introduced a sheep enterprise in 1932 based on the buying-in of store lambs in the early summer and selling them fat later on. Second, they rented an additional 66 acres in 1936. During the period they also increased the number of dairy cows in a bid to increase output, but it is debatable whether this improved financial performance as it increased expenditure on cattle feed. Case-study Farm 2 decided to replace some of the area previously devoted to beef cattle and pigs by introducing an egg-laying free-range poultry flock in 1930 which certainly improved cash sales and, probably, profitability. They also started growing clover and sainfoin for sale as seed. For the three years from 1932, net margin steadily improved on this farm so it is frustrating that no business records remain after 1934 to enable a thorough assessment of whether this 'coping' strategy worked.

Of the four farms, case-study Farm 3 is unusual because when the tenant starting renting it in 1927, it was in an almost derelict state having being farmed in-hand. Originally, being beef cattle and cereals, the new tenant decided to keep more animals and rear them more intensively. To do this he increased the amount of labour used but cut machinery costs. The result was that, of the eight years of financial results available, only in the harvest year of 1938 was a positive net margin achieved. Case-study Farm 4 increased their milk net output by feeding more concentrates, cutting labour costs and raising machinery costs. They also built-up an outdoor pig enterprise on land released from that formerly devoted to sheep grazing.

We will now turn from these four farms to the operation of the farms on the Berkshire Downs run by George Baylis (1846–1936). He has been heralded as an especially innovative farmer who entered farming relatively late, having been articled to a solicitor, and was said to be able to farm profitably when others were failing. He did this mainly by concentrating on continuous arable farming on a six-course rotation with few or no livestock and the use of much inorganic fertiliser rather than the dung from folded sheep. In this way, farming in an unchanged manner for some 50 years, he became one of the largest farmers in England in the early twentieth century. His estate was largely on the Berkshire Downs and consisted of 12 owner-occupied farms (shown on Figure 2). He also had considerable areas of rented land, including some on the nearby Hampshire Downs.[37]

Table 8 summarises the financial performance of the 12,000-acre Baylis estate for the years 1923–36. The materials allow the calculation of annual financial output and costs totals and, then, a net margin (or profit or loss figure) for the estate as a whole as with the four case studies above. As in Table 7, the net margin figures are presented both as a total for the whole estate and, also as a per acre figure. They have been calculated in exactly the same way using identical definitions for each individual output and cost item.

What stands out from Table 8 is in only four of the 14 years shown did the estate register a positive net margin or profit (1925, 1926, 1935 and 1936) and that for each of these profitable

[37] R. Brigden, 'Baylis, George (1846–1936), farmer', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004); H. G. Robinson, 'Notable farming enterprises', *JRASE* 91 (1930), pp. 29–34.

TABLE 8. Financial performance of the farms[a] of George Baylis on the Berkshire Downs, 1923–36 (£)

Harvest Year	*Output*	*Costs*	*Net Margin*	*Net Margin per acre*
1923	32,510	51,793	–19,283	–1.61
1924	43,858	45,425	–1,567	–0.13
1925	47,486	42,980	4,506	0.38
1926	48,194	46,190	2,004	0.17
1927	44,753	46,976	–2,223	–0.19
1928	37,160	46,705	–9,545	–0.80
1929	44,270	45,189	–919	–0.08
1930	34,074	40,731	–6,657	–0.55
1931	31,464	44,532	–13,068	–1.09
1932	20,749	35,532	–14,783	–1.23
1933	24,152	36,449	–12,297	–1.02
1934	24,145	30,622	–6,477	–0.54
1935	32,057	29,457	2,600	0.22
1936	29,396	28,965	431	0.04

Note:
[a] These included 12 owned farms on the Berkshire Downs totalling 5,782 acres with a further 6,218 acres rented, some on the Hampshire Downs. The total of 12,000 acres held from 1922 to the death of George Baylis in May 1936 included farms ranging from 170 acres to 875 acres in size. The enterprises were mainly cereals with some cattle and sheep.
Source: MERL, FR BAY A/1.

years, the net margin was much less than £1 per acre. Furthermore, for four of the loss-making years, the overall loss was considerable in total and was over £1 an acre. When examining the figures in detail, the few livestock enterprises on the estate were profitable over the whole period but the arable enterprises failed to perform. Such a poor financial performance from someone who is regarded as an icon of successful innovative farming practice is intriguing. It is less than one would expect from the literature that largely extols his farming skills. In managerial terms, it has been argued that Baylis did badly at this time because of his relatively high labour costs. He was very slow to replace horses by tractors, resulting in his having to devote a considerable acreage of land to growing horse fodder.[38] However, perhaps it correctly reflects the financial situation for farming at the time. Other farmers on the Berkshire Downs, who have not left equivalent detailed financial records to enable any evaluation, may have performed even worse in financial terms.

It has been shown above how innovation took place and diversification tried at the national level in an attempt to cope with the difficult economic conditions in the study period. Such actions also took place at the local level on the Berkshire Downs. For example, and most notably, was the invention and spread of Arthur Hosier's moveable milking bails from his base

[38] Robinson, 'Notable enterprises', pp. 33–4.

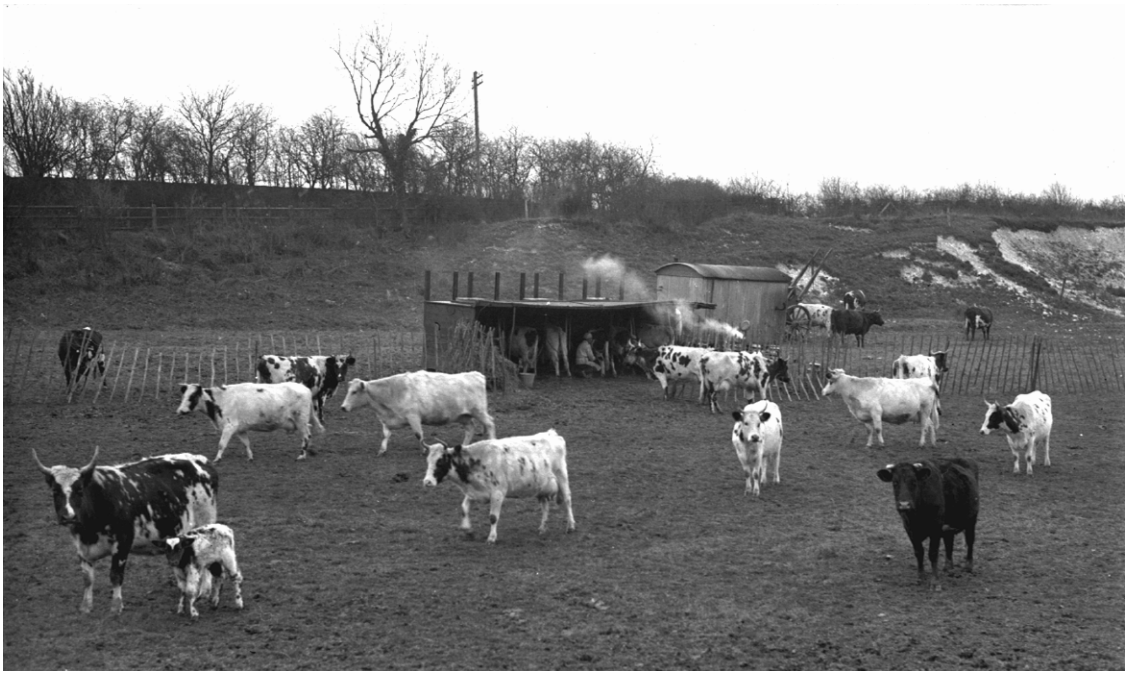


FIGURE 3. One of Mr Arthur Hosier's milking bails in use in the early 1930s. From the Eric Guy Collection, MERL, University of Reading, MERL P DX 289/195a.

at Wexcombe on the Berkshire/Wiltshire Downs border. Hosier used his fertile imagination to develop a system of outdoor dairying in areas with no fences or water. Machine milking was carried out away from the farmstead in the bails (see Figure 3), the cows spending their days in moveable enclosures. Not only were the capital costs lower, the cows were healthier, no mucking-out was required or the carrying into the farm buildings of hay, roots and straw as the cows were kept outside all year.[39] Concentrates were fed in the bails to persuade the cows in for milking and every few days the bail was pulled to fresh land either on wheels or skids, leaving the patch of land it had been situated on well-fertilised. Hosier started marketing bails in 1927.[40] In 1932, 92 were in use over England with four in Berkshire and, by 1941, 195 farmers were using them, eleven in Berkshire.[41]

A. T. Loyd, owner of the Lockinge Estate near Wantage, is another example of an imaginative and innovative landowner operating on the Berkshire Downs. Coming from an established career in the Egyptian public service, on his inheritance in 1920 he took over an estate of around 10,000 acres of in-hand land. He also inherited several thousand acres of tenanted farms in the downland parishes of Farnborough, the Ilsleys, Compton and Beedon. He quickly reduced arable production and moved more to livestock production with the original

[39] C. S. Orwin, *Progress in English farming systems*, V, *A pioneer of progress in farm management* (1931), pp. 17–20; Williams, *Principles*, pp. 131–2; Whetham, *Agrarian Hist.*, VIII, p. 191.

[40] R. D. Brigden, *Success in the press: a journalistic perspective on inter-war farming* (1997), p. 23.

[41] R. N. Dixey, 'The progress of bail milking', *The Farm Economist* 3 (1941), pp. 171–2.

Shorthorn beef herd being converted into a dual-purpose one with the emphasis on milk production. A Guernsey herd was introduced to produce high fat Tuberculin-Tested milk for the national market. The sheep on the estate were changed from the heavy Hampshire Down arable/corn type breed to the smaller Kerry Hill sheep suitable for a more grass-based system. In addition, a large outdoor poultry flock for meat was introduced in the mid-1930s. Loyd also tried to diversify. This included a plan to make straw rope from surplus wheat straw for export, and a scheme to breed and rear Dartmoor ponies on the rough grazing land of the estate on the Downs. However, it turned out there was little demand for the straw rope made and the ponies proved to be unruly and difficult to sell![42]

During the 1930s, the *Farmer and Stockbreeder* ran a series on 'Successful Women Farmers'. Two of these were farmers on the Berkshire Downs. First, was Mrs Taylor of Oare Farm, Hermitage, extending to some 450 acres. To maximize returns, she cut out the middleman by having a retail milk round perhaps in Newbury (the article does not say) and the cows were kept outside as much as possible to save labour costs on mucking out the buildings. Following a study tour to Denmark, she established a pig herd on Danish lines with much attention being paid to hygiene and the use of disinfectants. She also established a moveable flock of egg-laying hens on her pasture land to help with both cash flow and the provision of fertility.[43]

The second 'Successful Women Farmer' was Mrs Spottiswoode of Rooksnest Farm, Lambourne. She had an open-air Welsh Black dairy herd with both butter and milk being sold direct on a retail round (again, the article does not say where) and 160 outdoor porkers were also produced each year. Meticulous physical and financial records were also kept for each department of her farm business for comparative purposes both against her own previous performance and also against other farmers. This enabled her to be ruthless in her culling policy – if a cow did not produce 800 gallons in their second lactation they were sold for beef.[44]

The *Farmers Weekly*, launched in June 1934, might well have 'copied' the *Farmer and Stockbreeder* by quickly running a 'Successful Farming' series of 201 articles over the ensuing four years.[45] One of these articles centred on a progressive Berkshire Downs farmer, Mr Alfred Barclay, who ran three dairy herds on over 1,500 acres at Compton. At a time when TB was rife, Mr Barclay was a pioneer in the production of Tuberculin-Tested milk and, for the 25 years he farmed there, he was rigorous about disease prevention by, for example, hardly buying-in any new stock. Furthermore, his three dairies were situated high up and the arable land on his estate was used as a buffer strip between each of the three downland grazing areas. All the milk, averaging some 2,300 gallons a week, was sold wholesale having been bottled on farm and sold as 'certified' to obtain a premium over much of the milk being sold at that time.[46]

[42] M. A. Havinden, *Estate villages: a study of the Berkshire villages of Ardington and Lockinge* (1966), pp. 120–5.

[43] 'Mrs Taylor, Oare Farm, Hermitage, Berkshire', *The Farmer and Stock-breeder* 49, 1 Apr. 1935, p. 753.

[44] 'Mrs Spottiswoode, Rooksnest, Lambourne, Berkshire', *The Farmer and Stockbreeder* 49, 9 Sept. 1935, p. 2025.

[45] J. Harris, 'Fifty years of the Farming Weeklies', *JRASE* 145 (1984), p. 101; Brigden, 'Success in the press', p. 81.

[46] 'Research into animal diseases', *Farmers Weekly,* 15 Oct. 1937, pp. 16–17.

To conclude, we have seen that farmers on the Berkshire Downs were quick to change their cropping and stocking patterns to reduce the effects of the recession. There is also individual evidence that there was no lack of imaginative innovation shown at the local level by those seeking ways of counteracting the economic pressure on their farm businesses.

VI

We have seen the changes in agricultural land use, farm livestock, agricultural workers and holdings for the period 1921–38 by, first, England and Wales and, then, for 27 core parishes on the Berkshire Downs. These key metrics of agriculture are shown side by side in proportionate change terms in Table 9 for ease of comparison together with the results of a test of the statistical significance of the observed differences.

Before discussing these local versus national comparisons in detail, it is worth making the point that between 1921 and 1938 there was a very similar rise in the area of owner-occupied land for the Berkshire Downs against England and Wales (18 per cent to 30 per cent owner-occupied for the former over the period and 20 per cent to 33 per cent respectively for the latter).[47] In other words, it seems that both locally and nationally there was a similar trend towards owner-occupation through landowners selling tenanted land to both their tenants and original owner-occupiers.

Taking agricultural land first, although there was a larger fall in the total arable area on the Berkshire Downs, and in the area of clover and rotational grasses as compared with England and Wales as a whole, none of these changes were statistically significant. Whilst the growth of rough grazing land on the Berkshire Downs was more than twice that in England and Wales and that of the area of permanent grass was more than 10 times the rate in England and Wales, only this latter change was statistically significantly different.

With the trends in livestock numbers over the study period, there were large differences in proportionate changes between England and Wales and the Berkshire Downs. For example, whilst the numbers of cattle and pigs more than doubled on the Berkshire Downs in comparison with England and Wales, only the six-fold increase in cattle on the Berkshire Downs was comparatively statistically significant. Nationally, the rise in the numbers of total fowl was higher than for the Berkshire Downs, a change that was statistically significant.

For agricultural workers, the proportionate fall in the numbers of all workers was some 6 per cent more for the Berkshire Downs compared with England and Wales, and the fall in casual workers was nearly 25 per cent more on the Berkshire Downs; none of these differences proved to be statistically significant. Similarly, whilst it can be seen from Table 9 that the fall in the total number of agricultural holdings was some 6 per cent more for the Berkshire Downs as compared with England and Wales, and some 15 per cent more for 'small' holdings of between one and 50 acres for the same geographical areas, none of these comparative changes was statistically significant.

[47] See the sources for Table 9.

TABLE 9. Changes in agricultural land use, farm livestock, agricultural workers and agricultural holdings: the Berkshire Downs compared with England and Wales, 1921–1938 (per cent) together with a test of the statistical significance of the observed differences

	England and Wales	*Berkshire Downs*[a]	*Z statistic*[b]	*P*	*Statistical signficance*
Agricultural land use					
Tillage	–23.1	–27.4	0.322	0.678	ns
Clover and rotational grasses	–25.4	–41.2	0.565	0.668	ns
Total arable	–23.6	–30.4	0.538	0.678	ns
Permanent grass	9.0	103.3	–2.183	0.014	*
Total crops and grass	–5.5	3.3	–0.827	0.204	ns
Rough grazing	18.7	40.4	–0.617	0.268	ns
Total agricultural area	–1.8	0.5	–0.984	0.163	ns
Livestock numbers					
Total cattle	21.7	119.9	–2.069	0.019	*
Total sheep	29.5	11.1	0.065	0.825	ns
Total pigs	42.3	111.5	–0.845	0.199	ns
Total fowl	111.7	105.4	–2.215	0.013	*
Agricultural workers[c]					
Regular whole-time	–25.1	–29.6	0.046	0.830	ns
Casual[d]	–56.5	–80.0	0.189	0.791	ns
Total workers	–31.8	–37.6	0.108	0.814	ns
Agricultural holdings					
Between 1 and 50 acres	–18.7	–33.8	0.033	0.833	ns
Over 300 acres	–7.7	–8.9	0.014	0.838	ns
Total holdings	–12.9	–19.3	0.023	0.836	ns

Notes:

[a] 27 parishes totalling just over 70,000 acres in agricultural use.

[b] The Z test standardises the data into a normal distribution format and results in column 3 with a Z statistic which, when using the appropriate statistical table, provides a p value (column 4). This shows the probability that the observed differences in proportionate change between the measures for England and Wales and the Berkshire Downs occurred by chance alone. In column 5 the level of statistical significance for each line comparison is shown; * indicates where it is statistically significant at the level of less than 5%.

[c] Excluding the occupier or principal partner and his wife, groundsmen and gardeners.

[d] Includes regular part-time workers.

Sources: Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, *Agricultural Statistics, 1921 and 1938* (1922 and 1939); TNA, MAF 68/3014 and MAF 68/3859.

VII

As stated in Section I, there was comment that farms in the period went to rack and ruin, with maintenance being suspended, resulting in a worsening in the appearance of the countryside. Scrub and bushes such as gorse and juniper were said to take over grazing land and land was abandoned to the rabbits. Indeed, some said they were the most profitable crop![48] The downland of southern England was said to be particularly badly affected, and was likened to a desert with the Berkshire Downs being likely to be at the extreme end of the phenomenon.[49] But, how can these various assertions of dereliction be tested? It is an especially problematic issue as the official land use data derived from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries' annual June census did not have a category called 'scrub'; the nearest such land use category is defined as 'rough grazing'.

In an attempt to look for changes in the level of scrub over time on the Berkshire Downs for the study period, the use of contemporary aerial photography was investigated. It was found that the National Monuments Record (NMR) of English Heritage at Swindon had a substantial collection of oblique aerial photographs taken during the 1920s and 1930s by either Major Allen or O. G. S. Crawford for the purpose of recording cropmarks and sites such as ring ditches or earthworks; the former were filmed in June to September and the latter in the winter when the sun is lower in the sky and produces longer shadows. As a result, even though the photographs are old, scrub can usually be clearly seen. These photographs are available as an open-access, browsable collection, filed in boxes by their Ordnance Survey grid reference number, each covering an area of 100 hectares.

The study area comprises, in broad terms, 500 one kilometre OS grid squares (50,000 hectares or 123,550 acres); 94 of these squares have prints available from the 1920s and 1930s in the NMR oblique aerial photographic collection. Of these 94 squares, 10 had prints from different times in the study period and, of these, in six separate 100 hectare (247 acre) squares there is clear visual evidence of an increase in scrub over time.[50] However, whilst this is good evidence of some increase in scrub at six separate places on the Berkshire Downs at various times during the study period, it is probably not appropriate to arithmetically 'raise' this evidence to try to make an estimate of the likely areal extent of the phenomenon at the end of the study period.

To try to explore this issue further, numerous images in the archives at MERL were closely examined to see if there was any visual evidence of scrub existence during the study period. Some 59 images of farming scenes on the Berkshire Downs in this period were identified, extracted and scrutinised for this purpose and only six possibilities were found. Two of these are reproduced as Figures 4 and 5 here. However, it should be emphasized that these images, all from the Eric Guy collection, only show the existence of scrub at the particular point of

[48] J. Cherrington, 'Introduction', p. xi; G. M. Craig, J. L. Jollans and A. Korbey (eds), *The case for agriculture: an independent assessment* (1986), pp. 101–2; J. Martin, 'The wild rabbit: plague, policies and pestilence in England and Wales, 1931–1955', *AgHR* 58 (2010), pp. 259–60; Perren, *Agriculture in depression*, pp. 49–50; Whetham, *British Farming*, pp. 5–9.

[49] J. Brown, *The rural world of Eric Guy* (2008), p. 15; Perren, *Agriculture in depression*, p. 46; Smith, *Ecology*, p. 407; M. Soper, *Years of change* (1995), pp. 44–5; Thomas, 'Agriculture in the south', p. 12.

[50] OS kilometre squares: SU2477, SU2986, SU3282, SU3884, SU3984 and SU5486.



FIGURE 4. A moveable poultry ark on the Berkshire Downs with scrub in the background near Aldworth in the mid-1930s. From the Eric Guy Collection, MERL, University of Reading, MERL DX 289 PH1/840.



FIGURE 5. Scrub on the Berkshire Downs near Aldworth in the mid-1930s.
From the Eric Guy Collection, MERL, University of Reading, MERL PDX289 PH1/901.

time when the photographs were taken, and not that scrub was necessarily on the increase.[51] There could also have been some particular on-farm physical or farming systems reason why such scrub was in existence, and that this was not linked to their farms' financial situations at the time.

So, combining the evidence from the aerial photographs from the NMR with those from the MERL collection gives some credence to the suggestion that scrub increased on the Berkshire Downs from 1921–38. There is no evidence though, that whole farms went derelict, just parts of the odd field. This is in contrast to what happened in the depression of the 1880s where changes in a whole farm resulted in a village on the Berkshire Downs, called Snape, becoming derelict as the owner changed the farming system from an arable/sheep system to grass-based sheep 'ranching'. The original farm employed 16 men whereas the latter employed a shepherd only; ironically, by the late 1930s, a new owner had introduced five bail milking herds and 1,000 outdoor pigs onto this grassland and the total number of employees then rose to 20.[52]

VIII

What about the comparison of the financial performance of farms on the Berkshire Downs with those in England and Wales? It will be remembered from the discussion above, the two measures that are available for both geographical areas are farm sale prices and NFI. Table 4 presents comparable figures for the former. Here it can be seen that for only one of the comparative five-year moving averages presented (1929–33) were the Berkshire Downs figures higher than for those of England and Wales and, for 1928–32, they were the same at £21 per acre. For all the other years, particularly in the period 1921–30, the Berkshire Downs figures were substantially lower than those for England and Wales: between 1922 and 1928 they were less than half. Interestingly, whilst from 1931 prices in England and Wales stabilised, for the Berkshire Downs having risen back again until 1931, they fell again until the end of the study period.

In order to compare NFI per acre for the nation against that for the Berkshire Downs, some calculations and somewhat heroic assumptions are needed. First, the NFI figures for the UK presented in Table 1 for four groups of years over the study period need to be divided by the average total agricultural area for those years from official statistics.[53] Then, to obtain equivalent figures for the Berkshire Downs, a series of weighted average calculations had to be performed on the data for the case-study farms in Tables 7 and 8, to allow for the different areas and availability at various times during the study period. The results per acre, in current price terms, are as follows, with each period comparison being shown first for the UK and then for the Berkshire Downs: 1920–23, £2.89, –£1.61; 1924–29, £0.79, –£0.11; 1930–34, £0.71, –£0.78; and 1935–39, £1.29, –£0.20.

[51] MERL photographic collection, P DX289 PH1/16; P DX289 PH1/195b; P DX289 PH1/655; P DX289 PH1/840; P DX289 PH1/901; and P DX289 PH2/4138.

[52] C. S. Orwin, 'Commodity prices and farming policy', *JRASE* 83 (1922), pp. 9–10; A. D. Hall, *Reconstruction and the land* (1941), pp. 171–3.

[53] Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, *A century of agricultural statistics. Great Britain, 1866–1966* (1968), pp. 91–2; <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/dard-statistics/agricultural-statistics/agricultural-census-historical-data-1847-to-date.htm>.

The comparisons reveal a stark difference in profitability between the 'national' farm and the 16 or so case-study Berkshire Downs farms. Whilst the level of profitability at the national level declined by some 73 per cent from £2.89 per acre in 1920–23 to £0.71 in 1930–34 and then rose by 1939 to £1.29, it was always positive. In contrast, on the Berkshire Downs, between 1920 and 1934 a loss per acre was made and it wasn't until the period 1935–39, when a NFI of £0.20 per acre was obtained, that profitability returned. The poorness of the financial performance on the Berkshire Downs can be further emphasised when two factors are considered. First, the national 'farm' includes large areas of hills and upland in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and northern England, perhaps 40 per cent of the total, areas where it has always been difficult to farm profitably. Second, the Berkshire Downs case-study farms may well have been farmed by people with above average levels of technical and managerial ability as, at that time, few farmers had started to collect the comprehensive financial records necessary to calculate NFI. In other words, whereas the national performance may have been pulled downwards by the large area of marginal land, the Berkshire Downs figures are likely to have been better than those achieved by 'average' farmers in that area.

In 1928 and 1931 the Agricultural Economics Research Institute at the University of Oxford carried out inquiries into the severity of the agricultural recession. They ascertained the number of notices to quit issued by tenants to their landlords and the number of rent reductions obtained. This quantitative data, provided by land agents and chartered surveyors, was supplemented by qualitative material detailing, by county, which types and sizes of rented farm were worst hit and where. In reports on both inquiries, the farmland on the Berkshire Downs received especial mention as to how hard it had been hit by the depression and how difficult landlords were finding the task of keeping their tenants, or indeed, finding new ones to replace those who had quit.[54]

Finally, the basic thesis of this paper – that farming on the Berkshire Downs during the study period was worse hit by the recession than in the country as a whole – needs answering. It has been shown above that farmers on the Berkshire Downs quickly moved out of the traditional arable corn-sheep system and that there was a statistically significant greater rise in the area of permanent pasture and cattle numbers than nationally as less-intensive beef and dairying systems were adopted. Farmland sale prices per acre were considerably lower on the Berkshire Downs than nationally and there is some good evidence that more than the average numbers of tenants there either gave notice to quit, or had rent reductions.

Using data from case-study farms on the Berkshire Downs, it has also been shown that, in comparison, farms nationally in the study period, on average, performed much better in terms of NFI per acre. Indeed, right across 1921–38 they made a positive NFI per acre whereas, on the Berkshire Downs, for three out of the four groups of years analysed in this period, negative NFIs resulted. It has also been argued above that this very poor financial performance might well have been the cause of some dereliction and, a possible rise in the presence of scrub, during the period.

[54] D. Skilbeck and M. Messer, 'The incidence of notices to quit and rent reductions as an indication of farming conditions', in The Agricultural Economics Society, *Proceedings of conferences held in London, December 12th, 1928, and at Downing College, Cambridge, June 21st–24th, 1929* (1929), pp. 55–6; M. Messer, *The agricultural depression of 1931. Its nature and incidence* (1932), pp. 10, 16 and 17.

Following the above evidence, it can be concluded with some certainty that farmers on the Berkshire Downs during 1921–38 were harder hit by the recession than were those across the country in general. Taking Paul Brassley's point that the inter-war years were 'a mixture of decline and regeneration' for the industry, it is clear that there were innovative and inventive farmers on the Berkshire Downs using modern methods, for example, of producing milk and rearing poultry for both meat and eggs. In order to do this, they needed a degree of faith for miles of barbed wire fences needed erecting as well as wells sunk for water.[55] Indeed, most of them were employing one or more of Tony Giles' four ways of maintaining or increasing their profit, as outlined in the introductory section above, in order to withstand the recession.[56] However, for most farmers there, it was a difficult time with, to draw on John McInerney's words, a lot of 'coping' with what the policy and market situation had faced them with, as well as 'hoping' that things would improve.[57] Which, of course, was what happened with the advent of the War and the urgent necessity for an increase in home food production.[58]

[55] Brassley, 'British farming', pp. 198–9.
[56] Giles, 'No fixed address', p. 390.
[57] McInerney, *Economic adjustment*, pp. 3, 11 and 15.
[58] H. Newby, *Country life: a social history of rural England* (1987), p. 173; Whetham, *British Farming*, pp. 19–20.

The *Review*'s sixtieth anniversary essay competition

Employing the enemy: the contribution of German and Italian Prisoners of War to British agriculture during and after the Second World War*

by Johann Custodis

Abstract

German and Italian prisoners of war (POWs) were a common sight in parts of rural Britain during and immediately after the Second World War. This article seeks to ascertain their economic contribution to the British wartime and post-war economy. The analysis of new evidence from the National Archives reveals that Italian and in particular German prisoners were productive assets on the land, more so than previous estimates have shown. At a peak in 1946 they formed one fifth of the rural workforce. Both their productivity and the scale of their employment was highest in the immediate post-war years, leading to a contribution to British GDP of one per cent in both 1946 and 1947.

Historians have already emphasized the 'substantial contribution' of prisoner of war (POW) labour to wartime British agriculture.[1] On one assessment, Italians were 'more useful to Britain's cause in the wheat fields than the battlefields'.[2] Official government publications are more cautious, referring to a time lag and the need to remove security constraints before POW labour could be fully used.[3] Davis considered POWs a liability for their captors during both World Wars holding that they crowded out native workers, were costly, inefficient, and lacked motivation and skills.[4] This paper seeks to determine which of these views is correct. Davis's hypothesis is tested by assessing the German and Italian POW contribution to British agriculture. New qualitative and quantitative evidence is used to revise POW employment numbers, evaluate qualitative accounts on Italian and German POW productivity, establish POW productivity proxies and yield a first estimate for the contribution of rural POW labour to British GDP. The paper concludes that POWs made significant contributions to British agriculture, particularly in the immediate post-war years.

* The author would like to thank many colleagues at various conferences for their suggestions, but most importantly Peter Howlett for his ongoing support and help, and the ESRC for its financial support. This article is dedicated to my Father. All manuscript references are to the National Archives, London.

[1] Bob Moore, 'Turning liabilities into assets', *J. Contemporary History* 32 (1997), p. 127.

[2] Neville Wiley, 'POWs in the era of total war', *War in History* 13 (2006), p. 224.

[3] H. M. D. Parker, *Manpower: a study of war-time policy and administration* (1957), pp. 187, 384; H. Satow, *The work of the prisoners of war department during the Second World War* (1950), pp. 33–5.

[4] G. Davis, 'POWs in twentieth-century war economies', *J. Contemporary History* 12 (1977), pp. 627–9.

Over 470,000 German and 400,000 Italian POWs were held on British soil or in the British Commonwealth during and after the Second World War. Almost half of them (360,000) were working by early 1945.[5] Britain was the heaviest user of this labour supply in the British Commonwealth, employing over 150,000 Italians and 380,000 Germans at peak. The 1929 Geneva Convention explicitly allowed captors to force captured enemy soldiers of signatory countries to work provided they were not engaged in labour which was directly linked to the war effort or dangerous, excessive or unhealthy.[6] Britain and the British Commonwealth countries abided very closely by these rules.[7] The last Italian POWs were repatriated from the British Commonwealth in the summer of 1947 and the last Germans had left Britain by July 1948.[8] Post-war POW employment was possible because of an unprecedented legal peculiarity. According to the Geneva Convention, POW status would only cease with a peace treaty.[9] However, neither Italy nor Germany had formally signed a peace treaty after armistice. Italy surrendered after Mussolini's fall in September 1943 and in May 1944 the provisional Italian government agreed on a 'co-belligerent' status supporting the Allied war effort. A peace treaty was only signed in the summer of 1947.[10] Germany surrendered unconditionally in May 1945 and no peace treaty has ever been signed. For this reason, POW status did not end for Germans in the hands in the Allies. However, the Allies informally agreed to repatriate all POWs in their hands, in Europe, by December 1948.[11] The repatriation of all German POWs on British soil was completed by July 1948, but after that date, 15,700 German and 1,400 Italian ex-POWs remained in Britain as civilian rural workers.[12]

I

New evidence located by the author at the National Archives in Kew allows for a more complete and consistent analysis of German and Italian POW employment in Britain than has been achieved before. Many British government files on POW employment and POW policy have been closed until recently. The Maschke Commission, a German historical commission researching the history of German POWs in British captivity during and after the Second

[5] Helmut Wolff, *Zur Geschichte der deutschen Kriegsgefangenendes 2. Weltkrieges, Band XI/1: Die deutschenk riegsgefangenen in britischer hand* [The history of German POWs in World War II: German POWs in British hands] (1974), pp. 21–8; Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, 'British perceptions of Italian prisoners of war, 1940–47', in Bob Moore and Barbara Hately-Broad (eds), *Prisoners of war, prisoners of peace: captivity, homecoming and memory in World War II* (2005), p. 25; MT 39/568, Draft War Cabinet paper, 'Employment of German POWs in the UK after the cessation of hostilities', Annexes B and C, 4 Apr. 1945.

[6] Articles 27–32, in Dietrich Schindler and Jiri Toman (eds), *The laws of armed conflicts* (third edn, 1988), pp. 347–8.

[7] R. Overmans, *Soldaten hinter Stacheldraht – Deutsche Kriegsgefangene des 2.Weltkriegs* [*Soldiers behind barbed wire – German POWs in the Second World War*], p. 83.

[8] Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, *The British Empire and its Italian prisoners of war*, (2002), p. 220.

[9] R. Overmans, 'Das Schicksal der deutschen Kriegsgefangenen des Zweiten Weltkrieges', in Jörg Echternkamp, Andreas Kunz, Wilfried Loth, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Rüdiger Overmans and Michael Schwartz (eds), *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg, Band 10/2, Die Folgen des Zweiten Weltkrieges* [The Reich and World War II, 10: Consequences of World War II] (2008), pp. 431–505.

[10] Moore and Fedorowich, *Empire*, p. 137.

[11] Overmans, *Soldaten*, p. 303.

[12] Julius Isaac, *British post-war migration* (Occasional papers series of the National Institute of Social and Economic Research, 17, 1954), p. 183.

World War in the 1970s, was unable to access many of the files which are now available. Also, this paper for the first time presents consistent quantitative evidence on both German and Italian POW employment in Britain. The evidence mainly comes from War Office (WO) and Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) files. It is supplemented by documents from the Cabinet Office records (CAB) and from other departments such as the Home Office (HO).

During and after the Second World War, almost 400,000 German and 154,000 Italian POWs were held in Britain.[13] The treatment of and policy towards Italian and German POWs diverged sharply. While German POWs were regarded as a serious security threat, especially in 1940, when a German invasion of Britain appeared imminent, the Italians were generally considered to pose less of a danger. This difference in treatment was further intensified following Italy's surrender in September 1943. The Italians were offered the choice to become 'co-operators' or 'non-co-operators'. The former performed work contrary to the Geneva Convention and under lower security constraints while receiving higher financial rewards than non-co-operators.[14]

The new evidence shows that while only 9,000 Italians had been employed by December 1941, the figure had quadrupled within a year and peaked at 162,000 in June 1945. After that date, repatriation depleted their numbers until it was completed in June 1946. German POW employment only commenced in March 1944 and remained small until the autumn of that year, but rapidly expanded after the German armistice in May 1945 (VE Day). At its peak in August 1946, 377,000 Germans were working in Britain.[15] Subsequently, German POW repatriation progressively reduced employment numbers until completed in July 1948. The composition of the POW workforce during and after the war reflects these drastic changes. While Italian POWs formed almost all the POW workforce until the summer of 1944, their share fell progressively after D-Day and the German armistice in May 1945 to less than half. By June 1946, the POW labour force consisted exclusively of Germans except for a small number of 1,400 Italians who had assumed civilian status to work in agriculture.[16] The combined German and Italian workforce had almost doubled by May 1946 compared to spring 1945. This suggests that the impact of their employment must have been larger post-war than during the war years.

The prisoners worked in many different sectors, such as housing, road construction and brick production, but the great majority were employed in the rural sector. The new evidence shows that from July to September 1945, for instance, on average 60 per cent of all German POWs employed were working in agriculture, making up approximately 11 per cent of the British agricultural labour force.[17] By November 1945, 174,750 out of 333,750 of the Italian and

[13] Bob Moore, 'Axis Prisoners of War in Britain during the Second World War: a comparative survey', in Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich (eds), *Prisoners of War and their captors in World War II* (1996), p. 19.

[14] Ibid., p. 33.

[15] Plus another 4,000 base camp staff.

[16] Lucio Sponza, *Divided loyalties, Italians in Britain during the Second World War* (2001), p. 313. These are not included in the figures as their number was small and they no longer had POW status. The absolute figures on German and Italian POW employment provide more details on the trends mentioned above.

[17] On average, 132,000 German POWs were employed in agriculture from 7 July to 8 Sept. 1945, MAF 47/132, employment return sheets July to Sept. 1945. The British rural labour force was 1.04 million in this period. Peter Howlett and Central Statistical Office, *Fighting with figures: a statistical digest of the Second World War* (1995), p. 38.

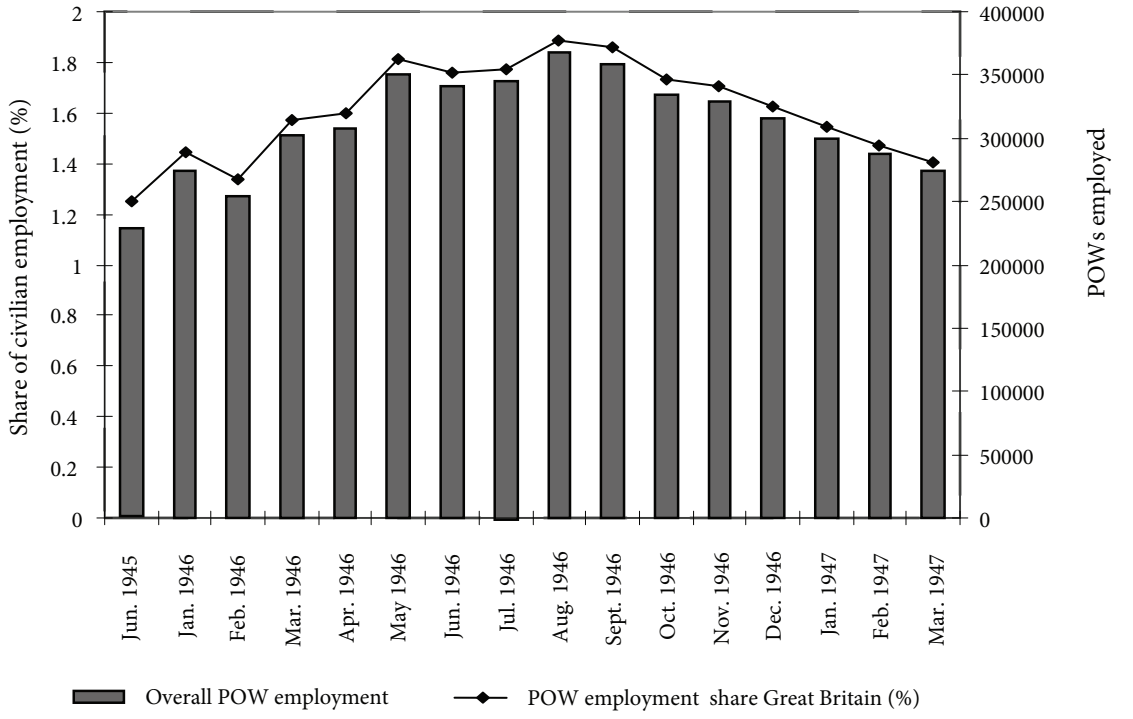


FIGURE 1. Aggregate POW employment in Great Britain in absolute terms and as a share of civilian employment

Source: NA, WO 165/59, various monthly reports.

German POWs (52 per cent) employed were under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF).[18]

The aggregate POW employment appears small at first glance compared to the British civilian labour force. Italian POWs represented only 0.27 per cent of the civilian labour force by July 1943.[19] However, this situation changed drastically post-war: by June 1945, Italian and German POWs represented over one per cent of the British civilian labour force. Figure 1 shows that at peak in August 1946, this figure had almost doubled to 1.86 per cent (almost exclusively German POWs). On average from June 1945 to March 1947, the POW employment share was 1.55 per cent. Similar to the absolute POW employment figures, the relative contribution of POW labour only seems to have taken off after the war, but remained significant for at least two years. The increasing importance of POW labour in the post-war period was linked to the state of the British post-war labour market. Tomlinson has shown that a severe shortage of labour (and

[18] CAB 114/33, C.P. (45) 305, memorandum by the Minister of Labour and National Service, 26 Nov. 1945, 'The employment of German and Italian POWs in Great Britain'. Of this number, 108,750 were Germans and 66,000 Italians.

[19] Aggregate civilian labour force in mid-1943 was 22.28 million (*Ministry of Labour Gazette* 53 (1945), p. 199). Adding the Italian POW workers (61,000) to this yields 22.34 million, so Italian POWs a represented 0.27% of this aggregated labour force. Calculations for the other employment share estimates are made on the same basis.

capital) until 1947 encouraged the Attlee government to focus on increasing labour productivity.[20] Cairncross identifies the peak of the post-war excess labour demand during 1946 and 1947 with a steady decline thereafter until 1951.[21] For December 1946 for instance, a manpower gap of 1.346 million workers was predicted. Cairncross claims this gap reflected the general excess demand in the post-war economy and in essence presented an inflationary gap. German POWs were an essential part of the government's battle against this excess labour demand as it expected to employ 460,000 German POWs in 1946.[22] The actual peak employment of 377,000 was lower than predicted, but still represented a significant share of the labour force.[23] POW labour, along with Polish ex-soldiers working in agriculture and civilian workers from Central Europe under the 'European Volunteer Worker' (EVW) scheme played a key role in mitigating the British post-war labour shortage.[24] In addition to the German POWs and the Polish ex-soldiers, at peak approximately 8,000 Ukrainian POWs also worked on the land from the summer of 1947 onwards and eventually joined the EVW scheme in 1948. The Ukrainians had fought on the German side as part of the Wehrmacht but had surrendered to the British in Italy in May 1945. They were transferred from Italy to Britain in 1947 because the Foreign Office feared that they would be handed over to the Soviet Union once British troops were withdrawn from Italy.[25] Overall, approximately 75,000 EVWs were working in Britain in 1948 under various schemes, predominantly in areas such as nursing, hospitals and agriculture.[26]

II

British agriculture during the Second World War had to cope with pressure to expand output in order to compensate for lost imports. Moore-Colyer found that the U-Boat war had reduced food imports by 85 per cent compared to pre-war levels. Still, he considers Murray's claim of a severe food crisis during the entire wartime period to be exaggerated.[27] The industry mainly reacted to the shortfall in imports by increasing arable acreage through the conversion of grassland. Cropped acreage during the war rose by 6 million acres of which 4 million went into extra cereals and 700,000 into potatoes.[28] The composition of rural output changed. The main problem according to Moore-Colyer was not maximization of output, but the fulfilment of production targets of directly consumable food crops. For this purpose, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) was equipped with extensive powers of economic planning. County War Agricultural Executive Committees (CWAECs) were introduced in 1939 which exercised substantial planning and executive powers at the county level. They were set

[20] J. Tomlinson, 'Managing the economy, managing the people: Britain, *c.*1931–70', *EcHR* 58 (2005), p. 562.

[21] A. Cairncross, *Years of recovery: British economic policy, 1945–51* (1985), p. 22.

[22] Ibid., pp. 386–95.

[23] WO 165/59, Summary No. 63, Aug. 1946.

[24] See Cairncross, *Recovery*, pp. 386–95 for Polish workers. On the EVW scheme see I. Weber-Newth and J. Steinert, *Labour and Love, Deutsche in Grossbritannien nach den Zweiten Weltkrieg* [Germans in Great Britain after the Second World War] (2001), p. 23.

[25] WO 32/13190, Memorandum, Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain, Panchuk, 31 May 1948, p. 3; Home Office Circular No. 170/1948, 28 July 1948.

[26] R. J. Moore-Colyer, 'The call to the land: British and European adult voluntary farm labour', *Rural Hist.* 17 (2006), p. 98.

[27] Ibid., p. 83.

[28] Paul Brassley, 'Wartime productivity and innovation, 1939–45', in B. Short, C. Watkins and J. Martin (eds), *The front line of freedom. British farming in the Second World War* (2007), p. 40.

cultivation and performance targets and achieved these through their control of labour, machine and fertilizer inputs. They monitored the execution of their orders via officers on the ground and their sub-committees.[29]

The recent literature on British wartime agriculture challenges Murray's standard work (published as a volume in the official history of the War) on agriculture's wartime role and output growth as over-optimistic. Brassley and Martin both revise Murray's official government statistics downwards and find contemporaries exaggerated the contribution of farming to the war.[30] Brassley conducts an analysis of the sources of output growth to determine whether technological change or a rise in inputs was responsible for rural output growth. He uses Crafts' methodology to measure Total Factor Productivity (TFP), a variable that indicates to what extent output growth is explained by technological change. Brassley concludes that agricultural output 'did not increase much during the war'.[31] TFP growth was negative during the period examined at a startling minus 30 per cent. The negative residual implies that labour and capital inputs rose more than output while technological change contributed little. Data problems impede detailed calculations on wartime labour productivity, but all authors agree that increased labour inputs played an important role. The only government labour force statistics are returns for June and September and they only distinguish the contribution of POWs and the Women Land's Army (WLA) from 1944 onwards.[32]

These supplementary labour groups play a key role in this discussion on agricultural labour productivity. Murray admits that the figures available from June and September returns do not adequately reflect the rural labour force as these months are peak harvest times. Also, different worker groups have different productivities in relation to civilians. Williams has produced the most detailed labour productivity figures using the relative efficiency of different worker groups and converting them to an index of agricultural employment in terms of man-years.[33] Brassley finds that, based on Williams's figures, rural output growth exceeded input growth in 1940 and 1943, was on par in 1941 and below input growth in 1942, 1944 and 1945. Labour productivity therefore remained roughly constant during the war. However, Martin and Clarke both find Williams underestimated the contribution of the WLA and POWs.[34] Brassley adjusts for this by raising the labour input growth from 8.5 to 12.5 per cent. Still, these adjustments do not alter the results of his TFP calculations. The use of higher labour input growth or alternative depreciation figures only produces positive TFP estimates under very extreme assumptions. This confirms his conclusion that higher input growth and not technological change drove wartime expansion in agriculture.[35] However, Brassley's adjustments for labour input growth are interesting for another important reason. The inclusion of POWs and the

[29] Moore-Colyer, 'Call to the land', pp. 84–6.

[30] John Martin, *The development of modern agriculture: British farming since 1931* (2000), p. 54.

[31] Brassley, 'Wartime productivity', p. 38.

[32] The WLA was the revival of a civilian organisation that had been established during the First World War to replace male rural labour drafted to the front line. Angus Calder, 'UK 2. Domestic life, war effort and economy, b) manpower and war production', in B. Dear and D. Foot (eds), *The Oxford companion to World War II* (2001), p. 883.

[33] K. A. H. Murray, *Agriculture* (History of the Second World War, 1955), p. 273.

[34] Jill Clarke, 'The Women's Land Army and its recruits', in Short, Watkins and Martin (eds), *Front line*, p. 104.

[35] Brassley, 'Wartime productivity', p. 48.

WLA would raise input growth by half in his sensitivity analysis. These supplementary labour groups therefore could have impacted on the aggregate rural labour force quite significantly. Recent writing on British agriculture has therefore revised Murray's output figures downward, but at the same time revealed that POWs and the WLA played a more important role than previously acknowledged.

III

Wartime agricultural labour was a constant problem for the MAF. Call-ups, worker drafts to other industries and the failure to secure sufficient labour allocations from the War Cabinet created substantial rural manpower shortages.[36] POWs initially played a minor role as one of many supplementary labour groups. Beginning in 1943, they were increasingly tapped as a substitute for the WLA and schoolchildren. After the war, the reluctance of de-mobilized farm workers to return to agriculture and meagre WLA recruitment resulted in ever-growing demands for Germans on the land.[37]

These persistent rural manpower gaps were filled by a great variety of supplementary labour groups. Apart from POWs, pensioners, schoolchildren, part-time male and female labour, the WLA, army personnel, urban voluntary labour, Irish labour and unemployed dockers were used. The literature on these supplementary groups agrees on their vital role for rural production, but is uncertain about their relative contribution. Murray claims that without the supply of 20,000 Italian POW labourers from Libya for the 1942 harvest, it might not have been collected in time.[38] Clarke finds that the WLA played a 'vital part' in supplementing the rural labour force, especially during 1943. The WLA provided an essential 'hand on the land' and contributed to raising the net rural output and reducing the dependence on imported foodstuffs. Clarke claims that the WLA was considered more flexible than POW labour since the 'Land Girls' did not require guarding and were perfectly mobile.[39] The WLA suffered from prioritization of more war-relevant industries. WLA recruitment was suspended in August 1943 to release women into the aircraft and munitions industries and re-opened in early 1944, peaking in July 1944 at 80,000.[40] Given the suspension, WLA membership stagnated and civilian volunteers and POWs became more important for British food production.[41]

Moore-Colyer concludes that while civilian voluntary labour was drawn upon throughout the war, its scale was small and relative productivity low. Urban civilians were not used to hard physical labour and mostly volunteered for the summer harvests as other seasonal work was not attractive to them. However, he praises the value of schoolchildren. Murray concurs; noting that without them one million acres of potatoes would not have been lifted.[42] Their contribution declined after 1944, when POWs became increasingly available and replaced them.[42] Italian and German POW employment grew rapidly in 1944 and 1945 and the Germans not only replaced

[36] Murray, *Agriculture*, p. 272.
[37] Ibid., pp. 120, 122, 128.
[38] Ibid., p. 347.
[39] Clarke, 'WLA', pp. 104, 114, 116.
[40] Ibid., p. 104, Calder in Dear and Foot, *Oxford companion*, p. 883.
[41] R. Moore-Colyer, 'POWs and the struggle for food production, 1939–49', in Short, Watkins and Martin (eds), *Front line*, pp. 120 and 122.
[42] Murray, *Agriculture*, p. 258.
[43] Moore-Colyer, 'Call to the land', p. 87.

repatriated Italians from late 1945 onwards, but even became more prominent in agriculture post-war. By August 1946 for instance, around 180,000 German POWs were working on British farms.[44] Moore-Colyer describes the post-war period as one of 'muddling through' in the light of adverse weather conditions and of persistent labour shortages met by miscellaneous groups.[45]

According to Murray, there were some 130,000 POWs in agricultural employment in the post-war years, half of whom regular workers, for whom substitutes had to be found on their repatriation in 1948.[46] For this purpose, Polish ex-soldiers, displaced Ukrainians and most importantly EVWs were brought to Britain. By 1948, 23,000 displaced Ukrainians were working in British agriculture in addition to 23,700 or a third of the 75,000 EVWs in the country.[47] The 8,000 Ukrainian POWs also eventually joined this EVW pool. Like the German POWs, they were released from POW status in summer 1948 and assumed civilian status, many of them as agricultural workers. In contrast to the Germans however, the civilianized Ukrainians continued to be considered as EVWs. Also, the government attempted to allocate those Ukrainian ex-POWs considered unemployable in agriculture to areas such as construction or bomb disposal as it was difficult to repatriate them to Germany.[48]

Moore-Colyer presents a mixed view of the value of German and Italian POWs. He argues that the Germans were 'indispensable' in 1946 when only half of the 85,000 de-mobilized farm workers wanted to return to farming and when recruitment for the WLA for a two-year assignment to agriculture only yielded meagre results.[49] At the peak of the 1946 potato harvest, out of a total of 890,000 workers, 70,000 were civilian volunteers, 30,000 WLA and 180,000 German POWs and Polish ex-service personnel. He also notes the persistent criticism of POW labour in the farming press and the 'myth' that Italians were much less productive than Germans, but left open the question of the POWs' contribution as he lacked hard evidence. 'In terms of the success of British farming in fulfilling the demands placed upon it during the critical wartime and post-war years, the role of POWs is, in the final analysis, hard to quantify'. He nevertheless acknowledges their contribution and the efforts of the government authorities in assuring that the jobs were done by the POWs:

> The simple fact remains that the ditches were dug, the land was drained and in one way or another, the wartime harvests were earned. That this was so was in no small measure due to the success of wartime authorities in marshalling and co-ordinating the labour of POWs under their command.[50]

This paper sheds more light on the details of rural POW employment and complements Moore-Colyer's work by examining the relative contribution of POWs in qualitative and quantitative terms. The agricultural POW workforce in Britain developed from being small and mostly Italian in 1941 to a sizeable and exclusively German workforce after the war (see Figure 2). At its peak in March 1947, 170,000 German POWs worked in agriculture. Most POWs

[44] *Farmers Weekly*, 6 Sept. 1946, p. 19, 'German POWs to go home'.

[45] Moore-Colyer, 'POWs', p. 130.

[46] Murray, *Agriculture*, p. 352.

[47] Moore-Colyer, 'Call to the land', p. 98.

[48] WO 32/13190, 'Ukrainian POWs', Vale, Department of Prisoners of War, 29 May 1948; Secretary, Ministry of Labour to Col. Chandler, Directorate of POW, 27 Aug. 1948; WO Memorandum, 'Employment of Foreign Labour in Military Installations', 28 July 1948.

[49] Moore-Colyer, 'POWs', p. 128.

[50] Ibid., pp. 130–1.

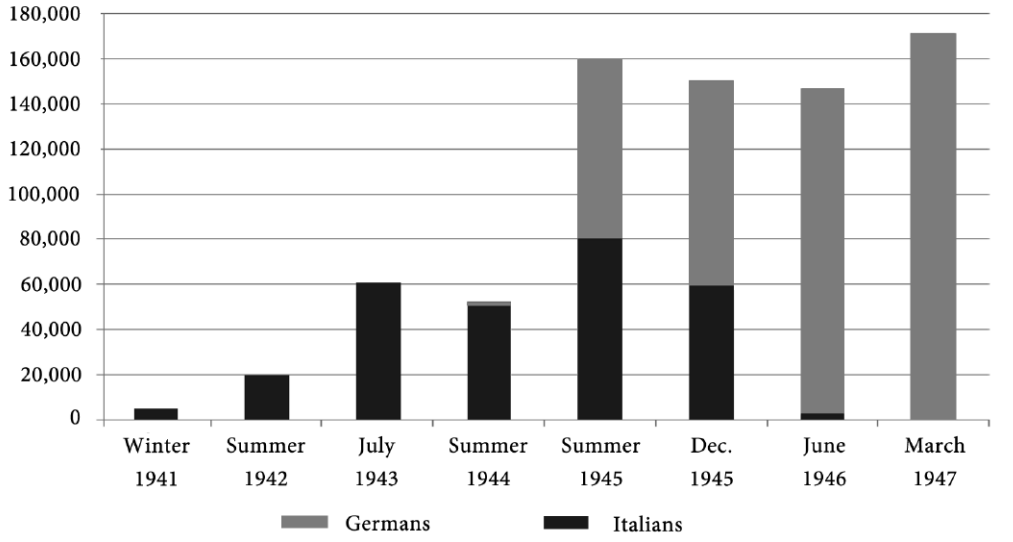


FIGURE 2. POW employment in British agriculture, 1941–47

Sources: MAF 47/132, LAB 13/257, CAB 114/26, WO 165/59.

worked on farms during the day and returned to camps in the evening. Those with records of good behaviour could be lodged at 'hostels', guarded houses near employment sites or 'live in' individually on the farm as 'billetees'. The first Italian POWs working in agriculture were deployed from camps when they arrived in Britain in July 1941, but hostel employment and billeting quickly followed.

Hostel and billetee employment grew rapidly given their advantages over camp employment. The government favoured billeting because it saved the costs of guarding, accommodation, transportation and food, shifted responsibility to the farmer, and increased net working time.[51] The War Office (WO) gave permission for billeting in October 1941, but it appears to have started only six months later, in March 1942, when it noted that '24 billetees have been employed with individual farmers' and 'reports of their work are satisfactory'.[52] This number had risen to 358 billeted Italians three months later.[53] From then onwards, billeting of Italians steadily rose, peaking at 23,000 in August 1945 and dropping thereafter with their repatriation. Hostels were primarily used for agricultural employment and their operation began in January 1942 as an experiment, but their usage exceeded that of billeting in scale and scope. While in July 1942, only 23 hostels were in operation, this figure had doubled to 45 by April 1943.[54] The expansion accelerated even further during the following months, reaching 112 hostels by June 1943 and 270 hostels by October.[55] At peak in March 1945, 500 hostels were in operation, housing 65,684 prisoners by June 1945. Hostels were originally built to accommodate 30 to 50 Italian

[51] MAF 47/56, 'Agricultural labour supply, Great Britain, June 1944'.

[52] HO 144/22653, 'Security Executive, Italian POWs for agriculture, proposed transfer of selected POWs to agricultural hostels', MAF note, 8 Nov. 1941, point 2; WO 165/59, Summary No. 10, Mar. 1942, point 10b.

[53] WO 165/59, Summary No. 13, June 1942, point 9c.

[54] WO 165/59, Summary No. 14, July 1942, point 7a.

[55] WO 165/59, Summary No. 29, Oct. 1943, point 9a.

POWs,[56] but the actual numbers of POWs per hostel over time far exceeded this intended capacity, indicating the maximization of this employment type. The average occupancy per hostel effectively doubled from 49 in April 1943 to 100 in March 1945.[57]

Germans were employed from 1944 onwards as a replacement for Italians. They replaced them only gradually as they were initially considered more security-intensive, but given the scheme's success, German POW employment rapidly expanded. German POW employment in agriculture had first been considered 'as an experiment' in October 1943.[58] The project was approved and 969 German POWs were selected in north-west Africa for their rural skills and compliance and shipped to Britain in January 1944 where they were dispatched to two experimental agricultural camps in Cumberland and Warwickshire.[59] Feedback by the MAF was positive, so it was decided to extend German POW employment to a further 17 camps.[60] By the end of October 1944, already 16,000 German POWs were working under the MAF in 22 camps which previously had been occupied by Italians and the Ministry of Supply.[61] However, this scheme ran into bottlenecks by November 1944. German POW employment required armed escorts and these could only be supplied for groups of twelve prisoners or more.[62] Thus, in December 1944, the government announced the commencement of unescorted German POW employment in agriculture and forestry as an experiment on a small scale.[63] The experiment was a success. In July 1945, 55,700 Germans had been placed in working camps for unescorted employment in agriculture and forestry.[64] German POW hostel employment is first mentioned in June 1945 with 1,700 and by July had already doubled to 3,659 accommodated in 46 hostels.[65] Billeting was initially forbidden for security reasons, but it started as an experiment on a small scale in November 1945. The Minister of Labour called the experiment a success in March 1946 with 5,463 German and 9,155 Italian billetees.[66] German POW employment in agriculture expanded even further in 1946 as more and more Italians had to be replaced because of repatriation. By September 1946, 145,000 Germans were working in agriculture.[67] The process of replacing Italians by Germans was more or less complete by the spring of 1946 and by June 1946 Italian POW employment had ended according to the War Office reports.

The relation between the German POWs, the local population and the farmers in general seems to have been friendly. One German POW who worked in agriculture in Newton Stewart in south-west Scotland in 1946 and 1947 recalled the mutual help the prisoners and the local

[56] WO 165/59, Summary No. 13, June 1942, point 9b.

[57] WO 165/59, Directorate of Prisoners of War Monthly Directorate Letter No. 18, Apr. 1943, point 7a; Summary No. 46, Mar. 1945, point 9b.

[58] MAF 47/132, Tame (MAF) to Chandler (WO), 19 Oct. 1943.

[59] Archives du Comité International de la Croix Rouge (ACICR), Geneva, C SC, Service des camps Grande-Bretagne, RT, report on camp 103, file H/FPD/MBG, 14 Mar. 1944.

[60] MAF 47/132, MAF report, 14 July 1944.

[61] MAF 47/132, report on WO proposal to stop changeovers, 26 Oct. 1944.

[62] MAF 47/132, Inter-departmental Committee for the allocation of POWs, WO proposals report, point 4, 26 Oct. 1944.

[63] CAB 114/27, clipping from *The Times*, 15 Dec. 1945, 'German prisoners to work on land – unguarded parties for farmers'.

[64] WO 165/59, Summary No. 50, July 1945, point III bi.

[65] Ibid. and Summary No. 49, June 1945, point 8.

[66] Minister Lawson in *Parliamentary Debates* (*PD*) (*Commons*), fifth ser., 421, col. 204–5, 26 Mar. 1946.

[67] Minister Williams in *PD* (*Commons*), fifth ser., 434, col. 29, 3 Mar. 1947.

population gave each other. As the Germans had given the village 'emergency help' in the winter of 1946–47, in return the local population successfully pleaded for the concession that the prisoners should be able to move freely within five miles of the camp during the day. This prisoner ate with the farmer's family during the breaks and helped him on his farm voluntarily on Sundays. Inevitably, friendships were formed.[68]

In terms of security considerations, camps were more secure than hostels and hostels more secure than billeting. From an economic perspective, camps were more expensive than hostels and billeting cheaper than hostels. The primacy of economic considerations concerning the utilization of POWs in agriculture is demonstrated by the fact that within a mere six months of their arrival in Britain, Italian POWs were being placed in hostels and were billeted within nine months. Perhaps even more revealing is the German experience, where security considerations were initially even stronger. The evidence clearly shows that once the initial camp-based scheme and employment in gangs of twelve had reached its limits, economic considerations came first and security concerns evaporated.

IV

Qualitative assessments of POW labour productivity varied substantially. While one farmer claimed in 1941 that his two Italians were worth ten casual civilian workers,[69] Lord Somerleyton stated in 1944 that two boys could do the job of 30 Italians.[70] Such disparate assessments arose because POW productivity changed significantly over time and differed by POW sub-group. In addition, the British press biased Italian POW productivity downwards but the newspaper reports also reveal high volatility in productivity.

Italians were most productive in small groups and as billetees. Shirking reduced Italian productivity in 1942[71] and both German and Italian productivity responded negatively to ration and clothing cuts and adverse war events. In August 1943 for instance, a Home Intelligence report claimed that Italians in the north Midlands had become less productive following the bombing of Rome while Italians in the south-western region were delighted by Mussolini's downfall.[72] The co-operator status for Italians introduced in April 1944 entailed a wider use of Italians. Co-operators could be used more extensively without the constraints of the Geneva Convention, were more productive than non-co-operators, more versatile in their use and sometimes more eager to work than British civilians.[73]

Nevertheless, the switch to the co-operator status was not as successful as anticipated by the government. While it was expected at the inception of the scheme in April 1944 that 75 to 90 per cent of the Italians would quickly volunteer to become co-operators, actual conversion rates were much lower. Less than 60 per cent had converted by July 1944 and only 75 per cent by the end of the year. The separation also triggered a wave of opposition from the non-co-operators. They were now more concentrated in non-co-operator camps and subsequently in

[68] Overmans, *Soldaten*, pp. 82–3.
[69] Sponza, *Loyalties*, p. 198.
[70] *Farmers Weekly*, 15 Dec. 1944.
[71] Moore and Fedorowich, *Empire*, p. 148.
[72] CAB 114/26, extract from Home intelligence report No. 150, 19 Aug. 1943.
[73] Sponza, *Loyalties*, p. 284.

a better position to organise strikes. Sponza alleges that from July 1944 onwards, a 'hardening of attitudes by non-co-operators became apparent through pro-fascist demonstrations and antagonism towards co-operators'.[74] In response, the government introduced a new package of privileges in August 1944 to encourage Italians to switch status. They would now be able to remit some of their wages to their families, have more freedom of movement, earn more money and could exchange half of it into British pounds. Co-operator rates did increase after August 1944, but the Italian armistice in the beginning of September also played a role in the rise. Moore and Fedorowich find that conversion rates remained low despite these new work incentives. Of the 154,000 Italian POWs in Britain by April 1945, over 40,000 or 37 per cent remained non-co-operators despite the new work incentives.[75] The co-operator share actually fell in 1946 because of preferred repatriation of co-operators.[76]

In spite of these problems, Moore and Fedorowich claim that the general impression of 'the Italians as a docile, if slightly less than efficient, workforce may have been generally true'. They argue that problems did exist, referring to work refusals by co-operators in January 1945. Like Sponza, they also highlight the low turnout of co-operator conversions by 1945. Only at the end of 1945 had 90 per cent of the Italians become co-operators. But they also concede that non-economic reasons such as the loss of protection by the Geneva Convention and the fear of reprisals by the Germans against their families back home constituted the main reasons for the prisoners' refusal to convert to 'co-operator' status.[77] They therefore concur with Sponza that Italians did cause problems until the end of their employment in Britain in 1946, but also confirm the general stereotype of the docile, slightly inefficient Italian.

Both Italian and German POW productivity increased if repatriation appeared imminent, for example, after the German armistice in May 1945, and it subsequently fell if repatriation was postponed or became uncertain. However, a lack of adequate supervision and excessive reward systems could also reduce productivity. MAF reported in January 1946 that German POW productivity had fallen recently because of slack supervision. There also was a tendency to 'go slow' because farmers 'spoiled' prisoners by giving them cigarettes and food as work incentives. Consequently, prisoners would now only work when adequately rewarded with these gifts.[78] Given the various different economic and non-economic factors impacting POW productivity, the following section will examine German versus Italian productivity and subsequently present aggregate quantitative results to form a clearer picture of POW productivity in agriculture.

V

Moore-Colyer asserts that the 'widely publicised myth' of the lazy Italian and hard-working German requires closer investigation, but he found no conclusive evidence on which to arrive at a clear verdict.[79] New evidence from government sources demonstrates that Germans were more productive than Italians. Costs associated with German POW labour were higher because they required more supervision and discipline, but they were more willing to work.

[74] Ibid., pp. 257, 271.
[75] Moore and Fedorowich, *Empire*, pp. 159–60.
[76] Ibid., p. 214.
[77] Moore and Fedorowich, *Empire*, pp. 159–60, 263.
[78] MAF 47/150, Williams to Cookman, 29 Jan. 1946.
[79] Moore-Colyer, 'POWs', p. 131.

As soon as security restrictions constraining their use were relaxed after VE-Day in May 1945, employment increased rapidly. German billetees were most productive, but unescorted Germans in large groups also showed good results.

A draft War Cabinet paper from the spring of 1945 on the employment of POWs post-VE day stated that despite higher guarding ratios for Germans compared to Italians, experience showed that 'the output of German prisoners greatly exceeds that of the Italians whilst if "technical' personnel" and extreme Nazis are excluded, the security risk should be greatly diminished once the war in Europe is over'.[80] Similarly, an article from *The Times* from mid-May 1945 praised the contribution of additional farm labourers and contrasted slacking Italians with industrious Germans. Discipline among the Italians 'sent out from some camps to work on farms has been poor in recent months. They have done as much work or as little as they pleased, and the guards have let them have their way'. Conversely, the Germans 'have a reputation for being good workmen, but they expect to receive orders that must be obeyed'. They required strict supervision in order to prevent them from idleness and becoming a 'nuisance'. With soldiers not yet returning home, farmers expected the War Office and MAF to supply them with more Germans in order to 'relieve the strain on manpower in the next few months'.[81]

Such views are also borne out by internal MAF correspondence. MAF had reviewed the wages payable by farmers for POWs periodically since 1941. As part of these reviews, it asked its Labour Advisory Officers (LAOs) liaising with the CWAECs for their views. In the summer of 1945, several LAO reports suggested that farmers preferred German to Italian POW labour as it was more productive and the ministry subsequently enquired whether the wages payable by farmers should be changed. LAO Purkis responded that almost all the committees he talked to rejected a change in the POW rate. Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Berkshire, Oxford and Surrey stated that instituting different wage rates for Italians and Germans was politically impossible and that a wage increase would reduce employment of Italians. Italian billetee productivity was good, but ordinary Italian POW labour was 'doing less and less'. Two ration cuts, recent clothing cuts and the uncertainty of repatriation appeared to be the main reasons for slacking. This being said, Purkis found that Italians worked well if incentives in the form of money and cigarettes were given.[82] LAO Williams claimed that Germans were better than Italians because they were capable of more sustained effort and better disciplined. He also pointed out that farmers preferred German POW labour to WLA and civilian labour because it was cheaper. The Nottinghamshire Executive Officer argued that Italians were only worth 6*d*. per hour, but that Germans were not worth more than 1*s*. per hour, the current wage rate.[83] Finally, quantitative evidence drawn from two different agricultural hostels in Carmarthenshire in Wales, Llandeilo (Germans) and Llandovery (Italians) also confirms this view. While during the period October 1945 to January 1946 Italians earned £1.32 per week, Germans earned £2. They worked 32 hours per week compared to an average of only 21 hours

[80] MT 39/568, Draft paper for the War Cabinet: 'Employment of German POWs in the UK after the cessation of hostilities in Europe', undated, but most probably Apr. 1945, p. 4, point 6b. Technical personnel' refers to Luftwaffe and U-Boat crews who were considered to have more fascist attitudes than other German Army personnel and therefore were less desirable for employment from a security standpoint.

[81] *The Times*, 14 May 1945, 'Farm labour – more German prisoners needed'.

[82] MAF 47/138, Purkis to Cookman, 25 June 1945.

[83] MAF 47/138, Williams to Cookman, 23 June 1945.

for Italians.[84] The Germans on average worked 50 per cent more than Italians. This confirms the conclusion from the qualitative results above: that in 1945 and 1946, Germans were working harder than Italians.

Qualitative evidence on the productivity of a third POW worker group, the Ukrainians, is very scarce. A month after their arrival in July 1947 a MAF representative noted that the 8,000 Ukrainian POWs working in agriculture 'worked well'. A Ministry of Labour representative added that they were 'essentially of an agricultural type' and that they should look forward to their transfer from POW to civilian status.[85] The Ukrainians were thus regarded as useful rural workers and it was expected to increase their utilization after their transfer. However, this picture had changed by March 1948. MAF at this point employed 7,200 Ukrainian POWs, 5,800 in England and Wales and 1,400 in Scotland, but would only agree to retain 4,800 of these as civilian rural workers as the remainder displayed 'poor standards' or caused trouble. While in Scotland ten per cent of the Ukrainian POW workers were rejected as 'trouble makers' or 'misfits', in England and Wales almost 40 per cent were considered to be not 'up to standard'. Apart from their 'low mental capacity', 'failure to work without strict supervision and living habits which made their accommodation in agricultural hostels impossible' were listed as reasons for their unsuitability for work.[86] More than a third (2,450, or 34 per cent) of the Ukrainian POWs working in agriculture in Britain in March 1948 were therefore considered to be unsuitable for rural employment. This implies that the Ukrainian workers were not as much of an asset as MAF had initially hoped. The problems of low productivity if supervision was not supplied and trouble making were nothing new; they had also been observed with German and Italian POWs as discussed before, but they had abated by the time the Ukrainians arrived in 1947. Apart from rebellious Italian non-co-operators and ardent Nazis, the Italians and the Germans showed reasonable compliance with rural work in the post-war period.

VI

Quantitative evidence on POW productivity in agriculture is taken from three different sources. First, MAF and its manpower division provide POW productivity estimates which mostly appear constant. Information relayed to Canada in 1942 on Italian POW productivity in Britain shows that the MAF considered a productivity of 75 per cent of civilian workers a fair average.[87] The same figure of 75 per cent was also used in 1944,[88] 1945 and 1946. MAF's manpower division estimated relative productivities in terms of 'man-equivalents' which were calculated to forecast rural labour requirements. For instance, 71,000 POWs in 1945 were worth 54,000 'man-equivalents', implying a productivity of 76 per cent compared to civilians. However, the manpower division's assessment seems somewhat arbitrary because all

[84] MAF 47/150, Lewis to Cookman, Carmarthenshire WAEC, 'Comparison of German and Italian POW earnings at hostels', 28 Jan. 1946.

[85] MAF 47/165, Note of a meeting of 8 July 1947 to discuss labour supply prospects in agriculture.

[86] LAB 8/98, undated note on meeting at Home Office on Ukrainian surrendered enemy personnel, 3 Mar. 1948; Note of a Home Office meeting to consider the disposal of Ukrainian POWs in the UK, 3 Mar. 1948.

[87] Library and Archives Canada, RG24/6577, 1-2-10, Memorandum from Col. Streight for Dr Coleman, 13 Nov. 1942.

[88] MAF 47/56, Hudson to Anderson, 13 Jan. 1944.

TABLE 1. POW and rural civilian wages, 1941–46

Date	*Min. wage/week (s.) (1)*	*Minimum wage/hour (2)*	*POW wage/hour (3)*	*POW wage share (%) (4)*	*Productivity/wage ratio (5)*
July 1941	48	1*s.* 0*d.*	9½*d.*	79	0.95
Dec. 1941	60	1*s.* 3*d.*	1*s.* 0*d.*	80	0.94
Dec. 1943	65	1*s.* 4¼*d.*	1*s.* 0*d.*	74	1.01
Aug. 1945	70	1*s.* 5½*d.*	1*s.* 0*d.*	69	1.09
Oct. 1945	70	1*s.* 5½*d.*	1*s.* 3*d.*	86	0.87
Feb. 1946	70	1*s.* 5½*d.*	1*s.* 3*d.*	86	0.87
Apr. 1946	70	1*s.* 6*d.*	1*s.* 6*d.*	100	0.75

Note: POW productivity is set at 75 per cent of civilians', see text.
Source: Ministry of Labour Gazette, 1943–46 for civilian wages, MAF 47/138 for POW wages.

supplementary labour groups in these 'man-equivalent' calculations were valued at 75 per cent and because the proxies employed did not change over time whilst POW productivity did.

Second, the difference between POW and minimum civilian wages presents a more dynamic POW productivity measure. Evidence comes from the Agricultural Wages Board (AWB) which set and regularly reviewed rural civilian minimum and POW wages. The first of these wage-setting procedures occurred in the summer of 1941 when the wages payable by farmers for POW labour had to be decided prior to the arrival of the first batches of Italian POW workers. The AWB acknowledged that farmers could not be charged the full wage as POW productivity was expected to be lower than that of civilians. However, POW labour could not be seen as a hidden subsidy to the farmer and it was stressed in internal discussions that the trade unions would object to forced labour undercutting the standard wages. Eventually, the AWB agreed on a 'four-fifth assessment', i.e. it considered Italians to be 80 per cent as productive as civilians. Farmers would pay 38*s.* a week for POW labour, 79 per cent of the civilian minimum wage in agriculture of 48*s.* at the time, subject to review after a few months.[89] In hindsight, the AWB noted that the four-fifths assessment was 'fully justified by experience in the case of billeted prisoners'; however gang labour was considered 'to be a little less efficient'.[90] This assessment confirms the earlier observation that billeted Italian POW labour was significantly more productive than gang labour. It also implies that the AWB advance estimate was reasonably accurate but that actual average Italian POW productivity was lower than 80 per cent in 1941.

POW wages were raised over time to account for rising POW productivity. Table 1 compares the civilian minimum wages and POW wage set by the AWB over time. Assuming the wage shares also present relative productivity, POWs were 74 per cent as productive as civilians in 1943 but less than 70 per cent in summer 1945 (column 4 in Table 1). POW wages were increased in October 1945 to account for POW productivity exceeding wages. The share of POW relative

[89] Sponza, *Loyalties*, p. 192.
[90] MAF 47/138, 'Charges for the supply of POW labour to farmers', AWB, Sept. 1945.

to civilian wages fell from 80 per cent in 1941 to 70 per cent in 1944 and then rose from August 1945 to 100 per cent in April 1946. The AWB considered POWs as productive as civilians from this date despite protests from farmers: wages remained at that level afterwards. The productivity/wage ratio in column (5) in Table 1 compares the POW wage share in column (4) with MAF's 75 per cent estimate. If the ratio is above 1.0, then productivity expressed by the MAF estimate exceeded the relative wages paid by farmers. If we assume the wage share measure to be more realistic overall than the constant MAF estimate, then the ratio captures a rise in POW productivity from 1941 to 1945 and implies that the MAF's 75 per cent proxy initially overstated and eventually understated POW productivity.

Third, Williams has provided another alternative dynamic POW productivity proxy. He assumes that relative weekly earnings in 1944–45 and 1947–48 reflect productivity to attain conversion factors and relative productivities. He finds billeted POWs more productive than non-billeted. POW productivity relative to full-time regular civilian workers rose over time from 40 per cent for non-billeted and 65 per cent for billeted in 1944–45 to 70 and 80 per cent respectively in 1947–48. Williams explains the variation with growing experience and declining hostility and irresponsibility.[91] The comparison of POW productivity to that of other civilian supplementary rural labour groups reveals that POWs changed from one of the least productive supplementary labour groups to the most productive post-war. Williams did not determine varying factors for all labour groups and did not distinguish between Germans or Italians or co-operators or non-co-operators. Moreover, he himself finds his measures arbitrary and various authors have criticised them as excessively low.[92] Still, Murray considered William's figures to be a good overall approximation.[93]

The productivity estimates from Williams and other productivity proxies are used to yield new POW productivity estimates adjusted for the billetee share. This methodology takes into account the higher productivity of billeted versus non-billeted POWs. For instance, had the entire POW labour force in 1944 been billeted, it would on average have been 65 per cent as productive as British male rural labour. Table 2 presents the billetee share of the total rural POW labour force from 1941 to 1947 for those dates where German and Italian total rural employment and billetee employment is known. It shows that at peak in summer 1944, almost a third of all rural POW workers were billetees and that from 1945 to 1947 the share varied between 12 and 14 per cent. These shares are then adjusted by the relative billetee and non-billetee productivity proxies over time to factor in the increasing POW productivity. The billetee shares are multiplied by 40 and 65 per cent for non-billets and billeted until 1944, by 50 to 75 per cent in 1945 to incorporate the MAF's view and by 70 and 80 per cent for 1946–47.

The productivity results are summarized in column 2 of Table 2. The annual productivity averages derived from these results in Table 3 show that POW prisoners were between 50 and 70 per cent as productive as civilian workers in British agriculture and that their productivity increased most significantly in 1946 and 1947. Productivity apparently fell slightly during

[91] H. T. Williams, 'Changes in the productivity of labour in British agriculture', *J. Agricultural Economics* 10 (1954), pp. 333–4.

[92] Brassley, 'Wartime productivity', pp. 36–7; Clarke, 'WLA', pp. 113–14.

[93] Murray, *Agriculture*, pp. 272–3.

TABLE 2. Billetee shares and POW productivity relative to British rural workers

Date	*Billetee share (%)*	*Relative POW productivity (%)*
(1) Winter 1941	0	40.0
(2) Summer 1942	5.0	41.2
(3) July 1943	9.2	42.3
(4) Summer 1944	28.6	47.1
(5) Summer 1945	14.0	53.5
(6) December 1945	12.0	53.3
(7) June 1946	12.9	71.9
(8) March 1947	9.2	71.0

Note: Billetee share of rural POW employment. Relative productivities used as follows: rows 1–4: non-billeted 40 per cent, billeted 65 per cent; rows 5–6: non-billeted 50 per cent, billeted 75 per cent; and rows 7 to 8: non-billeted 70 per cent, billeted 80 per cent.
Source: Billetee share: WO 165/59, various monthly reports.

TABLE 3. POW relative productivity proxy, 1944–47

Year	*Productivity average (%)*
1944	47.0
1945	53.5
1946	62.25
1947	71.0

Source: See Table 2 and text.

1945 because of a fall in the billetee share. However, the increasing use of co-operators and unescorted Germans in March 1945 suggests an increase in productivity during 1945. The Italian POW repatriation in November 1945 and the related camp changeovers may have reduced productivity as time was lost with POW logistics. Nevertheless, the 53.5 per cent figure should be taken as a minimum and higher productivity should be assumed for 1946. As a sudden jump in productivity from 1945 to 1946 was unlikely, we interpolate the 1946 average from the 1945 and 1947 figures to attain a more smooth and realistic estimate of 62.25 per cent for 1946. These new estimates present minimum figures to counter any upward bias. They are lower than the figures from MAF and AWB but appear more plausible as they account for smooth productivity increases over time.

VII

These revised aggregate annual POW productivity figures now allow us to compute the prisoners' economic contribution to British agriculture. Applying the relative productivities to

TABLE 4. POW and civilian employment in British agriculture, 1941–47

Date	*New POW figures (1)*	*Official MAF POW figures (2)*	*Civilian rural workers (3)*	*New POW share (%) (4)*	*MAF POW share (%) (5)*
December 1941	5,000	n/a	729,000	0.70	n/a
Summer 1942	20,000	n/a	824,000	2.43	n/a
July 1943	61,000	n/a	843,000	7.24	n/a
Summer 1944	52,157	25,273	862,958	6.04	2.93
Summer 1945	100,683	57,763	886,686	11.35	6.51
June 1946	146,677	91,366	888,864	16.50	10.28
March 1947	170,880	88,324	891,479	19.17	9.91
Average, 1941–47	79,485	n/a	846,570	9.40	n/a
Average, 1944–47	117,599	65,682	882,497	13.32	7.44

Note: (2) is not available before 1944 and is for England and Wales only up until 1945. Column (4) is the result of column (3) divided by column (1) and column (5) is derived by dividing column (3) by column (2). Figures in column (2) and (3) refer to employment at the end of June each year. Averages added by the author.
Sources: (1) MAF 47/132; (2) and (3) MAF, *Agricultural statistics*, *1939–44* (1947), *1945* (1948), *1946–47* (1950).

rural POW employment numbers will give us the real contribution to the rural labour force adjusted for productivity. In order to pursue this exercise, we have compiled new evidence on German and Italian POW employment figures in British agriculture from government sources and compared it with civilian data. Table 4 presents these results. It shows that civilian rural employment (column 3) gradually increased from 730,000 in 1941 to 890,000 in March 1947. This is then compared with the new evidence on combined German and Italian POW rural employment (column 1). The rural POW labour force developed from a minuscule size of 1,000 in 1941 to almost 171,000 in 1947. Based on these numbers, the new share of POW workers of the total British rural labour force is calculated and shown in column 4. The new POW share in column 4 is therefore the share of the total POW rural labour force in column 1 of the aggregate rural civilian labour force in column 3. The POWs initially only made up 6 per cent of the British rural labour force but at their peak in the summer of 1946 and March 1947 represented one fifth. On average, every tenth worker in British agriculture was a POW during the wartime and post-war period (1941–47) but from D-Day up until mid-1947, one in eight workers was a POW. The MAF's own official statistics on POW employment are taken and also expressed as a share of the rural civilian workforce (column 5). A comparison of columns 4 and 5 shows that the new POW employment shares are twice as high as the official government estimates for the entire period of 1944–47. The MAF figures suggest an average share of 7 per cent 1944–47 while my new figures for the same period are nearly twice as high at 13 per cent, even if averages are taken into account. Also, June and September are peak harvest dates, so civilian rural employment is inflated. By contrast, the new figures denote summer averages and thus avoid upward bias.

TABLE 5. Man-equivalent adjustments to British rural labour, 1941–47

Date	*Total workforce adjusted*	*Adjusted POW workforce*	*Adjusted relative POW share (%)*
December 1941	601,061	2,350	0.39
Summer 1942	679,388	9,400	1.38
July 1943	695,054	28,670	4.12
Summer 1944	711,509	24,514	3.44
Summer 1945	731,073	53,880	7.37
June 1946	732,868	91,673	12.51
March 1947	735,024	121,205	16.49
Average 1941–47	697,997	47,369	6.53
Average 1944–47	721,694	72,755	10.0

Source: See Table 3 above for relative average annual POW productivities.

Following the revision of POW rural employment shares, we can obtain the net contribution to the rural labour force by adjusting these shares by the relative productivity of POWs. This methodology follows the 'man-equivalent' assumption used by the MAF. The ministry based its calculations for labour requirements on 'man-equivalents' where the most productive male farm worker was equal to one man-equivalent. For instance, if POW workers in agriculture were 75 per cent as productive as the most productive British civilian male farm worker, then 100,000 POW workers would be worth 75,000 man-equivalents. MAF used these estimates in order to determine labour requirements to fulfil food production targets. One million acres of cereals for example required 30,000 'man-equivalents'. Civilian worker figures are adjusted by an average productivity of 82.45 per cent compared to the most able civilian farm worker to consider the varying productivity of groups such as the WLA or juveniles. This average is taken from MAF man-equivalent and labour requirement calculations on the entire British rural labour force from summer 1945.[94] POW employment figures are adjusted by the relative productivity averages from Table 3. The average POW productivity from 1941 until 1944 is set at 47 per cent, the 1944 result. It then increases to 53.5 per cent (1945), 62.5 per cent (1946) and 71 per cent (1947). Table 5 presents the adjusted total rural civilian and POW workforce and the resulting net rural POW labour share. The prisoners' net contribution to the rural labour force did not exceed 4 per cent until 1944 but increased steadily thereafter, with a peak contribution of 16.5 per cent in 1947.

The figures from Table 5 would imply that POWs on average produced a tenth of Britain's agricultural output in 1944–47. However, there are some qualifications to this assumption. Brassley finds that agricultural output growth exceeded input growth in 1940 and 1943, was on par in 1941 and below input growth in 1942, 1944 and 1945. Agricultural productivity during the war therefore was subject to considerable volatility, rendering the assumption of a constant

[94] MAF 47/56, 'Labour requirements for agriculture, 1946', point D, 'labour on farms, June 1945'.

aggregate agricultural productivity 1944–47 doubtful. Also, the preceding calculations assumed the average productivity of 82.45 per cent of the aggregate workforce from summer 1945 to hold for the entire period 1944–47. This might not be the case given seasonal variations in labour demand and supply. Nevertheless, my new estimates provide a first proxy for the POW output share. These shares can be converted into monetary contributions using MAF data on the UK net agricultural output in 1946 prices. For example, POW rural labour shares from 1945 and 1946 translate into a monetary contribution of £38.9 and £68.0 million in 1945 and 1946 respectively.[95] This expression in monetary terms illustrates once more that the prisoners' contribution was most significant post-war.

VIII

Physical values of output might reflect the wartime and post-war contribution of POW labour more adequately, but in their absence, monetary values seem a plausible substitute. This section uses data on the monetary value of POW labour to construct the first estimate of the prisoners' contribution to British GDP. Evidence on the contribution to the post-war construction sector will be analysed and will be combined with the monetary estimates of rural contribution above to calculate the prisoners' aggregate contribution.

The Ministry of Works (MOW) furnished statistics on the British construction industry which reveal the monetary contribution of POW labour for the post-war period from 1946 to 1948 (Table 6). German POWs contributed £26 million to British building and civil engineering during that period. Their relative contribution to output in these industries peaked in 1946 at almost two per cent or £16 million. Then it declined rapidly, mainly because of German POW repatriation in 1947–48. Output is minuscule in 1948 because all German POWs had been repatriated by mid-year. The MOW was an important user of POW labour. In November 1945 for instance, roughly 10 per cent of all Italian and German POW workers in Britain were employed by MOW[96] and in February 1946 it employed almost a quarter (23 per cent) of all German POW workers.[97] The work done by the prisoners was very broad, including military and industrial construction, residential buildings, roads and street maintenance, public buildings and air raid damage repairs.[98] Most prisoners working for MOW were engaged in housing, but some worked in cement and brick production and 300 German POWs were also used for the maintenance of London Parks in 1946.[99]

The MOW data and the rural estimates can now shed light on the relative value of POW labour. Table 7 compares the monetary contribution of net rural output from the previous section for the entire POW employment period 1941–47 to British GDP. POW employment in agriculture alone contributed almost one per cent to British GDP at peak in 1947. While the

[95] Net UK rural output was £528.671 million in 1944–45 and £543.621 million in 1945–46. MAF, *Agricultural statistics, UK* [Years] (1949), pt II, 'Output and utilisation of farm produce', pp. 30–1.

[96] 27,000 Germans and 4,500 Italians were employed by the MOW at the time, CAB 114/33, 26 Nov. 1945.

[97] 29,412 of 123,831 Germans worked for the MOW at the time. BT 64/2891, Consolidated employment return – German base and work camps, 28 Feb. 1946.

[98] Fleming and Rowden, *Statistics*, p. 533.

[99] See MAF 47/132, weekly employment sheets, June–Aug. 1945 for brick production employment statistics and WORK 16/1804, handwritten note, 29 May 1946 for park employment details.

TABLE 6. POW output of building and civil engineering work in Great Britain, 1946–48

	1946	*1947*	*1948*	*Total 1946–48*
Total output (£ m)	884.7	1,047.2	1,181.3	3,113.2
POW output (£ m)	16.0	8.2	0.9[a]	26.0
POW share (per cent)	1.81	0.78	0.07	0.84

Note: [a] POWs were only employed during the first two quarters of 1948.
Source: M. C. Fleming and S. R. Rowden, *Statistics collected by the Ministry of Works, 1941–56* (1980), p. 533, Table C1.1.

TABLE 7. Contribution of rural POW labour to British GDP, 1941–47

Year	*POW output (£ m)*	*Contribution to British GDP (%)*
1941	1.9	0.03
1942	6.4	0.08
1943	21.7	0.26
1944	18.9	0.22
1945	38.9	0.44
1946	68.0	0.78
1947	85.2	0.92
Average 1941–47	34.5	0.40
Average 1944–47	52.8	0.60

Note: Feinstein's figures are at 1938 factor costs and MAF figures at 1945–46 prices.
Sources: British GDP figures 1941–47 taken from C. H. Feinstein, *National income, expenditure and output of the UK* (1972), Table 6. UK net rural output: MAF, *Agricultural statistics, part II*, (1949), pp. 30–1.

absolute contribution of £34.5 million p.a. 1941–47 appears impressive, the GDP figures reveal that the rural contribution remained minuscule until 1943 and only reached the 0.5 per cent mark in 1945, when hostilities ceased. The average contribution between 1944 and 1947 of 0.6 per cent was significantly higher than the average contribution between 1941 and 1947 of 0.4 per cent, reinforcing the impression of a higher post-war contribution. Adding the POW building sector output to POW agricultural output yields a contribution to GDP of 0.96 per cent in 1946 and 1.0 per cent in 1947, so in both post-war years German POWs contributed at least one per cent to British GDP.

The results reflect the rising productivity over time and higher average productivity and employment numbers in the immediate post-war period. However, some qualifications have to be made. Firstly, the estimates understate the aggregate POW contribution because several sectors using POW labour, including the food processing, paper, canned food and fertilizer industries have been omitted for lack of adequate data. Agriculture however was by far the most important employment sector accounting in the summer of 1945 for 60 per cent and

TABLE 8. Contribution of POW labour in agriculture and construction to British GDP, 1946–47

Year	*POW output (£m)*	*Contribution to British GDP (%)*
1946	84.0	0.96
1947	93.4	1.00

Sources: See text and Tables 6 and 7.

in the following summer for 53 per cent of all German POW employment.[100] Assuming that construction employed at least another 10 per cent as shown above, this means that the output of at least a third of the POW workforce has not been accounted for in the 1946 and 1947 aggregate contribution estimates. Following this logic, the prisoners' aggregate economic contribution for the years 1941–45 is probably even more significantly understated as we lack data on the output of the construction sector. Third, the aggregate GDP figure is given at constant 1938 prices while my results are based on rural output with constant 1945–46 prices. The difference in base year may understate GDP figures, so GDP contributions may be slightly overstated. One way to solve the compatibility problem is to use market prices for the national income estimate. A figure from the United Nations statistical series for net national expenditure at market prices yields a minimum contribution of German POWs to British national income in 1946 of 0.65 per cent.[101] While this figure is lower than the previous result, it indicates a POW contribution of similar magnitude. Fourth, the German POW output figures depend on the assumptions discussed earlier. Finally, expressions of contributions in monetary terms for a war economy might actually understate the real contribution. My results above therefore are minimum figures and the actual contribution may have been higher. The peak result of one per cent for 1946–47 for agriculture and construction underscores the prisoners' value in the immediate post-war period in sectors with severe labour shortages.

IX

This paper has provided the first consistent quantitative economic estimates for German and Italian POW employment and productivity in British agriculture and by doing so, has revised existing estimates significantly upwards. It has also shown how the economic contribution, composition and scale of POW labour in British agriculture evolved over time. The POW workforce was both small and Italian in 1941 but became exclusively German post-war and at its peak in 1946 made up 20 per cent of the rural British labour force. It was used as a substitute from 1944 onwards to relieve schoolchildren from rural labour and to compensate the loss of WLA members reassigned to the munitions industries. The prisoners' employment enabled Britain to employ civilians in war-relevant industries such as munitions rather than on the wheat fields and they filled a significant manpower gap, both during and after the war, in a

[100] MAF 47/132, weekly employment sheets, 30 June to 8 Sept. 1945; employment of POWs in Great Britain as at the end of June 1946.

[101] Net national expenditure at market prices for the United Kingdom for 1946 is given at £9,362 million.

sector that was notoriously short of labour. They could be compelled to work in agriculture while civilians and even former farmers returning from the front were reluctant to work in the industry.

POWs could have been a severe net burden to British agriculture: they required escorts, might have been unskilled, fascist and prone to slacking and shirking. They could not be induced via penalties to work harder. On the other hand, experiments with skilled, compliant POWs illustrated that their productivity could be very high, especially in small unescorted groups, and that it could be similar to other supplementary labour groups such as the WLA. On average POWs were between 47 and 71 per cent as productive as regular male farm workers. This analysis revealed that their contribution to British agriculture *after* the war was much more significant than *during* the war. They were employed on a much larger scale. By this time, the POW workforce consisted mostly of Germans who were more productive than Italians, could be employed unguarded but were more mobile and controllable than civilian workers.

Davis, in his work on POW employment during both World Wars around the globe, claims that POW workers were inefficient, unmotivated and ill-suited to their tasks.[102] This assertion does not apply to the British case. His analysis neglects the dynamics, as well as the scale, scope and changing composition of POW labour encountered in British agriculture. New calculations show that they were at least 47 per cent as productive as regular male farm workers and constituted 13 per cent of the rural labour force in Britain from 1944 to 1947. Adjusting for productivity, they seem to have contributed on average 10 per cent to net rural output during the same period. The conversion of these figures into monetary estimates reveals a peak annual contribution in agriculture of £85 million in 1947 and an average annual contribution of £53 million in 1944–47. The prisoners' relative contribution to the British economy remained below 0.5 per cent until 1944 but reached 0.8 and 0.9 per cent of GDP in 1946 and 1947. The addition of German POW output for the construction sector raises the contribution above the one per cent mark. However, this figure still understates the POW contribution because output in sectors other than agriculture and construction is missing. While scholars almost unanimously concede the crucial role that POWs played in British agriculture, official government sources appear more cautious.

POWs were not a liability for British agriculture. Farmers initially viewed POW labour with scepticism, but towards the end of the war and after it, their demand for it appeared insatiable. Productivity varied by region, POW type, period and depended on many other factors such as supervision and war events. Initially, language difficulties, inexperience, and reluctance to work limited POW productivity, but over time language barriers fell, prisoners became more skilled and were used in a more productive and less costly manner, for example in smaller groups or as billetees. The new estimates have shown that POW labour productivity increased significantly over time. POWs, in particular the Germans, were a net asset for British agriculture in the wartime and immediate post-war period.

[102] Davis, 'POWs', p. 630.

The political culture of the English commons, *c.*1550–1650*

by Jonathan Healey

Abstract

Although there has been plenty of work on enclosure and the riots against it, the 'political culture' of common lands remains obscure, despite considerable interest amongst social historians in 'everyday politics' and 'weapons of the weak'. This article attempts to recover something of that culture, asking what political meaning was ascribed to certain actions, events and landscape features, and what tactics commoners used to further their micro-political ends. Using a systematic study of interrogatories and depositions in the Court of Exchequer, it finds a complex array of political weaponry deployed in commoning disputes, from gossip, threats and animal-maiming to interpersonal violence. In addition, it shows that the need to establish precedent, or 'long-usage', meant that certain physical acts and features were imbued with political meaning: acts of use, perambulations, old ridge-and-furrow, speech, even dying whispers, could all mean something in the politics of the commons. Moreover, commoners could be subject to moral scrutiny as neighbours, with antisocial behaviour liable to be used against them in disputes. All in all, it is argued that we are only just beginning to recover the politics of the English commons, and that there was much more to them than enclosure rioting.

Commons are political spaces. They are shared *between* people, and their survival depends on regulation and co-operation.[1] More than this, they are often physically ill-defined, as are rights to use them. Whereas, broadly speaking, a person's rights on a private plot are clearly defined, those on a common are often not. Sometimes based on local custom, on prescriptive documents locked up in dusty chests, or on imprecise concepts of 'neighbourhood', rights of use on commons are thus subject to intense but invisible fields of social force, in which some users have better claims of use than their neighbours, while others are excluded altogether, and in which access is defined in part by the distribution of power.

Of course, all early modern historians know there was a politics of common land. But

* Earlier versions of this article were presented at seminars at Merton College, Oxford in 2010 and the Oxford University Department for Continuing Education in 2012, as well as at the British Agricultural History Society Annual Conference at Durham University in 2010. I would like to thank the participants on those occasions for their insightful comments on the research.

[1] G. Hardin, 'The tragedy of the commons', *Science*, 16 (1968), pp. 1243–8; E. Ostrom, *Governing the commons: the evolution of institutions for collective action* (1990); A. J. L. Winchester, *The harvest of the hills: rural life in northern England and the Scottish Borders, 1400–1700* (2000); L. Shaw-Taylor, 'The management of common land in the lowlands of southern England, c. 1500–c. 1850', in T. de Moor, L. Shaw-Taylor and P. Warde (eds), *The management of common land in north-west Europe, c.1500–1850* (2002), pp. 59–85.

our view of this politics is focused very sharply on one particular aspect: the *dissolution* of common rights, through the wide-ranging raft of changes known together as 'enclosure'; and it focuses on one particular *form* of political action: the riot.[2] The enclosure riot, indeed, is well established as a crucial pre-industrial act of protest: hedge-levelling has even been called a 'national pastime', but the focus on such dramatic moments of direct action has actually obscured the wider politics of common land.[3] Rioting, it has been pointed out, is just one tactic by which groups of commoners could make a political point, and the crowd was 'not the only site for "popular politics"'. Indeed, as I hope to show below, there was a rich repertoire of political acts available to the early-modern commoner.[4]

Similarly distorting has been the tendency to characterize enclosure rioting as 'social protest'. This term was preferred, for example, by Roger Manning in his important study of early-modern rioting, partly because he felt localized protest against specific economic grievances was 'pre-political'.[5] But the term brings baggage. Social protest, surely, implies a moment of agency for the relatively powerless. The archetypal scenario would see the wealthy landowner attempting to extinguish the common rights of the poorer plebeians, whose main response was to riot, albeit usually in a limited way, destructive of property rather than persons, and often in combination with litigation. But again, 'social protest' is just one aspect of 'popular politics', and the term – with all its implications of antagonism across social cleavages, even class struggle – becomes less necessary if, unlike Manning, we accept a wider definition of the 'political'. Indeed, just as Manning and others were publishing their important research into early-modern rioting in the 1980s, a root-and-branch challenge to established definitions of popular politics was gathering pace.

The critical argument was not simply that small communities *did* in fact act politically in the old sense of engaging with government, but that the whole concept of 'politics' needed redefinition. Influenced by the anthropologist James C. Scott, and responding to Patrick Collinson's call for social history 'with the politics put back in', Keith Wrightson argued in 1996 that 'politics' should really be defined as 'the social distribution and use of power'.[6] Thus, aspects of village life which involved conflict, negotiation, process, discourse and mediation were in themselves political. His approach has been widely influential, particularly in the hands of his former

[2] K. Lindley, *Fenland riots and the English Revolution* (1982); R. B. Manning, *Village revolts: social protest and popular disturbances in England, 1509–1640* (1988), pp. 2–3; C. Holmes, 'Drainers and fenmen: the problem of popular political consciousness in the seventeenth century', in A. J. Fletcher and J. Stevenson (eds), *Order and disorder in early modern England* (1985), pp. 166–95; B. Sharp, *In contempt of all authority: rural artisans and riot in the west of England, 1586–1660* (1980). For a rounded recent discussion of the kinds of disputes that arose in relation to *urban* commons, see H. R. French, 'The common fields of urban England: communal agriculture and the "politics of entitlement", 1500–1750', in R. W. Hoyle (ed.), *Custom, improvement and the landscape in early modern Britain* (2011), pp. 149–74.

[3] Manning, *Village revolts*, pp. 27, 31–131, 316.

[4] M.J. Braddick and J. Walter (eds), *Negotiating power in early modern society: order, hierarchy, and subordination in Britain and Ireland* (2001); J. Walter, *Understanding popular violence in the English revolution: the Colchester Plunderers* (2005); id., *Crowds and popular politics in early modern England* (2006).

[5] Manning, *Village revolts*, p. 310.

[6] K. Wrightson, 'The politics of the parish in early modern England', in P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (eds), *The experience of authority in early modern England* (1996), pp. 10–11; J. C. Scott, *Weapons of the weak: everyday forms of peasant resistance* (1985); id., *Domination and the arts of resistance: hidden transcripts* (1990).

students, so much that we are now used to social history being written from this 'political' standpoint, with Scott's concept of 'weapons of the weak' now central to the vocabulary of the social historians.[7] Wrightson, however, did more than just argue for a redefinition of politics: he also suggested areas in which his 'politics of the parish' might be explored. There was, he said of early-modern England, a politics of patriarchy, neighbourhood, custom, reformation and state formation, and of subordination and meaning. Each of these has garnered historical interest, both before and after Wrightson's chapter. This article is very much in this tradition: it hopes to open up a new angle on the 'politics of custom', or at least one particular area of custom.[8]

'Custom' is of course a rather ill-defined term, which had a contemporary legal meaning as well as a modern sociological one.[9] It is not the purpose here to redefine custom, or to unpick its complex relationship with precedent and bylaw. Rather, this article will look in more detail at the politics of one area of the early-modern social experience which we usually consider part of 'custom', namely common land-rights. Much work on the politics of pre-modern 'custom' has considered both customary common rights and the widespread battles over customary land tenure.[10] Yet these are very different aspects of rural life, even if both could be – including in the legal sense – 'customary'. Moreover, while the politics of customary land tenure have attracted considerable attention, those of common rights have tended to be studied in terms of 'social protest' rather than Wrightson's 'politics', which might often be between relative equals.[11] The emphasis here, then, will be on more than just rioting; rather I will consider the wider picture of political agency on common lands, asking what political *tactics* commoners used, and looking for clues as to the political *culture* of commoning, such as the political meanings ascribed to certain acts. It is an article about how people sharing (or wanting to share) a particular kind of resource *waged politics* in relation to that resource. Moreover, it

[7] E.g. A. Fox, 'Custom, memory and the authority of writing', in Griffiths, Fox and Hindle (eds), *Experience of authority*, pp. 89–116; A. Wood, *The politics of social conflict: the Peak Country, 1520–1770* (1999); S. Hindle, *On the parish? The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England, 1550–1750* (2004).

[8] Wrightson, 'Politics', pp. 22–5.

[9] E. P. Thompson, *Customs in common* (1991), pp. 97–103.

[10] Most obviously: Fox, 'Custom'; id., *Oral and literature culture in England, 1500–1700* (2000). Adding customary mining law to the mix: A. Wood, 'Custom, identity and resistance: English free miners and their law, *c.*1550–1800', in Griffiths, Fox and Hindle (eds), *Experience of authority*, pp. 249–85. Work specifically on customs of commoning has usually been eighteenth-century in focus, and less legalistic in approach: Thompson, 'Custom, law and common right', in *Customs*, pp. 97–184; J. M. Neeson, *Commoners: common right, enclosure and social change in England, 1700–1820* (1993); L. Shaw-Taylor, 'Labourers, cows, common rights and parliamentary enclosure: the evidence of contemporary comments, *c.*1760–1810', *Past and Present*, 171 (2001), pp. 95–126. Also: B. Bushaway, *By rite: custom, ceremony and community in England, 1700–1880* (1982). For a recent collection of essays containing much interesting work on custom: Hoyle (ed.), *Custom, improvement and the landscape.*

[11] A point made recently by both Tine de Moor and Matthew Clark; T. de Moor, 'Avoiding tragedies: a Flemish common and its commoners under the pressure of social and economic change during the eighteenth century', *EcHR* 62 (2009), p. 2; M. Clark, 'The gentry, the commons, and the politics of common right in Enfield, *c.*1558–*c.*1603', *Historical J.* 54 (2011), p. 609. Work on the politics of enclosure in the last couple of decades includes: Neeson, *Commoners*; B. Frazer, 'Common recollections: resisting enclosure "by agreement" in seventeenth-century England', *International J. of Historical Archaeology*, 3 (1999), pp. 75–100; H. Falvey, 'Crown policy and local economic context in the Berkhamsted Common enclosure dispute, 1618–42', *Rural Hist.* 12 (2001), pp. 123–58; J. Walter, '"The Pooreman's Joy and the Gentleman's Plague": a Lincolnshire libel and the politics of sedition in early modern England', *Past and Present*, 203 (2009), pp. 29–67.

will try to see beyond the concept of social protest, accepting that there could be as much politicking between relative equals as between 'dominant' and 'subordinate' groups. Indeed, as Matthew Clark has recently shown, popular politics of this kind often fostered complex and shifting alliances in which dominant and subordinate groups could collaborate, and where the former could even deploy the language of poverty and subordination for their own purposes.[12] This is not so much a study of 'weapons of the weak', then, as – simply – of 'weapons'.

I

The critical locations for the politics of commoning were manor courts, or courts baron. It was here that commoning was policed. It is also likely that much related antisocial activity was presented at leets, technically royal not manorial courts but often rather poorly differentiated from courts baron.[13] Ideally, then, if we are to reconstruct the politics of the commons, then we would sit in on these courts; but we cannot. And, although there is much scope for work on manorial courts, their bald lists of presentments only tell us so much. We can see from their records the kinds of offence prosecuted, and the fines levied, but these two are dots we cannot join. For example, in 1652, in Troutbeck (Westmorland), Thomas Lankester was amerced (6*s*. 8*d*. a time) for hounding and staff-herding in Troutbeck Forest.[14] He was then fined at the same court for 'a hubelshou' against Miles Berwick. A hubbleshow was an act of disorder, essentially an affray: perhaps this one related to the illegal hounding and herding; maybe Berwick confronted Lankester on the fells? But we cannot know this. We cannot join the dots.

This article will deploy a different set of sources. Increasingly in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, common rights were contested in the central equity and prerogative courts, no doubt partly a result of the pressures of both population growth and the increasing commercialization of agriculture, plus the more general growth in litigation in the period.[15] The procedure of these courts, which hinged on the collection of written testimony, has left an astonishingly large paper trail, most notably of pleadings, interrogatories and depositions. The advantages of this material are numerous: it is vivid; it involved the sworn testimony of relatively ordinary people; but most of all, it joins the dots. If, say, Miles Berwick had been accosted by Lankester in a physical dispute on the commons of Troutbeck, then this is *exactly* the kind of connection that those constructing a case at equity would have brought to the court's attention. An example from Longsleddale, a couple of valleys down from Troutbeck, illustrates this perfectly, for witnesses attest that in 1576 one Richard Sheppard of Sadgill 'dyd assalte and beit wythe a longe pycked stafe Matthewe Todde … for dryvyng off sheipe', wounding Todd's head and ear.[16] This was part of a wider dispute between the two hamlets of Sadgill and Stockdale: we see tensions over grazing boiling over into violence; perhaps we can

[12] M. Clark, 'Resistance, collaboration and the early modern "public transcript": the River Lea disputes and popular politics in England, 1571–1603', *Cultural and Social Hist.*, 8 (2011), pp. 297–313.

[13] E. Kerridge, *Agrarian problems in the sixteenth century and after* (1969), p. 24; Winchester, *Harvest*, pp. 26–51.

[14] Cumbria Record Office (Carlisle), D/Lons/L5/2/11/10.

[15] Manning, *Village revolts*, pp. 9–38; C. W. Brooks, *Lawyers, litigation and English society since 1450* (1998).

[16] TNA, E 134/20Eliz/Hil4, Depositions of Hugh Sheppard of Kentmere and Richard Cowper of Sleddale, 1578.

imagine Sheppard's decision to pick up his staff and set out onto the fells that day to confront Todd. Moreover, his carrying of the weapon was a *political* act: it conferred power. But so, too, was Todd's recounting of the incident to his neighbours – the witness above deposed that he had 'hard saye' of the assault – likewise its inclusion in the interrogatories collated for the lawsuit, and the two witnesses' decisions to swear to the allegation's truth. The equity suit, then, allows us a brief window onto these political acts.

The main records used here are the 'evidences', i.e. the interrogatories and depositions, collected by the Court of Exchequer, the smaller of the two main central equity courts. Up to 1649 it dealt with cases in which suitors were Crown debtors (which might be any financial connection to the crown, including the payment of rent) or officers, though this subsequently evolved into a legal fiction, opening the court to all-comers.[17] This, of course, means that Crown manors are disproportionately represented in its records, though there is no reason to suppose this will significantly impact upon findings, save to note the frequent claim of Crown tenants that their interest happily coalesced with the monarch's. Suits were initiated by the presentation of an 'English bill', complaining of some injustice, or by an 'information' by the Attorney General, to which an 'answer' was given, possibly followed by a 'replication' and 'rejoinder' from plaintiff and defendant respectively. Similar to other central law courts, these pleadings tended to be rather formulaic. Much the most interesting material is to be found in the evidence collected for the case. This was gathered in the form of witness depositions, either collected by an Exchequer Baron in London or by commissioners nearer the community in question. Each side collated a set of 'interrogatories': leading questions to be put to witnesses of their choosing, usually senior inhabitants of the local area, who then answered all or some of them. Interrogatories were compiled with the help of attorneys, and gave each side an opportunity both to coax their own witnesses into setting out an acceptable narrative of the case, and to trip up those who deposed for the opposition. The answers were written down in summarised form by a clerk, signed by the commissioners supervising the making of the depositions, and then exhibited as proofs before the case proceeded to judgement. Witnesses were undoubtedly selected carefully by litigants and their counsel, so they usually stuck to script; technically, they should not have had a personal interest in the suit, but in the close-knit communities of early modern England such witnesses might be difficult to find.[18]

Equity depositions are not always seen in the most positive light. The legal scholar W. S. Holdsworth was particularly derisive: the procedure, he wrote, garnered 'the most unconvincing testimony at the greatest possible expense', and was a 'futile' method of recovering the facts.[19] One might sympathise with this on reading the lament of the Duchy Court of Lancaster, adjudicating a commoning case from 1556, which appeared

> so doubtfull to this courte for that a great nomber of personns which have deposed therin doe directlie depose the one syde againste the othere so as this Courte cannot well desine

[17] W. H. Bryson, *The equity side of the Exchequer: its jurisdiction, administration, procedures and records* (1975); H. Horwitz, *Exchequer equity records and proceedings, 1649–1841* (2001).

[18] C. Churches, '"The most unconvincing testimony"': the genesis and historical usefulness of the country depositions in Chancery', *Seventeenth century*, 11 (1996), p. 214.

[19] Quoted in Churches, '"Most unconvincing testimony"', p. 209.

> which side ought to be best credited and thereapon to make an order therein except they shulde condemne a great nomber of deponentes of manifest perjurye.[20]

Yet, we should not discount such evidence entirely because *sometimes* it was perjured. Most of the time, allegations by plaintiffs and defendants were backed by several witnesses, and witnesses probably usually misled by omission and weasel words rather than overt falsehoods. Moreover, many events are recounted in enough specific detail to have a genuine ring of truth, and comparing depositions to interrogatories allows us to see when witnesses have made significant embellishments to the phrases laid down by litigants.[21] And, of course, even if suitors and their witnesses perjured themselves, their lies had to be convincing and based on real, identifiable experiences.[22]

Exchequer evidences undoubtedly conceal much: they are proverbial tips of icebergs and without extensive searching through the archives both of the courts and of interested landlords we cannot hope to reconstruct anything like the totality of an individual suit. Such an effort would be Herculean in the extreme if it is to go beyond the confines of the local case study; my approach will be different: to collate evidence from a wide range of lawsuits. Such a bird's-eye approach has been taken before, particularly by Manning, using the records (especially the pleadings) of Star Chamber. But the approach taken here, using Exchequer *evidences*, has two advantages over Manning's. Firstly, given that Star Chamber was expressly charged with prosecuting disturbances of the peace, allegations of rioting in its pleadings may often have been legal fictions.[23] More seriously, any study of popular politics based on the records of Star Chamber will come out with the impression that rioting was critical and endemic: to use the court's records to study riots themselves, as Manning did, is intellectually justifiable, but to use them to see riots *in context* is circular. This is not the case in Exchequer, since no allegation of disorder was necessary for a suit to be heard at equity. Secondly, Manning's study was largely based upon pleadings, which tended to be stylized and dramatized, full – as Manning puts it – of 'hyperbole'.[24] Their descriptions of the weaponry carried by rioters, for example, were probably the formulaic inventions of attorneys rather than bearing any relation to facts 'on the ground'. When it came to framing interrogatories, however, litigants probably tailored their allegations to emphasize those which would be backed up by witnesses: indeed we can usually cross-check them with actual witness testimony. They are thus considerably more likely to tell us *what actually happened* than pleadings. Moreover, while pleadings were usually written by aristocrats, gentlemen, and their attorneys, evidences were forged in a dynamic interaction between litigants, counsel, and often plebeian witnesses. They thus provide a unique window on something close to popular mentalities.

Exchequer evidences also have the enviable advantage of being well catalogued in the

[20] TNA, DL 5/10, fol. 229r-v.

[21] Cf. N. Z. Davies, *Fiction in the archives: pardon tales and their tellers in sixteenth century France* (1987), pp. 5, 21; L. Stone, *Broken lives: separation and divorce in England, 1660–1857* (1990), pp. 4, 7; Churches, '"Most unconvincing testimony"', p. 220.

[22] Cf. T. Stretton, *Women waging law in Elizabethan England* (1998), pp. 14, 19.

[23] Although for an argument that many Star Chamber 'riots' were in fact real see B. A. K. McDonagh, 'Subverting the ground: private property and public protest in the sixteenth-century Yorkshire Wolds', *AgHR* 57 (2007), pp. 191–206.

[24] Manning, *Village revolts*, p. 319.

National Archives. Thus, for the purposes of this study, all sets of Exchequer evidences, catalogued with the keywords of 'common' and either 'inhabitants' or 'tenants' were consulted. The inclusion of the last two was a way of emphasizing the politics of the wider community in the sample, although undoubtedly there will have been pertinent cases not picked up. This gave a total of 195 individually catalogued sets of proceedings, which form the backbone of what follows, although a few additional suits from the equity courts of Exchequer, Chancery, and the Duchy Court of Lancaster, plus the prerogative court of Star Chamber have also been used because they had relevant stories to tell. It would be misleading to categorize these suits, as they usually encompassed a complex array of disputed rights, but the majority relate to pasture rights on large common wastes (though in some cases it was pasture rights on open fields at stake), with enclosures, intercommoning between communities, and the boundaries between manors being the most frequently contested issues.[25] Their geographical coverage is wide: 28 per cent are from the north, 26 per cent from the midlands, 16 per cent from eastern England, 11 per cent from the south-east and 17 per cent from the south-east. Wales, however, provides just 3 cases (2 per cent). In terms of chronology, the majority of suits were from Elizabeth's reign, with some 63 per cent of dated sets of proceedings coming from 1570–99, while only 11 per cent were from 1620–42. Even if we remove the Baron's Depositions, which are only fully catalogued up to 1603, the sixteenth-century figure is still 60 per cent. Much more detailed work would be needed to confirm this, but it looks like Exchequer suits over common rights were on a declining trend by the reign of Charles I. This may reflect the sale of Crown lands under the first two Stuarts, but then the frequency of suits does not seem to increase after the Civil War, when a Crown interest was no longer required.[26] The suits contain nearly 3,900 interrogatories, and depositions from nearly 2,200 witnesses, with occupations recorded for all but 11.3 per cent of deponents. Witnesses were overwhelmingly male, just 1.7 per cent were women.[27] Of the males with occupational titles, 12.7 per cent were knights, esquires and gentlemen, 33.0 per cent were yeomen, 29.9 per cent husbandmen and 2.3 per cent other agriculturalists. Just 3.7 per cent worked in textiles, 7.8 per cent were small tradesmen (such as blacksmiths), 0.8 per cent worked in extractive industries, while fully 7.8 per cent were labourers. The remaining 2.1 per cent comprised a smattering of professionals and clergy, five servants and an almshouse inmate from Durham. The sample is thus socially inclusive, but the male rural middling sort forms its backbone.

There is, of course, one more glaring issue with using legal records for reconstructing any aspect of popular political culture, namely that they show us a view of society through a specifically legal prism. The events described, even if they took place without the participants *thinking* in terms of the law, are only visible because one side believed they were *relevant* to a lawsuit. Interrogatories were set out as a way of recording those elements of the story that were deemed legally relevant to the case rather than as an exact replica of what happened 'on the ground'. Of course, writing the history of popular politics with the legal system taken out

[25] This is a similar profile to the enclosure riots in Manning, *Village revolts*, pp. 57–8, 84–5.

[26] For the sale of Crown lands: R. W. Hoyle (ed.), *The estates of the English crown, 1558–1640* (1992).

[27] Cf. Wood, *Politics*, p. 132; N. Whyte, 'Custodians of memory: women and custom in rural England, *c.*1550–1700', *Cultural and Social Hist.* 8 (2011), pp. 153–73.

is both impossible and undesirable: the waging of law was a central political tactic in early modern England and Wales.[28] And yet, early modern people were more than mere litigants, and – as the following hopefully shows – there was potentially much more to politics than the law. Thus, while the law will always lurk in the background, and while careful attention is paid to the reasons actions were recounted to the court, the aim will be to read legal records against the grain, shedding light on those political actions which were *not* specifically legal; acts like the destruction of property, the angry threat, and the fellside brawl.

The following, then, is an attempt to recover something of the 'political culture' of the English commons. The article first discusses the ways in which commoners understood precedent, which was a crucial issue when use-rights were at stake. Here, acts of use, perambulations, landscape features, and speech might carry political meaning. It then considers how commoning intermeshed with issues of reputation in local communities, with witnesses drawing implied links between the people's behaviour and their claims to common rights. Commoning, it is suggested, existed within a wider nexus of neighbourhood. Finally, it considers some of the more disorderly weapons deployed in commoning disputes, arguing that rioting was only one part of a picture which incorporates brawling, threats, and violence against animals. I cannot pretend to offer a complete taxonomy of the political culture of the commons; but what follows, at the very least, will hopefully show some of their complexity.

II

Equity suits over common land devoted most time to establishing 'long usage'. This was the crucial plank of legal 'custom': for a practice to be 'customary' it must have occurred from 'time immemorial', technically having been uninterrupted since 1189, as well as being 'reasonable', and compatible with natural and divine law.[29] The evidence brought to the courts regarding long usage can tell us much about the culture of commoning. Of course, many witnesses simply recounted that a given practice had occurred throughout their remembrance, or theirs, their father's, or even grandfathers' remembrance. If not, they reported the 'common reputacion' as in Jacobean Penrith, 'the voyce of the contrye thereaboutes' like a Forest of Wyre deponent in 1574, or the 'common spekyng of old men of the cuntrie' as was recounted to the Duchy Court of Lancaster in 1476.[30] These kinds of social memory, and their gradual replacement by written evidence, have been considered by Adam Fox and Andy Wood; the following, then, will focus on some of more subtle ways in which precedent and long usage were understood.[31]

It is a straightforward point, but the most obvious way of claiming precedent for a use-right was to exercise it, and the act of *using* a common unimpeded might establish customary *right* to do so in future. As a late-Stuart commentator had it, once 'a reasonable Act is found to be

[28] J. A. Sharpe, 'The people and the law', in B. Reay (ed.), *Popular culture in seventeenth-century England* (1985), pp. 244–70.

[29] A. Wood, 'The place of custom in plebeian political culture: England, 1550–1800', *Social Hist.* 22 (1997), p. 47.

[30] TNA, E 134/17Jas1/East4, Interrogatories, 1619; E 133/1/207, Deposition of Thomas Lowe of Highley, 1574; DL5/1, fol. 111v, Deposition of John Gregory of Bole, 1476.

[31] Fox, 'Custom', id.., *Oral and Literate Culture*, pp. 259–89; Wood, 'Custom, identity and resistance'.

good, and beneficial to the people … they do use it and practice it again and again, and so by often iteration and multiplication … it becomes a Custom; and being continued without interruption time out of mind, it obtaineth the force of a Law'.[32] Thus, in pre-Reformation Warwickshire, the tenants of Brandon were refused permission to drive their animals through woodland in neighbouring Binley, as 'it woolde dryve the tennantes of Bynley to furder inconveniens for that the tennants of Braunde wolde then take the same grownde as intercomoners with Bynley'.[33] Physical access was crucial: if a group of putative commoners could be excluded from the land, any claim of long usage was meaningless. Enclosure, in the physical sense, is the best-known way to seize possession of a common, but there were others. In Henry VIII's reign, Sir Ralph Langford pulled down two bridges in Withington (Lancashire), preventing access to a disputed common; he was ordered by the Duchy Court of Lancaster to rebuild them, but in 1533 the court found them 'nether sufficiently made ne well layed as they were before but be made & layd in suche fasyon as nether carte horse ne catall may passe over the same'.[34] Witnesses for Star Chamber reported similar bridge-destruction by the inhabitants of Somerton (Somerset) in the 1550s.[35] On Bardsea Moor in north Lancashire, James Anderton, Esq., stopped the tenants of Muchland from exercising turbary rights simply by blocking their access: 'both with settinge stakes & spyles, as alsoe with layeinge great stones & makeinge severall ditches crosse over the said waye … whereby the said tenants could not bringe theire waynes & cartts looden with theire fuell'.[36]

Another method of excluding unwanted commoners was to impound their animals or confiscate their tools. This was critical as it stopped one's rivals establishing a precedent for commoning, and simultaneously created one for its *prevention*, especially if there was no common-law recovery launched by a writ of replevin. Much testimony hinged on whether common rights had been disturbed by impounding or not. In Cranborne in northern Dorset, for example, it was deposed approvingly that in around 1561 the lord of Midgham (Hampshire) had attempted to graze sheep and cut heath and turf on Alderholt Heath, 'but the tennants of Alderholte did fett awaye the same heathe & turfe and would not suffer his shepe to go quietlye'.[37] Another precedent-setting action was the perambulation of boundaries: incorporating a piece of land within a perambulation staked a claim to it.[38] In the 1570s, the landlord of Stockdale (Westmorland) instigated a perambulation of a disputed common to pre-empt the claims of neighbouring Sadgill. It was still remembered over fifty years later.[39] The territorial limits of common rights usually shared a boundary with another spatial community such as a borough, parish or manor, and thus acts performed specifically at those borders were

[32] Quoted in Thompson, *Customs*, p. 97.

[33] TNA, E 133/2/258, Interrogatories and Deposition of John Fosten of Coventry, 1575.

[34] TNA, DL 5/6, fol. 88v.

[35] TNA, STAC 4/10/60, Interrogatories, Temp. Philip and Mary.

[36] TNA, E 134/13Jas1/East11, Deposition of John Fleming, Esq., 1615; cf. Manning, *Village revolts*, pp. 121–2.

[37] TNA, E 134/15Eliz/East3, Deposition of Robert Wyllis of Damerham, 1573.

[38] S. Hindle, 'Beating the bounds of the parish: order, memory and identity in the English local community, *c*.1500–1700', in M. Halvorson and K. E. Spierling (eds), *Defining community in early modern Europe* (2008), pp. 205–28; Bushaway, *By rite*, pp. 81–97; N. Whyte, *Inhabiting the landscape: place, custom and memory, 1500–1800* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 59–74.

[39] TNA, E 134/8Chas1/Mich23, Interrogatories and Depositions, 1632.

significant.[40] In north Cheshire, the sale of bread demarcated the boundaries between the commons of Frodsham and Helsby. According to one witness:

> John Smythe a baker of Chester hath sondry tymes brought breade to sell at Runkorne Weston and Haulton. And when he was comynge homewarde againe through Frodsham (having lefte some of his breade unsolde) the men or weomen of Frodsham aforesaid would folowe the said Smith untill he came to … Lewins Brooke. And then they would buy of his bread and not before. So that this deponent doth think that when they were come over the said brook, called Lewins Brook, they were out of the compasse and Libertie of Froddisham.[41]

Elizabethan inhabitants of the borough of Woodstock (Oxfordshire) and neighbouring Hensington had an even more memorable signifier; Agnes Collyer of Cassington recalled that she

> hathe sene the maior and comynalitie of Woodstock receave Kinge Henry the Eight at the neither end of Comon Acre and at the upper end of Sturtinge Grove and that shee hathe alwaies reputed the said places where Kinge Henri the Eight was receaved to be the uttermost bounds of the Borroughe of Woodstocke.

Moreover, she knew a gate called Barre Gates, and 'hathe sene the said Kinge Henry and the Quenes Majestie that now is receaved by the Maior and Comynalitie of Woodstock at the said gattes called Barre Gattes'.[42] The boundaries of rights could also be transposed onto those of parochial responsibility. In a dispute over rights of common on the castle wall and ditch in Cambridge in 1628, it was pointed out that during a recent epidemic the widow living in a house built on the land was denied relief for herself and her children by the parish of Chesterton, 'for that they alledged that she was not of their parish'. A bachelor of arts had died in the same house and had been buried not at Chesterton, but at St Giles's Church in Cambridge. The town of Cambridge thus enjoyed rights on the land.[43] Not dissimilarly, the boundaries between tithe obligations might also, as Nicola Whyte points out, be connected in parishioners' minds to the spatial delineation of gleaning rights.[44]

Physical remains might be as potent as memories. In Elizabethan Cawston (Norfolk), it was suggested that there were 'diverse plaine mencions of olde riggs and furrowes in … Jerbrigges Wood, whereby ytt maye appeare that there hathe bene corne sowen in the same ground'.[45] The fact that timber had been cut in woods in Staveley (Derbyshire) was attested in 1607 by the 'diverse hundrethes of old stumps and rootes of the sayd trees yet remaininge', while the 'multitude of ancient pitsteades where charcoles have beene made' was evidence that the lord had customarily cut boughs and branches from old oaks.[46] The meaning of landscape features was not always clear, however, and could be contested. In a Cumberland case from 1602 one side alleged that an enclosure called Keldrickmyer had long been separate from Wetheriggs

[40] Cf. N. Whyte, 'Landscape, memory and custom: parish identities, *c*.1550–1700', *Social Hist*., 32 (2007), pp. 166–86.

[41] TNA, E 134/23&24Eliz/Mich1, Deposition of William Frodsham, Esq., of Elton, 1581.

[42] TNA, E 134/25Eliz/Hil4, Deposition of Agnes Collyer of Cassington, 1583.

[43] TNA, E 134/4Chas1/Mich37, Interrogatories, 1628.

[44] Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, pp. 81–2.

[45] TNA, E 134/23&24Eliz/Mich14, Interrogatories, 1581. Many of the themes in this paragraph are central to Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, esp. pp. 125–64; the Cawston case is discussed on p. 145.

[46] TNA, E 134/5Jas1/Mich38, Interrogatories, 1607.

Moor, and there were 'diverse signes and tokens of ditches and fences which have of ancient tyme bene made for the devyding and severinge thereof'. But two local men deposed that these were in fact just water conduits and sluices.[47]

Memories of speech could also become politicized in battles over precedent. In a north Lincolnshire dispute, where the occupants of Eastoft manor house claimed grazing rights in a common pasture, a local labourer recalled his time as a servant under the house's previous owners, saying that 'he hath often hearde' the occupier 'saye and affirme … that she had noe right of common to hir howse wherein she dwelt in Eastofte in the pasture called Luddington Highe Pasture but through sufferaunce of the inhabitants of Luddington'.[48] In a 1560s intercommoning dispute in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds, the deathbed words of two Southam men were used against them by tenants in neighbouring Cleve. Both John Lorynch and William Keer were alleged to have told their sons to discontinue their challenge, the latter stating clearly that 'none of the inhabitants of Sowtham in respect of there lands holden of the said manor of right ought to have any common in and uppon the said wast grounde'.[49] But Lorynch's daughter, Anne Castle, who stood witness for the other side, told a different story. She recalled sitting with her father frequently during his final sickness

> and not long before his death lyeing in his bed asked for his sonne William wherupon this deponent who sate there on the bed by hym went & called the same William to his father and whan the said William was come to hym he said to the same William as followeth in effect (William the matter is nothing greate for whiche I called yow) There is variance about the Hill & yow neade not to care for yow have common in every quarter there[,] which woordes were spoken with a feynt voyce.[50]

To Anne, John Lorrynch had told his son not to worry about the outcome because he could claim rights of common as a tenant of *both* Southam and Cleve. Even the faint whispers of a dying man could be contested in the politics of the commons.

Similarly, words, actions, and even silence giving support to common rights might be remembered and used against the speaker should he later try and attack those rights. In a boundary dispute on the wild heaths of south Dorset, it was noted that the defendant George Savage had passed one of the plaintiff's witnesses digging turves on the land in question, but the witness 'never heard the said defendant George to find any fault with their soe doeing or use any wordes against them to that purpose'. Indeed, according to the testimony of two others, Savage had given 'friendly speeches' to one man while he was digging; another witness even recalled him wishing 'God speed'.[51] It was similarly inconvenient, meanwhile, if opponents to an enclosure had actually been employed on building it, as was alleged of the tenants of Hopesay and Aston-on-Clun in the Forest of Carewood in 1584.[52]

Thus depositions recounting precedent allow us to tap into a wider culture of commoning,

[47] TNA, E 133/10/1510, Interrogatories and Depositions, 1602.

[48] TNA, E 134/13Jas1/Trin3, Deposition of Francis Seane of Luddington, 1615.

[49] TNA, E 134/6Eliz/Trin1, Interrogatories, 1564.

[50] TNA, E 134/7Eliz/East1, Deposition of Anne Castle of Southam, 1565.

[51] TNA, E 134/11&12Chas1/Hil9, Depositions of Edward Tommes of East Stoke, Edward Stourton of East Stoke, Edward Dolling of Wareham, Henry Cleeves of East Burton, 1636.

[52] TNA, E 134/26Eliz/East16, Interrogatories, 1584.

in which memories, actions, landscape features, and even everyday speech were charged with political meaning. But there was a lot more to the politics of the commons than wrangles over precedent. The remainder of this article explores some other forms.

III

Occasionally, moral judgements were passed on those claiming common rights. To an extent, of course, this was a legal tactic to taint an opponent, but it also suggests a wider culture of gossip and reputation in which the 'common fame' of individuals could be related to their claims as both litigants and commoners. Rights of common could form part of a wider nexus of neighbourhood in which other factors such as conduct and reputation were seen as pertinent to people's claims as commoners.[53] In 1595, deponents in a Norfolk boundary dispute remembered that 'Old Drake of Brumwell' had been 'whypped for some thinge that was taken out of one Bishopps howse' and was indeed 'a very lewd and bad man'. Witnesses in the same case were also asked whether they had 'heard' that one Patrick had forged a boundary document, bitterly regretting it on his deathbed , the accusation having – in this instance – clear implications for the facts of the case.[54] Other individuals were characterized as bothersome neighbours whose litigiousness was damaging the community, such as Robert Dawson of Luddington (Lincolnshire), described in 1615 as a 'busie trooblesome fellowe'.[55] Somewhat later, William Bostock of Abingdon, who had allegedly interrupted the townsmen's common rights, was known to his neighbours as 'Mad William Bostock', on account of his litigiousness.[56] In pre-Reformation Lancashire, it was known around Whalley Abbey that the monks employed one John Eastergate, 'otherwise called Rughe necke', to forge evidences in support of enclosures. Indeed, there was apparently 'a comon sayeinge in the cuntrie that soe longe as Rughnecke lyved, Abbeis shuld never wante evidences'.[57]

Both sides of the moral coin were in evidence in a 1587 interrogatory set by Garrett Wallys of Whittlesey (Cambridgeshire): he had allowed himself to be

> greatly detrymented in his fermes by the forbearinge of the poore inhabitantes in eatinge his severalles', whereas his opponents were 'very troblesome persons and suche as have moved muche disorder & dislike in the towne by lewde and unorderly perswacions with the inhabitants aswell in movinge sutes as in procuringe & threatninge men to contribucions in this and other sutes'.[58]

In 1631 it was pointed out by the inhabitants of Warton-in-Lonsdale (Lancashire) that their opponent in a commoning dispute, Thomas Middleton of Leighton Hall, was a convicted recusant, who 'doth not come to the church to heare devyne service, nor hath done this six yeares and above'.[59] A particularly comprehensive set of denunciations comes from a

[53] Cf. Thompson, *Customs*, p. 101.

[54] TNA, E 133/8/1234, Interrogatories and Deposition of Peter Cullyner of New Buckenham, 1595.

[55] TNA, E 134/13Jas1/Trin3, Interrogatories, 1615.

[56] BL, Add. MS, 28,666, fols 275r–337r, Interrogatories and Depositions, 1650s.

[57] TNA, DL 44/196, Interrogatories and Deposition of Richard Townley, Esq., 1570.

[58] TNA, E 134/29Eliz/East23, Interrogatories, 1587.

[59] TNA, E 134/6&7Chas1/Hil13, Deposition of Thomas Dickonson of Warton, 1631.

late Elizabethan lawsuit from Warwickshire. Here, a series of witnesses who had been called to support the plaintiff Margaret Knowles's throwing open of Galley Common were subjected to brutal character assassinations. They were 'all poore men and women and they live very hardly and gett there livinges naughtely', were 'but paltery fellowes all of them and that there is none of them that beares aney credytt', were 'but poore folke and of no valew nor credytt', 'all poore men and women and such as are very poore and of no great reputacion', and – perhaps more pointedly – 'they are very poore folke most of them and yet somme of able enoughe to live'. And there were more specific allegations: Margaret Rochell had a child by her father-in-law; William Grantham 'did steale geese and wheat sheafes' and was 'a drunken fellow'; John Oldes stole a heifer; William Coleshaw stole a mare; William Chapleyn was 'a corrupte and a bad man' who had forged documents and committed perjury; Robert Vyncent had 'put awaye his wiefe' and 'kepte a whoore' in another man's house; John Stephenson was 'a roge and common begger'. Of William Gryffyn it was said that he had kept a whore for four years, had a child by her which he boarded out before taking the child back to his own house where he 'tooke his lynninge out of his cloake to make it garments'.[60]

Many of these cases, most obviously the last one, were perhaps simply attempts to discredit witnesses, but in at least one case the suggestion was clearly made that two men claiming common rights would actually use them for ill. Humphrey Elcocks and John Sawier were claiming the right to hold cottages on the waste of Haywood Park in Staffordshire, but a string of witnesses testified to their bad character. To William Basseforde, a Tixall husbandman, they were 'so badd & lewd as he thinketh them not worthie to lyve amongest any honest men, for that the common voyce ys, that they have ben dayly receavors of theeves & roges'. Another witness had 'harde that the sayd plaintiffs are verie lewde & bad persons'; to another, they were 'known to be lewde & badd persons suche as ys muche evell reported of them for their conversacion and no good knowen by them'. John Bromall, husbandman of Shutborough, reported they were 'accompted verie badd persons and suche as many speake muche evell of for their bad lyf & conversacion', and that Elcocks, who was an indicted horse-thief, was so bad that he dare not 'shewe his head in Staffordshyre unlesse yt be by oule light to playe the knave'. Most tellingly, Richard Sherbrooke, a Shutborough husbandman (with whom, as will be seen, Elcocks had some history), reported to the court that:

> the sayd plaintiffs are accompted verie badd & verie lewde persons & too bad to lyve and that the sayd Elcocks hath been an habowrer bothe of hores & theeves & a common companyon with suche people and that he this examinant dothe verely thinke that to the end he might have moore free conversacion with evell disposed people he fownde meanes to buyld that cottage in the place where yt now standeth beinge farr from neighboures & neare to a comon highe waye on the one syde & wylde wooddes & wastes on the other syde whereby they might have free accesse unto hym and the better meanes to escape uppon the detection of any their badd accions[;] and a notable place for the profession of horse staylinge wherein the sayd Elcocks ys thought verie skylfull as dothe well apeare for that he standeth now indicted

[60] TNA, E 133/7/1021, Depositions of William Devenshire of Galley Common, Robert Fullylowe of Stockingford, Anthony Strayne of Wolvey, Edward Stonehurst of Astley, William Mason of Potters Coton, 1591.

as this examynant well knoweth within the countie of Stafford for stealinge of a nagge & a mare of this examinants.[61]

In other words, the pair could not be trusted to live on the common. Of course, commons and forests were often portrayed as 'theevesh places' which gave 'liberty and opportunity unto villainous minds'.[62] Here is an unusually specific accusation.

Such judgements of fitness to enjoy common rights could work the other way. Despite plenty of evidence to the contrary, James Anderton claimed to have conducted himself 'honestlie and justlie' as steward of the Lancashire manor of Muchland and had 'alsoe beene a verrey good frend unto the homagers, tennants and inhabitants theare' (they were suing him).[63] The most unusual statement in support of commoning rights came from Colwyn Forest in Wales, where in 1599 commoners asked, rhetorically, whether their witnesses did 'heare it said read or reported' in 'histories, cronicles, records, books or otherwise' that there had been any 'rebellion, outradge, mutyney or sedicion don or commytted' by the forest's inhabitants. Or rather had they not always 'behaved them sealves like quiet subjects' since William the Conqueror's day, holding their land of English lords 'for which theire fethfull obedience there was no such cause or neade either in the tyme of King John or any other kinge of England to buyld any castell there or use any other force or garrison'.[64] Part of their reason for making such a point was no doubt to ensure that the court felt their common rights were 'agreeable' to the 'use of the state and for the good of the commonwealth', as a Privy Council directive to an enclosing landlord put it in the same decade.[65] It may well also be an attempt to deflect accusations of rebelliousness by this mountainous Welsh 'other', in much the same way that miners of Derbyshire and the Forest of Dean, or the commoners of Northamptonshire, did.[66] But it also reflects the more general point that commoning was related to notions of neighbourliness, with villagers connecting disputes over use-rights to wider assessments of character.

IV

Perhaps the most striking testimony that emerges from the Exchequer proceedings describes disorder. It should be emphasized that in the majority of cases, evidence of disorderly behaviour was absent. This might reflect the source material as much as anything. Disorder was only of tangential relevance to most cases: its recounting before the courts was a ploy to besmirch an opponent. But given that, if criminal acts had taken place, it was in the interests of at least one side to bring them up, we must suppose that most cases were thrashed out with little resort to disorder. Nonetheless, when it did occur, such disorder was a complex phenomenon, and there was more to it than just enclosure rioting.

[61] TNA, E 134/38&39Eliz/Mich12, Depositions of William Basseforde of Tixall, John Allen of Great Heywood, Robert Hollies, John Bromall of Shutburough, Richard Sherbrooke of Shutborough, 1596.

[62] Wood, 'Custom in plebeian political culture', p. 57.

[63] TNA, E 134/12Jas1/Hil17, Interrogatories, 1614.

[64] TNA, E 134/41Eliz/East30, Interrogatories, 1599; disputants did sometimes relate their causes to 'national' events, e.g. Lindley, *Fenland riots*, p. 65.

[65] Walter, *Crowds*, p. 198.

[66] Wood, 'Custom, identity and resistance'; Neeson, *Commoners*, pp. 94, 179–80; Wood, 'Custom in plebeian political culture', p. 56.

One kind of 'disorderly' political weapon deployed was the use of threatening and abusive words. In an Elizabethan suit, the lord of the manor of Felmingham (Norfolk) was accused of giving 'spitefull and revilinge woordes' against the Queen's tenants of Suffield.[67] A 1583 case relating to the boundaries between Woodstock and Helsington in Oxfordshire got so bitter that one George Whitton, chief defendant, was harangued one Palm Sunday by Woodstock's mayor, 'cauling hym and thretanyng hym with most vile speches', saying he was a 'vile skurvie knave, a stinckinge knave, a spyinge knave, spitting in the sayd Whittons face, divers tymes clinching his fyst to streeke the sayd Whitton'.[68] Sometimes, whole communities could grumble about commoning practices: in early-Stuart Wiltshire, the tenants of Melksham felt that their neighbours in Bromham were overstocking a common pasture, so they 'did alwayes murmur and grudge at the inhabitantes of Bromham when they came to the common drift'.[69] In early-Stuart Kilmington (Somerset), many customary tenants had 'gruged and murmured' when John Hartgill, a local landlord, had put his cattle on their commons.[70] In both these cases the group of tenants who did the 'murmuring' were the ones who brought it to the attention of the court: grumbling countered potential accusations of tacit acceptance of a precedent; it was not seditious.[71] But common speech could be brought up as a negative too, such as the allegation in 1616 that inhabitants of Rothwell (Northamptonshire) had 'bragged' that they could leave a disputed sheepwalk worthless by overstocking and trampling it with great cattle.[72]

Wealthy landlords could engage in bragging and threatening as much as 'plebeian' commoners, indeed their power made their threats especially ominous. A Derbyshire litigant, accused of depopulating enclosures in Birchover, was alleged to have declared that he 'cared not for the statute of tyllage, and that the worst was he could be but fyned if he decayed the manor', and 'lett the plaintiff do what he canne & playe the promotor, there shuld not be a handfull of corne sowen in Byrchover'.[73]Another landlord, Mr John Lane of Staffordshire, got one of his servants to publish a notice in the parish church of Willenhall in the 1590s, to the effect that:

> those that weare Mr Lanes wellwillers, and would be contented to forgoe their right of comon in Bentley Hey, should subscribe their names and putt to their handes or marke in the same note. And that thereby Mr Lane might knowe who were his frendes and wellwillers, and that those which did not or would not subscrybe their names or putt to their marke in the same writing he would esteme of them accordinglie, And that then if they caughte any hurte they might thancke themselves.[74]

One of the more frequent threats was to ruin opponents through litigation. In 1581, it was alleged that the defendants in a suit about common rights in Cawston (Norfolk) had 'gyven owtt that they wyll sewe or wery in sewte' any inhabitants of the manor who opposed them.[75]

[67] TNA, E 133/10/1599, Interrogatories, Temp. Eliz.

[68] TNA, E 134/25Eliz/Hil4, Interrogatories.

[69] TNA, E 134/13Jas1/East14, Deposition of William Hayward of Melksham, 1615.

[70] TNA, E 134/7Chas1/Mich20, Interrogatories and Deposition of John Leversage of Kilmington, 1631.

[71] Cf. Walter, *Crowds*, pp. 200–4.

[72] TNA, E 134/14Jas1/Mich37, Interrogatories, 1616.

[73] TNA, E 134/39&40Eliz/Mich19, Interrogatories, 1597.

[74] TNA, E 133/8/1188, Interrogatories and Deposition of Thomas Tomkys of Clement's Inn, 1595.

[75] TNA, E 134/23&24Eliz/Mich14, Interrogatories, 1581.

The cantankerous James Hebblethwaite of Norton was supposed to have instigated a number of common-law suits against the Queen's bailiff over use of a stinted pasture, saying that he 'wold never leave him out of sutes'.[76] In Walton-on-Thames (Surrey), it was alleged that the plaintiffs had threatened 'they would make the defendant spend much money about his common and that they were forty to one and would make him spend twenty shillinges to ther two pence'. Two witnesses attested to these threats, although one thought the sum was 12*d*. to every tuppence.[77] But meanings could be contested. In 1595 the defendants in a suit about the rights of non-resident cottagers in Wilberton on the Isle of Ely alleged that William Payne, one of the plaintiffs, had said 'that he trusted within a yeare or two that never a poore knave or scrobb in the towne of Wilberton should kepe a bullock ther'. A menacing statement at first glance, but one of the defendants' witnesses remembered it in a rather different light, deposing that:

> he hard William Payne saye (beinge in a great a anger because he se[e] many sheepe of Thomas Sanders & others fedinge in the herd walke) and use these or the like speches, if they will goe to it meaninge as this deponent thinketh that if they wold feed with their sheepe in the herd walke as they beganne that never a poore mann in the towne shold kepe a cowe.[78]

Thus Payne's words look more like a *defence* of the rights of the poor.

Words and threats were one thing, but commoning disputes could also escalate into physical violence; indeed, there was a tableau of violent disorder deployed which was far wider than the enclosure riot of established historiography. Given the political importance of the driving and impounding of animals, noted above, it is no surprise that such acts were potential flashpoints. On Holland Fen in 1580, two 'fengraves' were charged with driving illegal sheep from the fen, which they did while armed with a pike and an iron fork. They were reprimanded by a JP, but soon returned with a third accomplice and a threatening dog.[79] Similarly disorderly was a case from Whittlesey in Cambridgeshire, where it was alleged that two defendants, on the 10 June 1586, entered into a disputed waste called the Pingle 'with longe staves', where they and four others seized the complainant's cattle in a 'disordred manner', impounding them, whereupon 'the bells runge and so contynued ringinge for a longe tyme' (in a slightly odd twist, the plaintiff also alleged that the bells had been bought with money better spent on repairing a local bridge, evidenced by a recent accident in which a traveller fell off the dilapidated structure and drowned). The ringing of the bells was probably not mere triumphalism, but it served to *publicize* the act of impounding.[80] It emphasized the act's legality, and thus the precedent set. Other forms of disorderly impounding included driving opponents' animals an inconvenient distance, or harming them in the process.[81] Impounding could also be physically resisted, as in Steeple Ashton (Wiltshire) where a group of men, at least one brandishing a dagger, resisted

[76] TNA, E 133/5/708, Interrogatories, 1586.

[77] TNA, E 134/29&30Eliz/Mich17, Interrogatories and Depositions of David Chyld of Sunbury, Richard Dybbs of Apse, 1587.

[78] TNA, E 134/37Eliz/East19, Interrogatories and Deposition of William Marshall of Wilberton, 1595.

[79] TNA, E 134/23&24Eliz/Mich15, Deposition of John Metcalfe of Swyneshead, 1581.

[80] TNA, E 134/29Eliz/East23, Interrogatories, 1586; cf. Manning, *Village revolts*, pp. 44, 53–4; it may also have been an expression of joy: cf. Bushaway, *By rite*, p. 226.

[81] E.g. TNA, E 134/36&37Eliz/Mich24, Interrogatories, 1594; TNA, E 134/20Jas1/Hil8, Interrogatories, 1622.

the bailiff in 1581, or in 1618 on a Somerset moor, where one John Kelson threatened to unhorse officers performing a drift, and took possession of the driven sheep.[82]

Nor did the potential for disorder end once animals had been herded into the common pound: their owners could, in a fairly flagrant act of defiance, spring them straight out again. In the Forest of Chute on the Wiltshire-Hampshire border, swine belonging to a certain Mr Thornborough were impounded by the forester's servants whereupon 'the pound was afterwards broken upp and the swyne lett oute and the locke throwghen into the pond'.[83] In Dacre in Cumberland, a 1593 suit alleged that when cattle wrongfully agisted by Thomas and John Lancaster were impounded, they would simply 'breake the pindfolde, and carrye the cattell awaye'.[84] The legitimate way of recovering animals was to get a court to issue a replevin, indeed the process of distraint and replevin was a method of testing rights of both commoning and possession at the common law. However, the presentation of replevins to pounders did not always go smoothly. In 1622, it was alleged that the keeper of one Exmoor pound, when presented with a replevin for some impounded sheep, was ordered by his master the forester 'to treade the said replevin under his feete, saying his master would beare him out in the doeing thereof'.[85] On Quernmore waste, near Lancaster, a group of men guarding impounded animals overnight in 1541 refused to act on a replevin brought to them on the grounds that they could not read it, sending for a scholar to do so. The owners had little time for this, and broke the animals out regardless.[86]

Much of the violence reported was small in scale: petty, unorganized, perhaps usually in hot blood, like the assault on Sadgill Moor described at the beginning of this article. In many cases it was probably an escalation of a long-standing dispute: in a sixteenth-century controversy over grazing in Westwood between the Warwickshire villages of Coombe and Brandon, it was alleged that servants of the bailiff of Brandon were 'often warned' by William Cole of Coombe not to pasture their sheep there, but when they continued to do so, Cole 'grevously beate' one of them.[87] On occasions, however, disputes over common rights did boil over into widespread disorder and violence; this was undoubtedly more likely when commoning was just one of a set of tensions threatening to rip a community apart. In 1586, a dispute over the town lands of Beccles (Suffolk) led, the day after a new town charter was ratified, to a serious riot. One JP was woken from his sleep at 11pm by panicking town officers, reporting that

> a great company of men were come from the howse of one John Rede dwellinge a myle of, weaponed to trouble the towne of spyte and malyce, because God hadd sent the towne a newe charter for the assurance of their comon which the Redes woulde have taken awaye …

But although commoning was the precipitating cause, there were wider issues at stake. Much testimony was spent establishing the character of William Downing of Rushmere. To one side, Downing was 'a sedicious trobler of the comon peace or disquieter of the comon people'

[82] TNA, E 134/25Eliz/Trin4, Deposition of Thomas Witcombe of Steeple Ashton, 1583; E 134/20Jas1/Hil8, Deposition of John Colston of Mark, 1622.

[83] TNA, E 134/33&34Eliz/Mich8, Deposition of Thomas Reynolds alias Bushe of Sarsen, 1591.

[84] TNA, E134/35&36Eliz/Mich23, Interrogatories, 1593.

[85] TNA, E 134/20Jas1/Mich20, Interrogatories, 1622; cf. Lindley, *Fenland riots*, p. 54.

[86] TNA, DL 3/40/L3b, Deposition of John Green, 1541.

[87] TNA, E 133/2/249, Interrogatories, 1575.

who had 'sought to hurte others to his owne advancement' and was 'noted as an undertaker or dealer in bad causes'. To the other, however, he was a good man, 'well accounted of the worshipfull & better sort of people', although 'many of popishe affectation have muche malysed the man many yeres for his Christian behaviour and dealinge againste them'. Thus, at the background of this dispute over common rights lay the tensions of the English Reformation. Indeed, so fraught did this particular case become that one of the judges called in to arbitrate it admonished one side for their bad conduct, saying that 'he didd never see suche disorder amongest the rude people of the Northe where he is Justice of Assize'.[88]

Although this is a clear case of quite turbulent disorder, other 'riots' were altogether more limited affairs. One such took place in Cannock Chase in October 1591 when, according to 48-year-old miner Henry Wilcox, he

> comynge into the Quenes forest neere to a place there called Canoppe, did fynde thereabouts the number of syxe persons weponed, some with longe billes, some with longe staves, & some with spades, & some of them were betinge & shakinge downe the mastes to theyr pigges & swyne, & there were grete fyers made nere to the place & this deponent demaundinge what were theyr names, they refused to declare theyr names, But sayd that theyr dwellinge was at Mynsterworthe …[89]

Although technically riotous, six people shaking down wood for their pigs and making fires is hardly the stuff of social revolution. More insidious was the guerrilla campaign waged by inhabitants of Cawston (Norfolk) against the cony warren of Thomas Hirne kept on the Great Heath in the 1590s. On a string of occasions the warreners accosted men at night-time on the heath with nets, ferrets and occasionally dead rabbits.[90] The violence offered to these nocturnal rabbit-killers was minimal, but a few years later in the adjacent county of Suffolk, attempts to destroy offending rabbits ended with two of the cony-takers attacked with dogs and 'greeviouslie wounden that they were both in daunger of there lyves soe as theye hardlie eskaped death'.[91] Violence against animals, indeed, is an underexplored area in the history of early-modern agrarian politics.[92] It would be good to know, for example, how commonplace were actions like those of George Sheppard of Sadgill (Westmorland), who 'malitiouslie kilde' animals on a disputed common with stones.[93] It seems possible that such animal-maiming constituted a major weapon in the commoner's armoury.

There were a number of references enclosures being pulled down, but these were often reported as a *positive* act.[94] I have counted 18 cases of enclosures being pulled down in the

[88] TNA, E 133/4/658, Interrogatories and Depositions, 1586; cf. Manning, *Village revolts*, pp. 237–8. For the larger context of this suit, D. MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and Religion in an English County, 1500–1600* (1986), pp. 110–11, 195, 209, 244, 254, 268, 326–8.

[89] TNA, E 134/34Eliz/Hil23, Deposition of Henry Wilcox of Colford, 1592.

[90] E 134/43&44Eliz/Mich7, Depositions of John Dalderby of Cawston and John Buller of Haveringland, 1601; see also S. D. Amussen, 'A Norfolk village: Cawston, 1595–1605', *History Today*, 36 (Apr. 1986), pp. 15–20.

[91] TNA, E 134/5Jas1/Mich15, Deposition of Thomas Rushbrooke of Thurston, 1607; note that in this case it was the rabbit-catchers themselves who brought this to the court's attention. Attacks on warrens are discussed in R. B. Manning, *Hunters and poachers: a cultural and social history of unlawful hunting in England, 1485–1640* (1993), pp. 128–31.

[92] But see Manning, *Hunters*.

[93] TNA, E 134/16Jas1/East24, Interrogatories and Deposition of Christopher Bateman of Hugill, 1618.

[94] Cf. Thompson, *Customs*, p. 117.

sample lawsuits, and 10 of these were positive references, i.e. the destruction was brought to the attention of the court by its beneficiaries. These were protests, in Walter's words 'deliberately fashioned' to assert 'legitimacy', and may have been defensible at common law.[95] A particularly good example of this comes from Elizabethan Warwickshire, where the tenants of Sowe, defendants in a 1578 suit over pasture rights, claimed that 'at souche times as the complaynants father did inclose the same the tennants of the said manner did continually pull up and cast downe the hedges and ditches of the same and there tooke and used theire lawfull common of pasture'; this they did in a 'peaceable and quiet manner'.[96] Many cases in which enclosures were pulled down were simply, as one side saw it, the rightful exercise of legality. As Blomley pointed out not so long ago, broken hedges 'can signal violence and riot, or the legitimate assertion of common right'.[97] In the Exchequer evidences it is often the latter we see. Of course, memory can be misleading, and in some cases the dismantling of boundaries might have been ordered by a court, but recounted later in such a way as to make it *look* like spontaneous protest. In the 1642 testimony of a Worcestershire yeoman, it was recalled that forty years ago a man called Helden erected a house, warren and pinfold in Iverley Wood in Kinver Forest. For four years, Helden impounded cattle which pastured there, forcing their owners to seek replevins for their return, 'and nott longe after the said house and pound were pulled downe, and the conyes destroyed … butt by whome they were pulled downe and distroyed this deponent knoweth nott'. However, from other deponents (and the interrogatories), we learn that this act of destruction was on the orders of the Court of Exchequer itself.[98]

And yet, surely it was in commoners' interests to *say* if a court order lay behind such actions, and thus it is surprising that such backing was rarely mentioned. Moreover, there are cases of direct action in which commoners clearly made a point of publicizing them. One striking case is from Heckington in Lincolnshire. On Sunday 7 June, 1601, six men armed 'with dyvers weapons' entered a disputed enclosure called Stray Close, where they proceeded to break down the hedges and ditches, and pastured some 60 to 80 head of cattle there. When Anthony Malyn, a local gentleman, arrived to drive the cattle out, he had hardly moved them before they were rescued and returned to the close. The field was then guarded by rioters and their accomplices through the following day, during which commoners continued to bring cattle in, their numbers swelling to a potentially damaging 200 or 300 head. Neighbours, meanwhile, were encouraged to carry away all the remaining hedges, completing the annihilation of the enclosure. Most arresting about this case is the testimony of Malyn, which is worth quoting at length:

> Edward Davenant one of the defendants came to this deponent *& told him that hee had made work for him for hee had throwne downe the Straye Close and putt cattell into it*, whereuppon this deponent went forthwith to the said close with a purpose to drive owte the said cattell but when hee came there the said Edward Davenant Henry White & William Christopher

[95] Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*, p. 2; Bushaway, *By rite*, pp. 98–9; Thompson, *Customs*, pp. 117–18n.

[96] TNA, E 134/20Eliz/East4, Interrogatories, 1578.

[97] N. Blomley, 'Making private property: enclosure, common right and the work of hedges', *Rural Hist.* 18 (2007), p. 16.

[98] TNA, E 134/18Chas1/East1, Deposition of John Ouldenhall of Harvington, Interrogatories and Depositions, 1642.

> went into the said close & the said Davenant leapinge over the said Fenditche tooke a staffe owte of John Coxes hand one of the said defendants, and the said Coxe forthwith *gott another staff owte of the hands of a stander by, who were many in number*, and ever as this deponent forced to drive the cattell forthe of the said close at one of the breaches made by the said defendantes the said Davenant, White, Christopher & Coxe rescued the said cattell in suche forceable manner as this deponent colde by no meanes drive them further …[99]

The public nature of the action is clear. Davenant specifically made the incursion known to Malyn – rather gleefully – and the fact that bystanders were 'many in number' suggests they were alerted in advance. The rioters were not just destroying an enclosure. They were making a point.

But of course one side's legitimate removal of an illegal fence could be another's riot.[100] In 1584, for example, the tenants of Raby had pulled down enclosures made Henry Wigglesworth by the orders of the Queen's officers, but had been indicted for it.[101] Indeed, what to make of such actions could hinge on when they took place: if they were perpetrated at daytime and in full view of the community, they could be sold as legitimate acts restoring a rightful *status quo ante*; if at night then they took on a more sinister appearance.[102] In the Forest of Colwyn (Radnorshire), tenants recounted how, when part of their common was enclosed, they 'quietly in the day tyme (and not in the nyght) did throwe downe & deface the said dich for the quiet occupying & enjoying of there said common'. Their opponent disagreed, claiming his ditches had been 'overthrowen by nighte' on the 30 April back in 1584.[103] This element of *publicity* brings us full circle. In order to maintain common rights it was critical to use them publically, and for all the gossip, the threats and the violence, it is this element of public use which emerges as the most important tactic of commoning. If you wanted rights, you had to exercise them publically, if you wanted to challenge them, you needed to do so in such a way as it would be noticed, and you absolutely *must* not appear to give your assent. It mattered whether commons were used at daytime or night, as in some Buckinghamshire woodland in the 1660s, where a witness recalled:

> he never knew any of the inhabitants of the townshipps and places in the interrogatory mentioned make any *publique* claime to or pretend to have any right to cutt or carry away any wood in the said wood called St Johns Wood other then bushes or hases and if any were cut he conceives they were cut by stealth.[104]

Gathering wood by day was commoning; doing so by night was theft.

[99] TNA, E 134/44&45Eliz/Mich29, Interrogatories and Deposition of Anthony Malyn of Heckington, 1602. Emphasis added. Cf. Thompson, *Customs*, pp. 119–20.

[100] Lindley, *Fenland riots*, p. 58.

[101] TNA, E 134/26Eliz/East11, Interrogatories, 1584.

[102] E.g. Lindley, *Fenland riots*, p. 30.

[103] TNA, E 134/41Eliz/East30, Interrogatories, 1599.

[104] TNA, E 134/18Chas2/Mich13, Deposition of Thomas Widmer of Hughenden, 1666. Emphasis added.

V

Drawing this together, can we make any general points about the 'politics of the commons'? It is not my argument that all of these forms of politics were unique to battles about common rights, far from it. But it remains likely that the politics of the commons had a particular character which might emerge more clearly if similar work were performed on, say, tithe disputes or lawsuits relating to copyhold tenure. One wonders, however, if the physicality of the politics of the commons might have been one of its more distinctive (if by no means unique) features. The political tactics described usually had an immediate practical rationale; and this is best understood as part of a culture in which physical action was critical. Rights were affirmed by use, prevented by physical exclusion. Even in a period in which written documentation was growing in volume, the politics of the commons remained not just oral, but kinetic. Violence was usually short, sharp, and had an immediate purpose: a bloodied shepherd would no doubt think twice about depasturing on a contested common again, as might someone who was gossiped about (although 'Mad' William Bostock does not seem to have been much bothered). Commoners may also, as neighbours, have been held to a certain moral scrutiny. Ill-fame was undoubtedly often aired as a legal tactic, but litigants could only do so if neighbourly behaviour was talked about in disputant communities, and it seems likely that witnesses were unwilling to support the commoning claims of bad neighbours.

There is little obvious evidence for ritual. Bob Bushaway has shown how rituals could perform legitimating functions in the defence of common rights, perhaps most strikingly in the Wiltshire forest of Grovely.[105] Martin Ingram, meanwhile, shows that sexual politics was often acted out through quite elaborate popular rituals; and western rioters against early Stuart enclosures are known to have rallied to the cause of Lady Skimmington, invoking a popular shaming ritual.[106] Indeed, Manning himself suggested that ritual was a major component of popular rioting in the period.[107] And yet, there is no mention in these lawsuits of ritualized mocking, threats, or inversion. Even perambulations, which we know *were* often 'theatrical', are described in a matter-of-fact way. This is curious, and it is of course possible that the sources simply omit references to the more ritualized elements of events which were also interpretable as practical expressions of right. The issue requires further research: were, for example, pound-breaches attended by any kind of theatrical display? Is the ringing of church-bells better interpreted as a ritualized expression of divine sanction, or a practical way of forestalling accusations of covert riot? Perhaps both.

Another point to make is that the 'weapons' detailed above are not just 'weapons of the weak'. The truly weak, in fact, rarely feature. On the one hand, the poor's common rights were supported by William Payne of Wilberton; but on the other, witnesses in Warwickshire were dismissed as 'paltery fellowes' and 'poore folke … of no valew nor credytt'. The evidence we have, then, is not truly plebeian. It was a Lancashire gentleman, Thomas Middleton,

[105] Bushaway, *By rite*, pp. 209–11.

[106] M. Ingram, 'Ridings, rough music, and mocking rhymes in early modern England', in Reay (ed.), *Popular culture*, pp. 166–97; D. Underdown, *Revel, riot and rebellion: popular politics and culture in England, 1603–1660* (1985), pp. 107–12.

[107] Manning, *Village revolts*, passim.

who arranged for the riotous destruction of turving carts on a common in 1628; and it was a Norfolk gentleman who, in 1591, paid men to throw down two gates and a dyke about a common in Carleton.[108] It was a mayor of Woodstock who clenched his fist at a neighbouring commoner, insulting him and spitting in his face. If this article has shown that there was a cut and thrust to the politics of the commons, a complex culture of meaning, of action, and of violence both angry and tactical, then it was a cut and thrust of which the rural elite were a part. It is well-known that most deponents in equity suits relating to custom were old men, a gerontocracy, but they were also overwhelmingly representative of the rural middling sorts: there were some labourer deponents, but the majority were yeomen and husbandmen. A crucial point, then, is not that there were 'weapons of the weak' deployed in the politics of the commons (though surely they were) in the sense of tactics deployed by subaltern groups to fight powerful oppressors. It is that the politics of the elite and the middling sort, when it came to the particular demands of commoning, were diverse, sometimes tumultuous, and always complex. Waging law was just one of a series of weapons which ranged from low-level murmuring and gossip, through the impounding of animals in inconvenient places, through attacks on animals and threats and actions of interpersonal violence, right up to full-scale rioting. Even the use of the law, critical as was the question of long-usage to the establishment of a legal 'custom', rested on a complex culture in which certain actions were taken to establish or negate certain aspects of precedent.

Perhaps this period saw a gradual formalization of the politics of the commons. Wood and Fox have noted the increasing use of written evidence such as legal decrees and custumals for the establishment of custom in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[109] Perhaps the early-modern period saw the gradual withdrawal of the elites from this political culture of the commons, and their greater reliance on the relative certainties of the law and Parliament.[110] Maybe this cultural shift happened in much the same way as the one Peter Burke has argued for across Europe, in which elites gradually retreated from 'popular' culture.[111] But it seems just as likely that elites and middling sorts moved together, as the latter also became more literate and more engaged in the wider English legal system. These, though, must remain questions for the future. For now, one thing that can safely be concluded is that despite generations of scholarship on enclosure riots, the full history of the politics of the commons, of the nuances of action and meaning they encompassed, has only begun to be unravelled.

[108] TNA, E 134/6&7Chas1/Hil13, Interrogatories and Depositions, 1631; E 133/7/997, Interrogatories and Depositions, 1591.

[109] Wood, 'Custom, identity and resistance'; Fox, 'Custom'.

[110] Holmes, 'Drainers and fenmen'.

[111] P. Burke, *Popular culture in early modern Europe* (third edn, 2009).

Breed, culture, and economy: The New Zealand frozen meat trade, 1880–1914*

by Rebecca J. H. Woods

Abstract

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, exports of frozen mutton and lamb from New Zealand grew dramatically. Their destination was Great Britain, whose growing population demanded quality meat, and lots of it. Refrigeration technology enabled the trade in frozen meat between New Zealand and Great Britain, but its establishment was more than a matter of equalizing antipodean supply with British demand. This article argues that the trade in frozen meat depended on colonists' abilities to remake their flocks in such a way as to balance the demands of colonial environments with those of British consumers. This resulted in the formation of new breeds like the Corriedale, an inbred cross between the merino and longwool types from Britain, whose hybridity guaranteed suitability for colonial topography and terrain, while its genetic roots ensured that it remained British enough for 'Home' consumption.

By the onset of the First World War, more than thirty years had passed since the first shipments of frozen meat from colonial New Zealand had reached Britain. After modest and uncertain beginnings, with the carcasses of only 4,311 sheep and 598 lambs (plus 22 pigs) carried by the SS Dunedin from the South Island of New Zealand to Great Britain in 1882, the trade in frozen meat had swelled to nearly two million carcasses per annum in 1890, and six million in 1918.[1] Thirty-six factories for freezing beef and mutton had been established in neighbouring Australia and twenty-eight in New Zealand by 1911 and 111 warehouses built to receive and store the frozen meat in the major port cities of the United Kingdom. Over three million metric tons of frozen beef and mutton had traversed the tropics to Great Britain.[2] In 1918, William Soltau

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[1] William Soltau Davidson, *William Soltau Davidson, 1846–1924. A sketch of his life covering a period of fifty-two years, 1864–1916, in the employment of the New Zealand and Australian Land Company Limited* (1930), p. 37; B. L. Evans, *A history of agricultural production and marketing in New Zealand* (1969), p. 105.

[2] James Troubridge Critchell and Joseph Raymond, *A history of the frozen meat trade: An account of the development and present day methods of preparation, transport, and marketing of frozen and chilled meats* (1912), pp. 418–20, 422–3.

Davidson, the former manager of the New Zealand and Australia Land Company (NZALC), an Edinburgh firm influential in the early development of the pastoral industry in New Zealand, proclaimed the endeavour to be not only 'one of the most important steps ever undertaken by the Company' but the inauguration of 'a trade which has been of infinite value to the Colony and to the population of Great Britain'.[3] The transfer of millions of frozen, partially-butchered sheep across the equator from the antipodes to London had by this time become so much a part of global trade that Davidson's successor could say that '[e]very one is now so familiar with frozen meat that they forget that it had an origin, and that comparatively recently'.[4]

The story of the rise of this trade is most often told as an economic tale, simply, as a story of supply and demand, in which refrigeration technology made it possible for the ovine surplus of the southern hemisphere (South America in addition to Australia and New Zealand) to satisfy the demand of Britain for mutton and lamb.[5] In New Zealand, where human inhabitants were relatively few, early emphasis on a flourishing wool economy meant that flocks had swelled. But with prices for wool in flux over the course of the nineteenth century, 'that very increase had become a source of embarrassment' to pastoralists and the colony alike.[6] Particularly in the 1860s when the value of a fleece dropped precipitously, and with so much capital tied up in the bodies of their stock, sheep farmers saw their profits literally consumed in feeding them. For their own prosperity, and for the greater good of the colony, they sought to diversify the pastoral industry, casting about for additional ways to make sheep profitable. Early efforts to salt or tin colonial meat for consumption were not well received in Britain, where consumers 'preferred the real thing',[7] while 'boiling down' excess sheep into tallow for candles, soap and industrial products offered only slim profits.[8] At the same time, the population of Great Britain was increasing, the growing appetite of its industrial centres outstripping domestic agricultural production. Consequently, beginning in the 1860s, Great Britain became increasingly reliant on imported food, and by the 1880s, foreign imports were 'critical' to Britain's food supply.[9] Enter refrigeration technology, which, coupled with transoceanic steam transportation, provided a satisfying resolution for both colonial producers in search of markets, and metropolitan consumers in search of meat, and everyone – everyone but the sheep, that is – lived and ate happily ever after.

The basic outline of this narrative was set by early chroniclers of the trade, and by and large, it has been followed by subsequent scholarship, which has added layers of complexity and

[3] William Soltau Davidson, *The establishment of the frozen-meat trade, of the dairying system, and of the Corriedale breed of sheep in New Zealand* (1918), p. 16.

[4] David Murray, 'Prefatory Note' to Davidson, *Establishment of the frozen-meat trade*, pp. iv–v.

[5] Examples of this interpretation include Davidson, *Establishment of the frozen-meat trade*; Critchell and Raymond, *History of the frozen meat trade*; Ross Grant, David Jones, R. Ramsay *et al.* (eds), *The frozen and chilled meat trade: A practical treatise by specialists in the meat trade* (2 vols, 1929). See also Sydney D. Waters, *Clipper ship to motor liner: The story of the New Zealand shipping company, 1873–1939* (1939), p. 51.

[6] David Jones, 'New Zealand Trade', in Grant *et al.* (eds), *Frozen and chilled meat trade*, I, p. 130. I am grateful to the anonymous referees of this article for directing me to this source.

[7] E. J. T. Collins, 'Food supplies and food policy', in Collins (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, VII, *1850–1914* (2 vols, 2000), (i), p. 37.

[8] E. J. T. Collins, 'Rural and Agricultural Change', in Collins (ed.), *Agrarian History,* VII (i), p. 115; Waters, *Clipper ship*, p. 52; Leonard W. Lillingston, 'Frozen Food', *Good Words* (Jan. 1898), p. 238.

[9] Collins, 'Food supplies and food policy', p. 34.

sophistication to an analysis that remains, at its heart, economic.[10] Questions of capital and of costs, of incomes and rates and profits, from the level of the individual producer or consumer to the level of imperial trade itself, certainly, are central to how the refrigerated and frozen meat trade took root and flourished in the British Empire. But they are not the whole story.

This article argues that it was more than a matter of equalizing distant supply with demand. The growth and establishment of the trade in frozen mutton and lamb between New Zealand and Great Britain depended to a significant degree on the ways in which colonial producers were able and willing to remake their flocks to meet consumer preference in Britain. To accomplish this, colonists had to reformulate sheep bred for wool into animals capable of producing meat. They had to adapt their stock to new and unfamiliar environments, a challenge more easily met in New Zealand's temperate climate than in drier, hotter Australia, which served as a point of reference and comparison for New Zealand throughout the establishment of the frozen meat trade. New Zealand's own climate and stock were cast as competitive advantages in relation to Australia, where geography and climate alike worked against the technology – biological and mechanical – of the frozen meat trade. At the same time, against growing worries over food security, the British were coming to terms with food of foreign origin, realigning their own tastes and expectations to reflect shifting patterns of production and consumption within the Empire, in which colonial producers came to supply Britons with the beloved joints of mutton that had formerly been almost exclusively domestic. Among the many effects wrought by this momentous shift in production, trade, and diet was the origination of 'native' New Zealand breeds, breeds that could satisfy both the demands of British consumers and the realities of colonial environments, and which embodied the economic and cultural compromise that underlay the imperial frozen meat trade.

I

None of this was a foregone conclusion, although only a few decades of hindsight would make it seem so to both Britons and colonial New Zealanders. In the period leading up to the 1880s, and even into the first few years of the trade, the good sense – or even the possibility – of sending dead sheep on a three month-long journey of more than 13,000 miles was not apparent. Early efforts to engineer artificial cold, and to apply it to the preservation and shipment of meat – a textbook example of a perishable article – had mixed results.[11] The transoceanic shipment of frozen meat became a realisable possibility only in 1877, when the first 'completely successful' shipment of frozen meat arrived in France from Buenos Aires,[12] although the 'real origin' of

[10] For example, Evans, *History of agricultural production*; David M. Higgins, '"Mutton dressed as Lamb?": The misrepresentation of Australian and New Zealand meat in the British market, *c*.1890–1914', *Australasian Economic History Rev.* 44 (2004), pp. 161–84; Richard Perren, 'The North American beef and cattle trade with Great Britain, 1870–1914', *EcHR* 24 (1971), pp. 430–44; id., *The meat trade in Britain, 1840–1914* (1978).

[11] Starting in the late 1860s, Thomas Mort and James Harrison in Australia began experimenting with freezing meat, but were unable to ship it successfully in its frozen state. Waters, *Clipper ship*, p. 52; Evans, *History of agricultural production*, p. 104.

[12] This shipment itself was preceded by the not entirely successful attempt of the SS Frigorifique in the same year. R. Ramsay, 'The world's frozen and chilled meat trade', in Grant *et al.* (eds), *The frozen and chilled meat trade*, I, p. 4; Waters, *Clipper ship,* p. 54.

the trade, according to Ramsay, an early chronicler of the frozen meat industry, only came two years later when the SS Strathleven left Sydney in December 1879, reaching London in February 1880, thereby inaugurating 'the beginning of a huge world-wide trade, which, in the short space of half a century, has revolutionized … the conditions of life in many countries'.[13]

Prior to this, American consignments of chilled beef had pioneered the refrigerated trade. American beef was chilled (but not frozen solid), first by means of coal-powered fans blowing across giant blocks of ice, and later by the circulation of super-chilled ammonia, through insulated holds on ships packed with sides of beef; it arrived at Smithfield market for the first time in 1874.[14] This system, however lucrative for the Americans, was untenable for a trade between the antipodes and Britain, as it not only relied on more space between each suspended side of meat than could be profitably afforded over the much longer journey from Australasia, but also left shipments too vulnerable to the extreme heat of the tropics. When refrigerating engines were developed which were capable of reducing the temperature in a ship's hold enough to maintain sheep and cattle carcasses frozen solid, however, 'a streak of real daylight appeared'.[15]

By the time that New Zealand entered the trade in 1882, Australia's frozen meat trade was already established, having sent some 31,469 hundredweights (or 57,256 carcasses) over the course of the previous three years.[16] Prior to this, in the 1860s and 1870s, various schemes to preserve colonial meat were tried, primarily in Australia, with only limited success.[17] Pastoralists in New Zealand watched the fortune of their nearest colonial neighbour with interest as it sought to establish a viable trade with Britain in frozen flesh.[18] Each early shipment of frozen meat from Australia was followed closely in New Zealand, every scrap of news about its fate on the high seas and in London's markets eagerly printed and reprinted in the colony's newspapers. The SS Protos, which left Melbourne in November 1880 carrying 1791 carcasses of sheep and 100 of lamb, in addition to 4,138 casks of butter, six quarters of beef, and various other cargo, remained an item of interest and news in New Zealand for several months, even after it was unloaded in London.[19] How its 'large cargo of meat' was packed (in a 'cool air chamber', with '200 tons of butter in the water tanks underneath it'),[20] and the costs of freight, freezing, and handling were all described treated in detail.[21] The condition of its cargo (both meat and butter 'were landed perfectly fresh in London')[22] and its reception on the British market, both laudatory and critical, circulated throughout provincial newspapers. Information of this kind was carefully accumulated for future reference to New Zealand's own efforts in shipping frozen meat.

[13] Ramsay, 'World's frozen and chilled meat trade', p. 4. For Waters, the Strathleven signified the 'economic beginning' of the trade, *Clipper ship*, p. 54.

[14] Ibid., p. 53.

[15] Davidson, *Establishment of the frozen-meat trade*, p. 10.

[16] Critchell and Raymond, *History of the frozen meat trade*, p. 422.

[17] Ross Grant, 'The Australian Meat Industry', in Grant *et al.* (eds), *Frozen and chilled meat trade*, I, pp. 43–4.

[18] Waters, *Clipper ship*, p. 54.

[19] Figures drawn from 'S', 'Meat Export. To the Editor', *Otago Daily Times*, 8 Feb. 1881, p. 3.

[20] 'Exportation of Butter to England', *Star* (Lyttleton, New Zealand), 17 Feb. 1881, p. 3.

[21] 'Export of Frozen Meat', *Timaru Herald*, 24 Mar. 1881, p. 8.

[22] 'Exportation of Butter', *Star,* 17 Feb. 1881, p. 3.

From the vantage point of New Zealand, these early Australian shipments were experiments, the outcome of which would help determine the viability of the trade for their own colony. The 'Strathleven Experiment', as the first frozen cargo from Australia was referred to, demonstrated the viability of the frozen meat trade between Australasia and Great Britain, but was also an 'instructive case' that 'proved the practicability of preserving fresh meat in transit at a moderate expense'.[23] The Protos, too, was 'a successful experiment' that offered 'proof that before long, Australia and New Zealand would have ships trading to and fro … and this must result in great benefit to these Colonies'.[24]

While the passage of these pioneering vessels demonstrated the feasibility of the frozen meat trade, their success was not unqualified. Shortcomings and failures were carefully noted, and interpreted as opportunities for New Zealand to improve upon, and outshine, their 'Australian rivals'.[25] Here, the colonies' contrasting climates and environments came into play. In the case of the Protos, its cargo reportedly necessitated speedy cooking 'because of the tendency to rapid decomposition'.[26] London butchers, too, reportedly complained of the 'dark colour' of the meat.[27] But both these faults could be remedied, according to an early proponent of the trade, Mr Skilling, who served as an expert adviser to New Zealand's first freezing corporations. Skilling felt confident that by preserving the meat 'at a less degree of cold than the Protos's cargo was subjected to', rapid decomposition could be forestalled, and that the darkness of its meat, 'while inherent in the meat of Victoria and New South Wales … would not be characteristic of New Zealand's beef and mutton'. This was because Skilling 'regarded it as a climatic effect' and one that extended to New Zealand's human inhabitants too: 'Not only the meat of this colony, but the men and women too, were fresher and healthier-looking than those of the hotter climates of the sister colonies'.[28] Such estimations of the impact of colonial environments on living bodies, both human and animal, were not unusual for the time, and the perceived salubrity of New Zealand's climate thus offered further justification for the colony's entry into the frozen meat trade.

II

Yet even as observers in New Zealand avidly followed the fate of Australia's frozen cargoes, doubt arose over the suitability of this particular export trade. On the one hand, it was important for New Zealand to keep up with its larger neighbour to the west. In December 1880, spurred by the sailing of the Protos, a writer for the *Waikato Times* asked, 'Are we to be left behind in the race [to supply Britain with fresh meat], while our more enterprising neighbours in Melbourne and Sydney are reaping the reward of prompt action?'.[29] The author of an unsigned letter to the *Otago Witness* in early February 1881 concurred, claiming it would be a 'serious reproach to this Colony should no endeavour be made to participate in the obvious and varied advantages which must result from the undertaking'.[30]

[23] 'S', 'Meat Export', *Otago Daily Times,* 8 Feb. 1881, p. 3.

[24] 'Exportation of Butter', *Star,* 17 Feb. 1881, p. 3.

[25] 'A New Zealand meat export company', *Waikato Times*, 23 Dec. 1880, p. 3.

[26] 'Frozen Meat Export Company', *North Otago Times,* 28 Feb. 1881, p. 2.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] 'A New Zealand meat export company', *Waikato Times*, 23 Dec. 1880, p. 3.

On the other hand, whether New Zealand had enough surplus sheep to justify the economic investment and risk represented by the frozen meat trade was a real concern, and discussion of this question characterized early efforts to promote the trade. One of the earliest such efforts was that of the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce. Inspired by Australia's early success, 'gentlemen favourable to the formation of a Frozen Meat Export Company' met under the auspices of the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce on 26 February 1881.[31] As it happened, the Dunedin-based New Zealand Refrigeration Company, which grew out of the Chamber of Commerce's committee in the following month, was not the first corporate body to export frozen meat from New Zealand: that honour fell to the New Zealand and Australian Land Company in early 1882. However, the Committee's, and subsequently the Company's, widely publicized debates throughout 1881 about the cost and feasibility of the trade set the tenor of the discussion for New Zealand.

The earliest debate centred on a figure given in February 1881 by Matthew Holmes, prominent colonist, and member of parliament.[32] Based on a rough estimate of twelve million sheep in New Zealand, of which according to 'the usual calculation', one third 'might be taken as ewes', four million ewes could be expected to return some three million lambs, which in turn would replace the same number of 'old sheep'. According to Holmes, 'two million would be more than enough for local consumption', leaving one million for export.[33] At twenty sheep per ton, that represented 50,000 tons of meat – a 'vast quantity' – available for export per annum.[34] However, this estimate of the colony's surplus was not unanimously accepted. For instance, John Drew Atkin, a prolific letter writer and agricultural expert, believed Holmes's figures were out of date. According to Atkin, Holmes was 'evidently thinking of the times … before the rabbit invasion – when he stated that we should be able to keep up an export of 1,000,000 fat sheep annually'.[35] By Atkin's own reading of the colony's stock returns, the total increase in sheep over the five years from 1874 to 1879 was only 133,988 – 'a mere bagatelle.' Unless 'more stringent steps' were taken against the rabbit scourge, Atkins argued, the kind of surplus Holmes suggested was an 'utter impossibility'.[36]

Atkins was not alone in his point of view. A Dunedin resident writing to the *Otago Witness* on 19 March 1881 under the pen name 'Experientia Docet', asked where Holmes's surplus was now, 'or where has it been for the past five years?' Referring to the low numbers of sheep processed by the New Zealand Meat-Preserving Company, a large corporate body established in 1869 with processing and preserving plants scattered across both islands,[37] he wondered with more than a hint of sarcasm, 'Have the ewes been withholding their increase until such can be respectable frozen, and transported to a market where no Dornwell shall retail it at 1*d.* per lb?'.[38]

[30] 'Frozen Meat', *Otago Witness*, 5 Feb. 1881, p. 7.

[31] 'Frozen Meat Export Company', *North Otago Times,* 28 Feb. 1881, p. 2.

[32] *The cyclopedia of New Zealand, Wellington Provincial District* (1897), pp. 250–1.

[33] 'Export of frozen meat', *Timaru Herald,* 24 Mar. 1881, p. 8.

[34] 'Frozen Meat Export Company', *North Otago Times,* 28 Feb. 1881, p. 2.

[35] John Drew Atkin, 'Our exports, frozen meat, and the rabbit scourge', *Otago Witness*, 19 Mar. 1881, p. 8.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Critchell and Raymond, *History of the frozen meat trade*, p. 12.

[38] Experientia Docet, 'Export of frozen meat. To the Editor', *Otago Witness* (19 Mar. 1882), p. 8. A. Dornwell was a local butcher in Dunedin who eventually sold New Zealand's first frozen meat to local inhabitants

Local outlets for excess stock, such as Southland – which was among the last regions of New Zealand to be settled, and which offered at least as profitable an outlet as the export trade did, according to the writer – should be exploited before going to the trouble and expense of freezing and long distance shipping, Experientia Docet argued.

Holmes's estimates, as it turned out, were not that far off the mark. In fact, the total sheep population for all of New Zealand in 1881 was closer to 13 million (12,985,058; 13,069,338 in 1878); Otago and Canterbury, the two provinces with the largest ovine populations, had close to three million each. With fewer than 500,000 people to feed in the whole colony in 1881, the two million sheep that Holmes estimated would be left for local consumption after the frozen export of one million represented a whopping 457 lbs per capita per year – a mighty sum indeed. By comparison, people in Great Britain, which had one of the highest rates of meat consumption in the world, ate approximately 110 lbs per capita per year. At any rate, the four shipments made in the first year of the trade amounted to 22,897 carcasses, an impressive number for the nascent industry, but far short of Holmes's estimated one million.[39] And rather than deplete colonial flocks, the effect of refrigerated trade was to actually stimulate stock production: by 1886, the national flock was up to 16.5 million; by 1895 to 19.8 million, and with the exception of a temporary drop in 1903, it continued to rise until the close of World War I.[40]

Despite the fears of Atkins and others, the overwhelming perception in colonial New Zealand bore out the surplus indicated by statistical returns. Writing in 1918, William Soltau Davidson recalled that the surplus stock on the New Zealand and Australian Land Company's estates were so numerous that they 'erected yards at the edges of cliffs, into which some thousands of these old sheep were driven, so that they might be knocked on the head and thrown over the precipice as a waste product'.[41] Extreme measures like this may have been out of the ordinary, but very little could be done with sheep past their wool-bearing and breeding prime. Existing relief measures were as unsatisfactory in New Zealand as they were in Australia. Boiling down and the like provided a 'stop-gap', alleviating to a small extent the 'want of an outlet' for colonial flocks, but were, in Davidson's words, an 'unprofitable relief' to pastoralists, as well as an affront to a sense of colonial duty.[42] And as one Australian commentator put it, 'We had far rather [our flocks] should feed our brothers in the grand old fatherland. You want mutton and beef. We want to send it to you. How can this be done?'[43]

III

At the same time as New Zealand was confronting the problem of ovine overpopulation, Great Britain was facing an alarming paucity of fresh meat. By the late 1860s, experts and the

Note 38 *continued*
in December 1881 when the crankshaft on the SS Dunedin's refrigerating engine broke and its cargo had to be unloaded. Cf. 'Christmas Relish', *Otago Daily Times*, 26 Dec. 1881, p. 3.

[39] Waters, *Clipper ship*, p. 57.

[40] Figures for this paragraph are drawn from B. L. Evans, *Agricultural and pastoral statistics of New Zealand, 1861–1954* (1956), pp. 31, 7.

[41] Davidson, *Establishment of the frozen-meat trade*, p. 10. Similar measures were reportedly resorted to in Argentina. Waters, *Clipper ship*, 53.

[42] Ibid., p. 52

[43] Davidson, *Establishment of the frozen-meat trade*, p. 10; 'Australian Mutton', *All the Year Round* 20, no. 490, 12 Sept. 1868, p. 319.

public alike feared that Britain's growing population would outstrip productive capacity. Meat production was, in reality, doing relatively well by comparison to the rest of British agricultural production, but domestic supply had begun to fall short of demand.[44] The nation's population was growing, incomes were rising, and consumers were increasingly willing and able to spend money on meat.[45] And while domestic meat production was growing at a modest rate of 1.5 per cent per annum over the second half of the nineteenth century,[46] the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, signalling the end of agricultural protectionism and the introduction of free trade, drove up the price of meat.[47] Rising prices were only exacerbated by adverse weather and zoonotic disease outbreaks in the mid-1860s that contributed to 'demographic malaise' in Great Britain's livestock population and high stock mortality.[48]

The slow growth of domestic production, and the fast growth of consumer demand, produced a sense of crisis. In 1868, the nation's meat deficit was 'something alarming', according to a writer for *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Art*, 'being, for Great Britain, over 3,500,000,000 pounds annually', or 156,250 tons short of 'the quantity deemed necessary by physiologists'.[49] Anxiety over a pending 'meat famine' coincided with an actual rise in average meat consumption in Britain (from 90 lbs per capita in the decade 1861–70, to 110 lbs per capita the following decade) which gave greater credence to such fears.[50] As the pace of home production slowed relative to population growth and demand, the difference was made up by foreign meat, imported live or as chilled dead meat from Europe and America.[51]

The shifting balance towards reliance on foreign meat was hardly less disquieting than the threat of under-supply. The proportion of imported or 'foreign' meat consumed in Britain only continued to rise, from nine per cent in the years 1868–70 to 26 per cent ten years later.[52] This meant that while one out of every twelve people was fed by foreign meat in 1867, by 1887 one in every four relied on imports to supply their tables with joints of beef and mutton.[53] While some of the more boisterous denigrations of foreign supplies came from vested agricultural and pastoral interests opposed to free trade,[54] disinterested observers also found foreign sources to be less than satisfactory. In the first place, they meant relying on potentially hostile trade partners. In addition, live imports from outside the island might expose domestic herds to contagious diseases like foot-and-mouth disease.[55]

Despite their similarly exogenous origin, live imports from Ireland seemed slightly less worrisome than continentally-sourced imports. In fact, Irish stock that were finished in Britain became the 'backbone of the English fatstock industry' during the shortages of the 1860s and

[44] Perren, *Meat trade in Britain*, p. 3.

[45] Higgins, '"Mutton dressed as Lamb?"', pp. 175–6.

[46] Collins, 'Rural and agricultural change', p. 116.

[47] Ibid., p. 110.

[48] Ibid., pp. 98, 109.

[49] 'Our Meat-Supply', *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts* 257, 28 Nov. 1868, p. 759.

[50] 'Our Meat-Supply', *Chambers's J.* 2, no. 91, 26 Aug. 1899, pp. 615–16; Perren, *Meat trade in Britain*, p. 3. Prior to World War I, meat consumption in Britain peaked in the first five years of the twentieth century at 132 lbs per capita.

[51] Collins, 'Food supplies and food policy', p. 35; Higgins, '"Mutton dressed as Lamb?"', p. 166.

[52] Ernest E. Williams, 'The foreigner in the farmyard', *The New Review* 16, no. 93, Feb. 1897, p. 144.

[53] P. G. Craigie, 'Twenty years' change in our foreign meat supplies', *JRASE,* sec. ser., 23. (1887), p. 472.

[54] Collins discusses the views of agricultural protectionists at length. See Collins, 'Food supplies and food policy', 'Rural and Agricultural Change' and also Williams, 'Foreigner in the farmyard'.

[55] 'American Meat', *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* 52, no. 1366 (1881), p. 811.

1870s.[56] Although they remained potential vectors of contagion, and therefore a possible threat to Britain's herds and consequently the nation's economic wellbeing, Irish feed stock were politically less vulnerable than foreign sources. By the same logic, frozen colonial imports, too, were bound to be safer; both conceptually and actually. Even if they hadn't grazed the rich green pastures of Britain, as they were products of its cultural and economic offshoots, and as dead meat transported 'in a state of what one may call suspended animation', they all but eliminated the threat to public veterinary health.[57]

Health risks and hostile trading partners weren't the only causes for concern over the rising proportion of foreign meat feeding Britons, and worry over undersupply of meat in Britain in the 1860s and 1870s was more than just metabolic or material. In general, Britons considered meat consumption a foundation of their national identity and political pre-eminence, and the basis upon which they distinguished themselves from foreign rivals. It was not uncommon, for instance, for Britons to attribute their greater stature, strength and 'physical superiority' over their perennial rivals the French to their 'better supply of butcher-meat'.[58] The importance of meat to British identity, as well as to diet, gave a sharper edge to worry about potential under-supply.

Meat formed the nutritional basis of the British diet as well as a figurative basis of national identity, and while Great Britain may have proclaimed itself a nation of beef eaters, mutton held second place in its heart. Equally nutritious as their bovine counterparts, mutton and lamb were important elements of the British diet, and a significant element of national consciousness. In particular, mutton consumption was seen as 'one of the peculiarities of the English race', in contradistinction to other places, where it was merely an 'incidental item in the dietary of the people'.[59] The agricultural improvements of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Britain included great advances in livestock breeding, and the epitome of these developments was Robert Bakewell's 'Improved Leicester', or Dishley breed of sheep, an archetype of well-formed and tasty mutton. By the mid-nineteenth century, the breeding techniques pioneered by Bakewell had been applied with varying degrees of success to a number of other British breeds, including the Southdown, Shropshire and Welsh Mountain sheep.[60] Britons were willing to acknowledge that other nations possessed the ability to raise fine beef, but they prided themselves on their special national talent for breeding, rearing, fattening and ultimately consuming truly excellent mutton.

Colonial producers recognized the metabolic and cultural importance of meat to their metropolitan brethren. Writing in 1929, after the establishment and solidification of the frozen meat trade, David Jones, Chairman of the New Zealand Meat Producers' Board, observed that 'the Briton is a great meat eater and his taste today in this direction is as pronounced as in the

[56] Collins, "Rural and agricultural change', pp. 98, 111.

[57] 'The Australian Meat-Trade', *Chambers's J.* 11, no. 538, 21 Apr. 1894, p. 246; Evans, *History of agricultural production*, pp. 83–4.

[58] 'Our Meat-Supply' (1868), p. 759; Harriet Ritvo, 'Mad Cow Mysteries', in her *Noble Cows and Hybrid Zebras: Essays on animals and history* (2010), pp. 99–100; ead., *The Platypus and the Mermaid and other figments of the classifying imagination* (1997), pp. 194–7.

[59] Ramsay, 'The world's frozen and chilled meat trade', p. 11.

[60] Harriet Ritvo, 'Possessing Mother Nature: Genetic capital in eighteenth-century Britain', in Susan Staves and John Brewer (eds), *Early modern conceptions of property* (1995), pp. 413–26.

days gone by, when for his sustenance he depended solely on his herds and flocks'.[61] Recognition of the national fondness for sheep meat was among the motivations that stimulated refrigerated trade between the antipodean colonies and Great Britain.

IV

With the onset of refrigerated shipping, however, all was not smooth sailing. Britons were fascinated by the technology that produced 'artificial cold' – they marvelled at the workings of refrigerating engines, and the interior climate of cold storage warehouses ('among the most wonderful of recent developments')[62] – but they were at first wary of actually consuming frozen beef and mutton. British diners had to be convinced that mutton which had 'cropped pasture land 13,000 miles away, and been dead from six to nine months, or even longer' was good to eat.[63] The unpopularity (and unpalatability) of tinned meat from the colonies initially turned the British market away from the frozen variety of the same provenance. Moreover, Britons worried about the effect of the freezing process on the 'nutritive value' and tastiness of meat.[64] They particularly feared that the blood, and consequently nutritional value and flavour, would seep out of the meat during the thawing process, leaving it in a 'dry and tasteless condition'.[65]

Distributors of the colonial harvest of mutton and lamb overcame this initial prejudice in two ways, by undercutting home-grown competition and by fraud. As a writer for the *New Review* put it in 1897:

> We do not eat Frozen Mutton and Refrigerated Beef because an Arctic temperature improves their flavour, or because the breeds and pasturage in other countries make better Meat than we can grow. We import them because they are cheap.[66]

By the virtue of its availability, and because it retailed for several pence less per lb than home-grown mutton of similar quality, colonial mutton found purchasers, even if not from among the most discerning epicures, in the early days of its trade. Throughout the 1880s, colonial mutton sold for roughly 1*d*. less per lb than home-grown, and by 1896 prime New Zealand mutton was 2½*d*. less per lb than the top end of the Britain's produce, while Australian mutton (alongside Argentinean) bottomed out at 4½*d*. less.[67] It was hard for consumers to resist such value, and the prejudice against frozen meat, some commentators observed, was 'mainly a middle-class one after all'. Before Australasian beef and mutton became widely available, meat was dear enough to limit its consumption by the working class, even though it made up a larger proportion of the labourer's diet in Britain than it did in most of Europe.

Despite assertions that discerning palates could tell the difference between locally raised and colonial imports, there were no official measures in place to stop retailers selling colonial meat as home-produced. The best colonial meat, it was asserted again and again, though excellent,

[61] Jones, 'New Zealand Trade', pp. 131–3.

[62] 'Australian Meat-Trade', p. 247.

[63] Lillingston, 'Frozen food', p. 238.

[64] 'Our Meat-Supply' (1899), p. 616.

[65] 'A visit to the Australian Frozen Meat Company's works', *Leisure Hour* (Sept. 1882), p. 560.

[66] Williams, 'The foreigner in the farmyard', p. 149.

[67] 'Annual statement of the trade of the United Kingdom with foreign countries and British possessions for the year 1885', *Quarterly Rev.* 165, no. 329, July 1887, pp. 54–5; Williams, 'Foreigner in the farmyard', p. 150.

did not measure up to the very best domestic meat, so that butchers selling the 'bountiful supplies from the Antipodes' as Scotch and English mutton could make an extra profit.[68] The extent of fraud in marketing frozen meat from Australia and New Zealand, however, was probably more limited than anxious publications on the topic from the time suggest, not least because meat that has once been frozen presents a different appearance than meat which has never been frozen, offering an immediate visual cue to most purchasers as to the provenance (at least in broad geographical terms) of their supper.[69] Nevertheless, concern about actual and potential fraud was sufficient to convene a select committee in the House of Lords in 1893 on the 'Marking of Foreign Meat'.[70] Various representatives of the trade paraded before the Committee, giving evidence (sometimes contradictory) as to the quality and distinguishability of colonial versus home-grown meat, and to the persistence of fraud in London and provincial cities.[71]

David M. Higgins has conducted a detailed analysis of the evidence given to the select committee, and concluded that not only was fraud less prevalent than contemporaries supposed, its effects were also less pernicious. Had fraud existed on a significant scale, Higgins argues, the price differential between meat of foreign origin, including colonial, and domestically-produced meat would have narrowed over time. That this did not occur suggests a relatively low degree of fraud in the marketplace. What misrepresentation existed, Higgins concludes, was practiced over a relatively short span of time in the early years of the trade.[72] Moreover, outrage over the misrepresentation of the point of origin of meat expressed an objection to the act of fraud itself, not necessarily a prejudice against foreign or colonial meat. That is, consumers objected to being sold a false article (colonial meat passed off as British), not necessarily to colonial meat per se.[73] Britons wished 'to exercise their patriotic preference in favour of domestic meat', and misrepresentation of colonial mutton as British prevented them from doing so.[74]

While the misrepresentation of colonial meat did not line the pockets of British butchers in any economically significant way,[75] the persistence of claims about fraud suggest that, even if such worry was overinflated, it remained culturally significant. Concerns about the misrepresentation of meat to British consumers spoke to precisely that centrality of meat to their daily lives and national identity. In the early days of the trade, misrepresentation also served in a roundabout way to overcome 'the extreme prejudice with which frozen meat was at first regarded'.[76] As one astute observer noted, in 1879 'The British public would in theory have nothing to do with Australian mutton; but somebody appears to have eaten it, for the next year 17,275 carcases came into this country'. This he attributed to the strong likelihood that 'a great deal of it was sold as home fed, so that the consumer, through his own ignorance and folly, not only ate Colonial mutton against his wishes, but had to pay more than its market value'.[77]

[68] 'Australian Meat-Trade', p. 237.

[69] Higgins, '"Mutton dressed as Lamb?"', pp. 173, 175, 177.

[70] BPP, 1893–4, XII, *Report from the select committee on marking of foreign meat, etc., together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, and appendix* (1893).

[71] Higgins, '"Mutton dressed as Lamb?"', pp. 167–71.

[72] Ibid., p. 182.

[73] Ibid., p. 176.

[74] Ibid., p. 174.

[75] According to Higgins's analysis.

[76] Lillingston, 'Frozen food', p. 237.

[77] Ibid.

While being duped into paying top prices for 'prime Scottish, and best Welsh or Southdown' even when 'the beasts whose remnants filled [the butcher's] cart have never known the taste of Scots or English grass' may have given the lie to the supposed national talent for judging meat, colonial pastoralists could not afford to ignore the tastes of the British consumer.[78] Australian pastoralists quickly learned that they could not simply export mutton grown as a by-product of their wool industry to hungry, waiting consumers in Britain, and, as in so many other aspects of the frozen trade, New Zealand also watched and learned. Though many in the southern colonies believed that 'it would be hard to beat for flavour a leg of mountain-fed Merino wether in good condition', Britons were not 'sufficiently colonial' to agree.[79] The palatability of merino mutton had for some time been a matter of debate in England, and Australian-grown merino chops fared no better than had their homegrown equivalent of a generation or two earlier. Britons felt strongly that different social classes required different cuts of meat, but just what was considered appropriate for each stratum of society was open to interpretation. Sometimes, experts and commentators exhorted the middle and upper classes to choose lean, more refined cuts of meat, leaving the fat joints to the working classes.[80] At other times, it seemed that fat joints were necessary to the physiological and intellectual lives of the middle and upper classes, while lean cuts sufficed to power the lower orders engaged in rough, unrefined physical labour. In keeping with the latter view, observers felt that the earliest shipments of lean, frozen merino mutton were 'too small and delicate to suit the taste of English buyers', nor did the manner in which the carcasses were dressed 'altogether meet with the approval of the butchers' in the metropolis.[81] Observers thus pointed to the northern mining districts as markets for merino mutton, where 'those engaged in less exacting physical occupations prefer lean meat', unlike members of the middle class, for whose refined occupations a fat joint of mutton or lamb was more fitting.[82] Merino cutlets may have been fit 'to sustain the English workman, and make abundant meals for the destitute' but they would not do for 'the paterfamilias of middle life as his cut-and-come-again dinner joints'.[83]

In the end, it fell mostly to the lower classes to absorb the colonial contribution to Britain's meat supply. According to Higgins, evidence given before the select committee of the House of Lords suggests that poor and working-class inhabitants of London and other major industrial centres were 'the greatest consumers of all types of foreign and colonial meat'.[84] High-end London butchers were a sometimes inadvertent exception to this, because with the large joints favoured by their well-heeled clientele, point of origin was more difficult to distinguish than in the smaller cuts.[85] Fraudulent distribution of colonial meat, then, was limited in extent, and largely circumscribed by class, and except where top-end purchasers ended up with New Zealand instead of 'prime Scotch', the lower prices of meat from New Zealand and Australia, as well as South America, made it more attractive to the poor.

Australian producers initially looked towards 'educating the "Home" taste' as a solution to

[78] Williams, 'Foreigner in the farmyard', p. 151.

[79] 'How down mutton went down', *New Zealand Farmer* 12, no. 9, Sept. 1892, p. 370.

[80] Ritvo, *Platypus and the Mermaid*, p. 200.

[81] 'Visit to the Australian Frozen Meat Company's works', p. 560.

[82] Lillingston, 'Frozen food', p. 239.

[83] 'Australian Mutton', p. 320.

[84] Higgins, '"Mutton dressed as Lamb?"', p. 172.

[85] Ibid.

the unpopularity of their colonial merino mutton.[86] '[T]here is no reason why the English taste should not be educated to a proper appreciation of merino mutton', wrote one contributor to the *Australasian Pastororalists' Review,* the pre-eminent agricultural journal of the colonies.

> [I]f the sheep are killed near their pastures, and accordingly have not suffered deterioration from a long journey, consumers may speedily find that though merino mutton is somewhat less sightly in appearance when thawed than crossbred, its flavour is by no means inferior.[87]

Britons, however, were proud of their exacting palates. *Chambers' Journal* reported in 1877 that 'we should confidently say that no people on the face of the earth are such connoisseurs in good beef and mutton as the English, down even to the humblest classes'.[88] Consequently, they were not likely to be re-educated in matters of taste by their colonial cousins, and, having watched the reception of Australian mutton on the British market, pastoralists in New Zealand alike conceded that 'colonial tastes in this matter could not affect the question'.[89]

V

In the new trade, colonial pastoralists saw an opportunity to revitalize a pastoral economy that, because of its emphasis on a single product, wool, was very much at the mercy of the vicissitudes of international markets. Although wool remained the colony's primary export product, the refrigerated trade quickly became crucial to New Zealand's economic well-being, pulling the colony out of the global economic depression of the 1890s.[90] But even with a surplus of sheep to hand, success in the frozen meat trade was not simply a matter of slaughtering the excess sheep from a flock bred for wool. As any good breeder in the late nineteenth century knew, sheep bred for wool did not necessarily produce good meat. In fact, the case was more often quite the reverse. The relationship between the weight and texture of a fleece on the one hand, and the carcass on the other, was a problem which had already occupied breeders in England for several hundred years. Whether or not the mechanisms of heredity, fattening, and wool growth were well understood, experience suggested that producing excellent mutton and superior wool were more or less mutually exclusive. From the late eighteenth century onward, this principle was reinforced by a tendency towards specialization in English sheep-breeding in which breeding for mutton was largely divorced from breeding for wool, producing ever more specialized types of sheep designed to eke maximum efficiency and profit out of particular regional conditions and economies.[91]

By the late 1870s, at the outset of the trade in frozen meat between Australasia and Great Britain, there existed a wide variety of British breeds, each with its own special talent or use,

[86] 'Mutton Cutlets', *New Zealand Farmer* 12, no. 2, Feb. 1892, p. 37.

[87] 'The frozen meat industry', *Australasian Pastoralists' Rev.* 3, no. 2, 15 Apr. 1893, p. 72.

[88] 'Imported Beef and Mutton', *Chambers' J.* 695, 22 Apr. 1871, p. 253.

[89] 'How down mutton went down', p. 370.

[90] Evans, *History of agricultural production*, p. 90. Only twice was wool surpassed as the most valuable export before the second half of the twentieth century: by gold in 1860s and by meat and butter in 1930s. Ibid., p. 89.

[91] Nicholas Russell, *Like Engend'ring like: Heredity and animal breeding in early modern England* (1986); Robert Trow-Smith, *A history of British livestock husbandry* (2 vols, 1957).

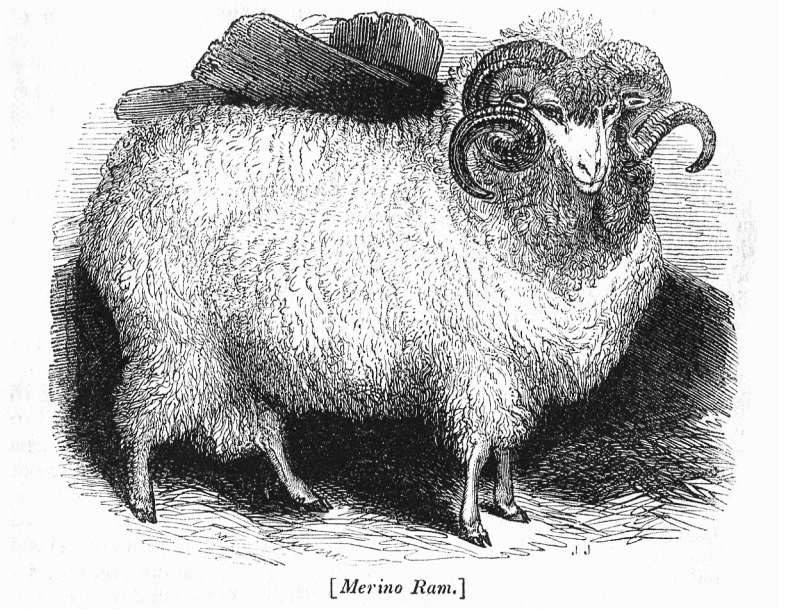


FIGURE 1. Merino ram, from William Youatt, *Sheep: Their breeds, management, and diseases. To which is added the mountain shepherd's Manual* (1837).

although not all were readily available in Australia or New Zealand. The antipodean ovine surplus consisted primarily of merino sheep, originally a Spanish breed, known for both its fine wool and the poor quality of its flesh.[92] They predominated in Australia where their importation to the colony dated back to 1796 when John McArthur brought the first merinos from the Cape of Good Hope to New South Wales. The breed was also prevalent in the high elevations of New Zealand's South Island (Figure 1). The varied regional terrain and climate of New Zealand's islands had encouraged sheep farmers to stock more breeds than just the merino even during the heyday of the colonial wool trade, some of which were now desirable as 'freezers'. Lincoln Longwools, producing a long, heavy, lustrous wool for the worsted manufacturing industry, and Leicesters, known for their heavy, fatty carcasses and weighty fleeces, could also be found in New Zealand. Much rarer were such breeds as Southdowns and Shropshires, the latter a relative latecomer to the British breeding scene: it was shown in its own category at the Royal Agricultural Society of England's show for the first time in 1868. These were champion mutton-makers, producing a pleasantly plump leg but only a lightweight fleece of medium quality, making them (at least in the early days) relatively unpopular in the colonies.[93]

Determining which sheep to breed where depended on a number of considerations, some economic, some environmental, and some cultural. Given the distance between the Australasian colonies and the markets in Great Britain and Europe, the difficulties in preserving and transporting meat prior to the advent of frozen shipment, and the relatively tiny size of colonial human populations, emphasizing wool production in Australia and New Zealand made perfect sense. Wool was lightweight and never went bad; consequently it was easy to

[92] Evans, *History of agricultural production*, p. 82.

[93] Corin (pseud.), 'The management of sheep on small farms', *New Zealand Farmer* 12, no. 5, May 1892, p. 197.

store and ship. Moreover, its production was labour-intensive only at specific times of year, namely at lambing season and during shearing, and so was well-suited to the low population density of the Australasian colonies. For most of the nineteenth century this served Australia, in particular, extremely well: its hot, dry climate seemed uniquely suited to the merino sheep, whose wool was, then as now, the standard in fineness and value. Indeed, Australia appeared so well-appointed for sheep farming that its lack of indigenous ovine species came as a 'curious fact' to nineteenth-century commentators.[94] For decades the colonies' vast flocks of merinos grazed equally vast sweeps of land, their hooves reshaping native ecosystems as their golden fleeces produced both metropolitan and colonial prosperity.[95]

In New Zealand, regional environments and climates were colder, wetter, more temperate, and more varied than in Australia, and the wool produced, as well as the breeds of sheep that grew it, was likewise more various. Whereas Australia's flocks produced almost exclusively the very fine grades of merino wool, the merino, lover of extreme heat or cold, but nothing in between, thrived only in the cold, high altitudes of New Zealand's craggy Southern Alps. The lowlands and river valleys of much of New Zealand were too wet for the erstwhile Spanish sheep, who suffered foot rot in such damp conditions, so longwooled breeds like the Leicester and Lincoln were needed to graze these moister regions. The clip from these flocks may not have returned such high prices as those of merino flocks, but to some extent quantity could make up for a relative lack of quality. At a time when the international wool trade alone determined profitability, longwooled breeds made otherwise unsuitable lands lucrative. Later, with the establishment of the frozen meat trade, these heftier breeds proved profitable to New Zealand's pastoralists in their own right.

When it came to the advantages of climate and environment, New Zealand really did have a leg up over Australia. Early Australian shipments had proved that the transoceanic shipment of frozen meat was possible, but the island continent's extreme heat and aridity was detrimental to producing frozen meat. Not only were the pastures on which Australian flocks (and herds, for that matter) grazed hot and arid, and the vegetation often sparse, requiring any sheep raised there to roam far and wide for their feed, the southern continent's irregular meteorological patterns and recurrent drought played havoc with the fortunes of livestock. These conditions favoured merino sheep, but were a challenge to the breeds that Britons preferred to eat. Selected for the damp, verdant pastures of the British Isles, they could ill withstand the periodic drought and dry heat that characterized much of the southern continent.

Moreover, Australian rangeland was hundreds of scorching, dusty miles from the port cities of New South Wales and Victoria, no easy trip for mutton in either its live or frozen state. Transport by rail challenged the export product in both stages of processing: if shipped live to be slaughtered and frozen at coastal freezing works, sheep were likely to be knocked about and bruised, to weaken, grow thin and lose their 'condition', the 'deterioration in quality thereby produced [preventing] the meat taking first rank and having any chance as a competitor with meat killed near the pasture'.[96] But if frozen inland and transported in refrigerated rail cars,

[94] 'The Australian meat-trade', p. 246.

[95] Libby Robin, *How a continent created a nation* (2007); Elinor G. K. Melville, *A plague of sheep: Environmental consequences of the conquest of Mexico* (1994).

[96] 'The frozen meat industry', p. 72.

the frosty load was vulnerable to total destruction should any mechanical failure or other impediment stall the cargo and leave it exposed to the punishing heat and sun of the continent. '[I]t is during this transition that the success of the whole undertaking is most endangered', one observer noted, 'for if the meat becomes at all thawed or softened in transit, the carcasses thus affected, when unshipped in the London Docks, present a most unpalatable appearance, being misshapen and discoloured, and are … condemned … as being unfit for food'.[97] There was no quick fix for this dilemma, and it wasn't until the early years of the twentieth century that refrigeration and transport technology advanced sufficiently to allow for reasonably risk-free inland freezing in Australia.

The climatic challenges that made Australia 'not so suitable for killing and freezing' sheep put it at a disadvantage relative to its eastern neighbour, whose average temperatures were lower and whose pastures were often situated nearer to its ports.[98] Yet Australian mutton developed a reputation for being second-rate not only because its product lacked the 'finishing' that came as a consequence of proximal pastures and abattoirs, but also because of British preferences. Cheap meat could always find a market in Britain, but no matter how good the price, Britons would almost always prefer the mutton of a 'native' British breed over the that of the merino. 'Englishmen prefer', wrote a contributor to the *Saturday Review*, 'from taste or habit, English meat'.[99] This marked preference – some called it a 'groundless' prejudice – presented an opportunity for New Zealand to capitalize on its more diverse colonial flocks.[100] New Zealanders were well aware that 'though we can't come near Australia in the fineness and lightness in grease of our wool clip, we have all the advantage in climate for taking the lead in meat production'.[101]

Which breed of sheep was best suited to their new surroundings was not a new question for breeders in New Zealand. A simple question in Australia, where in all but a few regions merinos thrived, it was a complicated one in New Zealand. 'Everything depends on the kind of pasture a sheep is sustained on', wrote T. H. Anson, an early authority on sheep-breeding in the Canterbury region, in 1877. '[W]hether it will attain to a point as near perfection in carcass and wool bearing capabilities as possible; or, on the other hand, whether it degenerates every year in both' came down to the resonance between the land and the breed.[102] Colonial breeders in New Zealand were well aware that the British Isles had produced regional types bred for local climatic, environmental, and of course economic conditions. 'In England the natural habitat of the different breeds has been long since determined', declared an essayist for the *New Zealand Farmer, Bee and Poultry Journal*, 'and we should in vain look for a Southdown in the fens of Lincolnshire, or a Lincoln on the chalk downs of Sussex or Hampshire'.[103] As they learned the lay of their new land, they were also increasingly aware that the hills, dales, plains and river valleys of New Zealand were like, but not *quite* like, 'Home'. Consequently, as types bred for particular local conditions in the British Isles, British breeds were close, but

[97] 'Visit to the Australian Frozen Meat Company's works', p. 561.

[98] Lillingston, 'Frozen food', p. 239.

[99] 'American Meat', p. 812.

[100] 'Frozen Food', *Chambers' J.* 20, no. 1020, 14 July 1883, p. 439.

[101] Taylor White, 'Cross-breeding of sheep', *New Zealand Farmer* 12, no. 5, May 1892, p. 198.

[102] T. H. Anson, 'On Sheep', *New Zealand Country J.* 1, no. 3, July 1877, p. 190.

[103] Corin, 'Management of sheep on small farms', p. 197.

not *quite* right for the colony. These uncannily familiar yet strange lands could be modified to a degree – they could be (and were) sown with English grasses, drained or irrigated – but fundamental attributes such as altitude, exposure, climate, wetness, and temperature could be little modified.

VI

Sheep, on the other hand, were far more malleable. They could be remolded to fit the land with more ease than the land could be refigured to suit the breed. 'We must adapt our sheep to the character of land we possess', Anson exhorted other pastoralists, and the readiest, most effective way to do this was by crossbreeding disparate types in order to combine their traits in one variety.[104] Crossbreeding was initially undertaken in New Zealand as a way to maximize wool production, but its means were easily reoriented to a new end when British markets opened up to colonial mutton with the establishment of the frozen meat trade. In this enterprise, colonial breeders in New Zealand followed the example of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century breeders in Britain who had, with great enthusiasm, crossbred local varieties in the name of improvement. In colonial New Zealand, the same methods were employed, but in the hope of hitting upon the right combinations of characteristics for particular places. In this context, improvement indicated a desire to reconfigure existing breeds into new breeds 'native' to the colony.

Early efforts to place the right type of sheep on the right type of pasture operated upon the theory of a cooperative 'chain of breeding'.[105] By crossbreeding merinos and longwooled breeds according to this principle, the properties of the merino – notably its fineness of wool – could cascade down from the high country sheep stations, through the foothills and river valleys, becoming proportionally more dilute among the flocks in the approach to the lowlands and marshes. In the other direction, size, carcass weight, and weight of fleece – all markers of the longwooled breeds – could climb gradually toward the highlands, the exclusive domain of the pure merino. In theory, this model meant that each sheep farmer could attain, by carefully calibrating his crossbreeding program, the right type of sheep for his pastures. Even under the best execution of this principle, however, whatever type of sheep thus attained would have to be constantly recreated, as crossbred animals only breed true to type under very special circumstances. The more likely outcome, however, was a very imperfect implementation of the 'chain of breeding'. Choice of breed often had as much to do with personal preference as with anything else, and critics had reason to lament the 'very strong inclination on the part of many farmers to disregard the character of the land, and to be guided in their selection more by their fancy for a particular breed than by its suitability for the conditions under which it would have to be maintained'.[106]

Nevertheless, these foundations served the pastoral interest in New Zealand well in the 1880s. The aim was no longer to produce the heaviest, most profitable fleece from a given

[104] Anson, 'On sheep', p. 190.

[105] John McBeath, 'Cross-breeding of sheep', *New Zealand Country J.* 1, no. 4, Oct. 1877, p. 267. Italics original.

[106] Davidson, *William Soltau Davidson*, p. 23.

piece of land, but to balance wool production with a carcass which would fetch the best return on British markets. And fetching a high price in London, Liverpool, or Birmingham meant catering to the tastes of British consumers. This entailed weighing carefully the demands of colonial environments with the imperative of metropolitan markets. While colonial breeders felt certain that 'the sheep farmers out here are naturally the best judges' of which 'particular line of breeding' suited local conditions, they acknowledged that 'London salesmen would, of course, know best what breed of sheep produced the mutton that sold for the highest price in their markets'.[107] Opinion varied as to whether that breed was a Southdown, Shropshire, or something else, but all – in the metropole and colonies alike – agreed that the crossbred flocks of New Zealand 'suit[ed] the taste of English purchasers'[108] and were 'more highly esteemed in the English market than the merinos which Australia chiefly furnishes'.[109]

The problem with crossbred sheep was that by their nature they produced instability and uncontrolled variation down the generations, the very thing that close and sustained inbreeding was designed to forestall. While a first generation cross between a longwooled breed and a merino might dependably give rise to an animal combining the weighty fleece of the one with the fineness of the other, the offspring of *that* generation, depending on whether it was bred to a longwool or a merino, 'naturally throws to the extremes' of one or another of its 'parent stock', and the result could not be guaranteed as an improvement over the breed in question in its pure state.[110]

The uncertainty and variability inherent in this endeavour caused much anxiety. Breeders feared the colony's flocks were in a hopeless muddle, and that a lack of particularity had created an indeterminate horde of 'mongrel-bred' sheep with no distinction, hence no predictability in breeding.[111] What was needed was a new breed, distinctly colonial but capable of satisfying the tastes of the most discerning British consumers. It was important that this breed be 'native' to the colony: 'English bred sheep are not exactly what we want', breeders recognized as early as 1877, as they were apt to alter in some way in unfamiliar colonial environments, whether that meant succumbing to disease, failing to fatten, or growing coarse or rangy. Rather, New Zealand wanted 'some native breeds, which shall not need to go through a course of acclimatisation, nor be periodically reinforced by new blood imported for the purpose, thus making us dependent on foreign breeders for our stock'.[112]

VII

The challenge was how to achieve this, given the intrinsic instability of crossbred varieties. 'We want a Bakewell to fix up a new type of sheep of permanent characteristics' was the call that sprang from the pages of the *New Zealand Farmer* in 1892. The 'new type' should be 'neither

[107] W. Weddel, quoted in 'The mutton of most value in London markets', *New Zealand Farmer* 12, no. 12, Dec. 1892, p. 476; Evans, *History of agricultural production*, pp. 84, 86.

[108] 'Visit to the Australian Frozen Meat Company's works', p. 560.

[109] Lillingston, 'Frozen food', p. 239.

[110] *The Corriedale, New Zealand's own breed: history and development* (1936), p. 11.

[111] Anson, 'On sheep', p. 190; Evans, *History of agricultural production*, p. 84.

[112] 'Cross-bred Sheep', *New Zealand Country J.* 1, no. 4, Oct. 1877, p. 269 (and originally published in the *Southern Mercury*).

too large or the reverse, of a muscular or fleshy character, and one to arrive at the standard of weight and condition in eighteen months time'.[113] While crossbreeding might produce a good terminal product for the freezer, breeders wanted a fixed and reliable type, 'the best stamp of … breed for the freezing trade': they wanted, in essence, to replicate the advantageous points of a crossbred in a pure breed able to reproduce itself with consistency.[114] To do this, they had only to follow the lead of their British predecessors and apply the principles of inbreeding to their crossbred stock. Though few would admit it, the most successful of the breeders of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, including Bakewell himself, most likely infused the target of their improving zeal with genetics (or 'blood') from another breed, subsequently inbreeding intensively to eliminate other than the desired characteristics. And indeed, this is just what experimental breeders in New Zealand did.

Creating an 'inbred crossbred', as it came to be called, was not entirely without controversy.[115] Debate over which existing British breeds should be used to create 'New Zealand's own' kept the *New Zealand Farmer* in print for several decades. Efforts to fix a crossbred type began as early as the 1870s. James Little, manager of the Corriedale Estate near Oamaru in North Otago, began intensively inbreeding successive generations of merino ewes crossed with Lincoln rams at almost the same moment that William Soltau Davidson of the NZALC, dissatisfied with the 'uneven' nature of the 'three-quarter-breds', determined to fix the half-bred type ('It was the half-bred sheep we wanted and nothing more or less').[116] The honour of establishing what was later hailed as 'entirely a New Zealand production'[117] is usually shared between the two men, although the breed came to be called the Corriedale after the station at which Little was manager at the time of experimentation.[118] With time, the NZALC's flock became the first continuously bred flock of Corriedale sheep, helping to establish the breed as New Zealand's own 'native' breed 'kept perfectly pure and inbred' for the remainder of the nineteenth century, though crossbred mutton of various parentage continued to fill the holds of the refrigerated steamers plying the seas between New Zealand and Great Britain (Figure 2).[119]

Creating an 'entirely new' breed was one way to produce 'native' breeds for New Zealand; adapting existing breeds to colonial conditions was another. This second course characterized what became known as the New Zealand Romney – or simply the Romney – sheep in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Known in Britain as the Kent or Romney Marsh breed of sheep in recognition of its origins, Romneys initially became popular in New Zealand because of their resistance to footrot. With the growth of the refrigerated trade, preference for Romneys grew, as their quickness to maturity and meaty carcasses suited the demands of the industry. Although this creolized breed quickly outpaced the Corriedale in numeric strength on the North Island of New Zealand, and soon after on the South Island, Corriedales remained a significant presence. In 1924, Corriedale stud sheep were second only to Romneys, with 39,563 studs entered in the New Zealand Flock Book (152,110 Romney studs were entered).

[113] White, 'Cross-breeding of sheep', p. 198.
[114] Weddel, quoted in 'Mutton of most value', p. 476.
[115] 'Mutton of most value', p. 476.
[116] Davidson, *William Soltau Davidson*, p. 23.
[117] Jones, 'New Zealand trade', p. 119.
[118] Clutton-Brock and Hall note the popularity of a similar Lincoln-merino cross in Germany and Ireland in the 1860s and 1870s. Stephen J. G. Hall and Juliet Clutton-Brock, *Two hundred years of British farm livestock* (1989), p. 139.
[119] Murray, 'Prefatory note', p. iv.



FIGURE 2. A flock of Corriedale cross sheep, Cheviot Hills Station, Canterbury, New Zealand, *c.*1893. Reproduced by permission of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

Corriedales were followed by Southdowns at 35,047 entries, and merinos at 28,479.[120] Estimates of non-breeding flocks put Corriedales in fourth place, with 642,782 sheep after close to three million Romneys, 1.4 million Half-bred, and 875,279 merinos.[121]

In 1923 the Corriedale Sheep Society published the first volume of its flock book, recording the pedigrees of more than 100 purebred flocks. By then, 'prime Canterbury' was a synonym for excellence on the British markets, and the Corriedale was promoted as both New Zealand's own quintessential 'native' breed, and the ideal universal mutton-maker.[122] Whilst New Zealand breeders were proud of how widely the breed had been exported – to Australia, South America, North America, Russia and even Japan – at the same time they celebrated its unique identity as a 'native' New Zealand breed. No other breed was 'so suited as the Corriedale [was] to … the sheep lands of the Dominion', enthused the breed's first historian, G. H. Holford,

[120] After that, English and Border Leicesters at approx. 23,000 each, Lincolns at 17,392, and Shropshires at 3,609. Jones, 'New Zealand trade', p. 117.

[121] The only other breed to exceed 100,000 were Lincolns at with around 200,000. Jones, 'New Zealand trade'.

[122] Weddel, in 'Mutton of Most Value', p. 477.

or so capable of producing 'magnificent mutton'.[123] While acknowledging that 'the British breeds of sheep are unsurpassed for the particular purpose for which they have been created', Holford gave credit to the Corriedale as an ingenious creation capable of taking advantage of the natural attributes of vast swaths of what environmental historians have recognized as the 'neo-Europes' of ecological imperialism. British breeds had taken root in New Zealand because of its affinities to 'the Homeland', but the stronger affinities among 'the upland sheep lands of the Dominion' made the Corriedale, as a 'sheep bred to suit this class of country', eminently suited to commensurate pastures 'in foreign lands'.[124]

As a dual-purpose breed combining wool and mutton production, the Corriedale was hailed as a return to the natural. The trend towards combining wool and mutton production, spurred by the frozen meat trade, '[was] not – as [was] often supposed – away from the nature of the … animals in their original state, but rather back to that original state'.[125] Millennia of domestication, the breed's boosters argued, had 'naturally' produced dual-purpose sheep: it was only relatively recently that modern breeders had disaggregated flesh and fleece to produce the highly specialized breeds of the late nineteenth century. According to this reasoning, although the Corriedale was a newcomer among sheep breeds, it represented 'a much closer approximation to the original state of the animal fixed by thousands of years of natural adaptation to environment than … [did] the comparatively recently developed specialist breeds'.[126]

Written in 1936, this rhetoric interpreted the development of the breed in such a way as to legitimize sheep breeders' efforts to repurpose their colonial flocks for the British market. In the case of colonial New Zealand's trade in frozen meat, novel technologies and novel breeds were mutually reinforcing. The ability to hold flesh 'in a state of … suspended animation'[127] brought colonial pastures into greater temporal, if not geographic, proximity with metropolitan markets. As a 'native' breed devised to fit the holds of refrigerated ocean liners, and to suit the demands of British consumers, the Corriedale was a new kind of colonial hybrid. As the product of British culture, history and biota, and the geography, environment and climate of colonial New Zealand, it was testament to the power of imperial ties to remake taste, breeds, and bodies.

[123] G. H. Holford, *The Corriedale: New Zealand's contribution to the sheep world* (1925), p. 11.

[124] Ibid., p. 12. Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological imperialism: The biological expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (1986).

[125] *The Corriedale*, p. 3.

[126] Ibid.

[127] 'Australian meat-trade', p. 246.

Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

BEN DODDS and CHRISTIAN D. LIDDY (eds), *Commercial activity, markets and entrepreneurs in the Middle Ages. Essays in honour of Richard Britnell* (Boydell & Brewer, 2011). xv + 255 pp., 7 figs., 13 tabs. £55.

The present volume, celebrating the career of Richard Britnell, brings together twelve exciting and innovative studies by some of the leading authorities on the social and economic history of medieval England. Each study represents an original piece of research, based, in most cases, on archival sources.

The volume opens with John Hatcher's study of rural wage earners and their living standards in the post-Black Death period. Here Hatcher challenges the prevailing view of the (long) fifteenth century as a 'Golden Age of the Labourer' and offers a new perspective on the topic, arguing that this period, and especially *c.*1440–80, was also an era of economic decline and depression. In particular, he points out the inability of manorial accounts, recording agricultural wages, to reflect the real income of rustic inhabitants. In reality, it is essential to distinguish between real (daily) wages and real (annual) income. A close analysis reveals that there was an apparent gap between the two, and that an average rustic could not have been employed for the 260 days a year left after cultivating his own landholding: an unrealistically high figure proposed by some historians.

John Langdon offers a most valuable contribution to the history of late medieval wages. Unlike other historians, who were satisfied with 'average' wages paid to male workers, Langdon, utilizing royal building accounts (in itself a unique source), sets out to learn about the wages of 'marginal' workers, that is, women and children. In addition, he differentiates between 'mean', 'median' and 'mode' wages paid to the same employees. Basal (that is, minimum) wages for all groups remained constant for a long period of time. Intriguingly, the 1290s saw a sudden disappearance of women from building gangs, which may be explained by the ensuing period of 'baby boom' and unemployment.

Derek Keene compares three major instances of grain shortage and famine in London in the later middle ages, focusing on the difference in reaction to three crises. Thus, during the famine of 1256–59, food relief came largely from the initiative of a single person, Richard of Cornwall, who secured imports of corn from Germany and Holland. On the other hand, there is archaeological evidence of the emergency establishment of mass burial grounds, perhaps devised by the Bishop of London. During the years of the Great Famine (1315–17), Edward II extended privileges to alien merchants, while urban authorities enacted new market regulations. In the course of the 1438–40 crisis, the civic authorities used more sophisticated measures, which included the exploitation of the public reserve to purchase grain and build the first city granary between 1438 and 1444.

John Lee's study on grain shortages in early sixteenth-century towns (despite the somewhat misleading title 'Grain Shortage in Late Medieval Towns') represents a complementary paper to the previous article by Keene. Like Keene, Lee focuses on governmental (both central and local) responses to urban grain shortages, giving special attention to early Tudor Coventry. These measures included forced sales of surpluses, regulation of begging, control of ale-houses and unlawful games, tight supervision of markets, import of grain and construction of central granaries. Food riots were provoked not by hunger, but by the failure of civic authorities to provide an adequate supply of corn.

Lee's paper merges nicely into James Davis's article on market regulation in fifteenth-century England, through the prism of a single legislative document, the so-called 'Lansdowne Assizes' of the late fifteenth century. In effect, the 'Lansdowne Assizes' were a synthesis of earlier central (royal) statutes and assizes and local (civic, manorial) by-laws, related to various traders and their merchandize. This document attempted to regulate trade and traders and prevent forestalling, speculation and other mercantile frauds. It should be viewed as a part of a wider process of gradual standardization of assize legislation, which was a major element in the late medieval English market economy.

Davis's paper on trade legislation is followed by Mark Bailey's article on self-government in small towns in the late medieval period. Here, Bailey challenges the old wisdom that dwellers of small towns had little or no autonomy and that they lacked control mechanisms as an urban community. A close analysis of institutional arrangements within 'mesne' (*seigneurial*) towns reveals that burgesses managed to attain a fair number of liberties and control, particularly through the piecemeal leasing-out of towns by their lords. Although this phenomenon became especially widespread after the Black Death, there are numerous pre-Black Death instances, too.

The topic of small towns is continued in Christine Newman's article on the marketing and trading networks of three late medieval towns in County Durham. The three episcopal towns (Gateshead, Sunderland and Darlington) differed in their success and fate, largely dictated by their physical location, degree of commercialization and local specialisms. Thus, Gateshead and Darlington were important local trade centres that coped with the post-Black Death crisis fairly well, while Sunderland, whose commercial activities were rather limited, underwent an 'urban decline' in the post-plague era and it was not until the late sixteenth century that it was revived, thanks to the expansion of its salt industry and trade.

The fate of late medieval Durham is pursued in Peter Larson's paper on peasant opportunities in rural Durham in the fifteenth century. On the basis of court records of the Durham bishopric, Larson shows that the post-Black Death era saw an upsurge in peasant land-market activities, with peasants accumulating larger holdings of land, mostly from the demesne. Later on, entire demesnes and even villages were being leased. This process led to an inevitable stratification within local communities. Other economic opportunities included newly opened coal-mines and demesne mills, leased to local peasants.

Maryanne Kowaleski's study on shipmasters as entrepreneurs takes us from Durham to the southern counties. Late medieval shipmasters not only possessed all the essential navigation skills, but were also involved in an array of entrepreneurial activities. They played an important part in long-distance international trade. Some of them were employed by ship-owners and merchants, while some others were themselves ship-owners, and in particular owners of commercial vessels. Ship-mastering seems to have been a particularly rewarding profession in times of war, when shipmasters expected to receive a share of any prizes while on the king's naval service.

Martha Carlin's article deals with hitherto neglected, but fascinating anti-embezzlement instructions for manorial officials, compiled by one Robert Carpenter in the 1260s. There are six possible frauds, connected to sheep management and cheese production. Whatever Carpenter's motives in putting together these instructions were, it is clear that they reflect the fact that embezzlement was a widespread practice in the late medieval rural economy. One important implication is that employee theft seems to have contributed to the late medieval shadow economy. An (accurate) translation is followed by an (equally accurate) critical edition of the treatise.

James Masschaele offers an article on the place of private charters in public land disputes in late medieval England. The success and validity of a charter were obviated by a number of challenges, including forgeries, and the age and physical and mental condition of its compiler. Charters were validated by being placed on an altar and read publicly at local courts. These 'legitimizing' rituals derive from kindred royal practices of validating royal writs. Charter witnesses played an important role in litigation concerning land disputes, either as local juries, or as evidence to each side's claims. The expansion of private charters reflects the expansion of other facets of socio-economic and cultural life in late medieval England.

The final essay, by Christopher Dyer, is concerned with the place of luxury goods in medieval English society and economy, over the very *longue durée* (*c*.650–1540). Dyer's findings are based upon both written sources and archaeological evidence. As he shows, between *c*.650 and 1100, nascent urban centres, patronized by kings, played the dominant role in importing foreign luxury goods, chiefly reserved for local aristocracy. Proliferation and disposal of luxury articles were rather limited. After *c*.1100, and mainly because of the concurrent processes of urbanization and commercialization, there was an increased proliferation of luxury consumables, in both small and large towns. In all cases, luxury goods were no longer limited to the aristocracy, but also enjoyed by various members of the urban elite.

The volume closes with a comprehensive bibliography of Britnell's works, down to 2010. These include 23 authored monographs and edited volumes, 91 articles and ten shorter notes and entries: a most impressive amount by any standard.

This *festschrift* has many apparent good points. First, it contains some important methodological and thematic contributions, whose quality reflects the high academic standards set by Richard Britnell himself and modelled here. For instance, there is no doubt that Langdon's article sets new methodologies for

studying the history of wages. Similarly, Dyer's article is an important reminder that, in many cases, a full picture cannot be assembled, unless both textual and archaeological sources are brought together. Second, the internal structure of the volume is very clear and easy to follow, with many papers flowing one into another thematically or conceptually. Finally, most papers are written on topics that Britnell has had a profound interest in during the course of his career. These include urban history (Keene, Lee, Bailey), trade (Davis, Newman), and the local history of County Durham (Newman, Larson), just to name a few. This volume is indeed a fitting way to pay homage to Richard Britnell and appreciate his impact on the scholarship of late medieval economy and society.

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JOHN HARE, *A prospering society: Wiltshire in the later Middle Ages* (Studies in Regional and Local History 10, University of Hertfordshire Press, 2011). xvi + 240 pp., 7 figs., 15 illus., 33 tabs. £35.

The University of Hertfordshire Press is a publisher worth watching, as it has produced a number of excellent and engaging books in the last few years, and this present volume is no exception. Hare's study of later medieval Wiltshire provides an important addition to our knowledge of local and regional history. The book is clearly and logically structured, and divided into thematic chapters, which are organized in three parts. The first part considers the nature of the available sources, as well as the wider context of the study, the county as a whole, its constituent regions and types of settlements. The second part focuses on change in the later Middle Ages, after the arrival of the Black Death, in particular in the context of agriculture, demesne leasing and serfdom. Part three of the book looks at trade and local industries, especially the developments in the cloth industry. Maps, photographs and tables are clearly presented and well-integrated into the text.

Considering the continuing popularity of local history, regional studies such as this should find a broad appeal. This book is not only very welcome because it consolidates a lot of existing knowledge, but it also adds to our understanding and knowledge of the county of Wiltshire. Hare explores changes and continuities in the county mainly from about 1380 to 1520. However the real scope of the volume is considerably broader than this, as the author also considers developments in the earlier centuries, and a significant amount of space is devoted to the exploration of various aspects of the society and economy of Wiltshire before the arrival of the Black Death.

The first part of the book neatly sets out the wider as well as the local context for the study, discussing the nature of the available sources, settlements and demographic developments. Hare notes in particular the population decline following the Black Death, but he might even be underestimating death rates in the region, as – especially on Glastonbury Abbey manors – studies of death rates have frequently indicated population losses in excess of 50 per cent. (See for instance, M. Eccleston, 'Mortality of rural landless men before the Black Death: the Glastonbury Head-Tax lists', *Local Population Studies* 63 (1999), pp. 6–29.)

Chapter 4 contains an interesting discussion of local agriculture and often takes a satisfying comparative perspective, for example between the types of crops grown in the seigneurial agriculture in Wiltshire's chalk downlands and non-chalk areas. Following the excellent studies of Ben Dodds, Hare uses tithe data from Winchester Cathedral Priory, which recorded tithes from demesne lands and tenants, to gain comparative insights into peasant and seigneurial agriculture. While he finds some interesting differences in the crops grown by lords and tenants, he also notes that there were regional divergences.

Alongside arable agriculture a significant amount of space is devoted to livestock, which grew in importance in the context of contracting arable farming in the post-Black Death decades. Sheep farming is discussed at length, but Hare also considers the importance of other livestock. Whilst the growth in rabbit farming on various estates from the fourteenth century onwards has been noted before, Hare also explores the significance of cattle- and especially pig-farming, which lasted well into the fifteenth century.

The developments in demesne leasing are discussed in detail in part two of the book. Demesne leasing was undertaken by people from varying backgrounds. However, in Wiltshire it appears to have been peasant families who were at the forefront in taking advantage of new leasing possibilities. The decline of serfdom in this period has also been linked to the development of demesne leases and Hare discusses this development in depth in chapter 8. He links the decline of serfdom to increasing mobility, while also drawing attention to the clashes between lords and peasants, which inevitably occurred as a result of the struggles over serfdom.

The third and final part of the book includes some very useful discussions of Wiltshire's hierarchy of towns, and the nature of industry and trade in the county. Of importance here was first the growth, then the decline and subsequent recovery of the cloth industry in the fifteenth century.

Overall this is a very satisfying and interesting study, and it will be of interest to historians of local history, students of the social and economic developments of later medieval England, as well as the interested general reader.

MIRIAM MÜLLER
University of Birmingham

C. M. FRASER (ed.), *The court rolls of the manor of Wakefield from October 1433 to September 1436* (The Wakefield Court Rolls Series of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, xv, 2011). xix + 248 pp. £15 + £2 & P. From the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 23 Clarendon Road, Leeds LS2 9NZ.

This volume is the fifteenth in the modern series of calendars of a source whose importance was recognized in 2011 when it was enrolled on the Memory of the World Register (administered by UNESCO). This series, established in 1977, builds upon the work of earlier scholars whose editions were published as part of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society's Record Series. The continuity within the project is illustrated by the fact that the editor of the newest volume, Caroline Fraser, was also one of the editors (with Kenneth Emsley) of the first.

Dr Fraser acknowledges in her introduction that the choice of years for this volume was a somewhat random one, but her choice fits neatly between earlier volumes which covered the 1530s and 1330s. This volume represents the series' first foray into the fifteenth century. The span of years covers the death of the manor's owner Joan, Duchess of York, and its transfer to Richard Plantagenet, grandson of her first husband. This change of ownership (the new owner was fully occupied defending English-held lands in France) appears to have mattered little to the workings of the court: only one minor change of procedure was instituted.

Like the others in the series, this volume contains a wealth of information for a range of historians, including local and family historians as well as those interested in particular aspects of fifteenth-century agriculture, social relationships, court procedure, crime, tenant–landlord relationships and debt. The people and places index will be useful to many (although there is a small printing error in the B section of the index). The small special subject index only hints at the richness of the court rolls' information, and it is a shame that it is rather limited in size and scope. However, such indices do take considerable time to compile. One small point about the transcription occurs: in several parts of the volume the place names are in capitals rather than the usual lower case italics and it is unclear if this change means anything or if these are printing errors.

As the editor points out, land transfers made up only a small portion of the courts' business. One such transfer records a holding to be sold by the vicar (if there are no heirs) with the profits going to benefit the service of the Virgin Mary in Sandal church. The next entry shows that the church was unlikely to benefit for some time as two members of the family had acquired life interests in the holding. As well as the standard record of the manor court, these rolls also contain the records of the sheriff's tourn, a rich source of information about the assize of bread and ale, forestalling and other misdemeanours. The ordinary business of the manor court was itself varied, and the descriptions make good reading simply for the picture that they paint of a community going about its business. There is the usual level of low-grade violent disputes, although the fights between members of the clergy always stand out from the crowd. The varied roles of women are apparent, including one who was the grave or bailiff and two others charged with felling green wood. In this volume one is struck by the numerous references to the care and exploitation of the areas of woodland, and in the later stages of the volume the leasing of waste land to various people. There are reminders too that everything in the medieval landscape had a value; several people were fined up to 2*s*. for cutting wood and thorns without permission.

MARILYN LIVINGSTONE
Carucate Research Partnership

MARJORIE KENISTON MCINTOSH, *Poor relief in England, 1350–1600* (Cambridge University Press, 2012). xiii +352 pp. £60.

SAMANTHA WILLIAMS, *Poverty, gender and life-cycle under the English Poor Law, 1760–1834* (The Royal Historical Society/The Boydell Press, 2011). xiii + 190 pp., 18 figs., 16 tabs., 1 map. £50.

These two studies offer some important new conclusions about the English poor law system. This is a significant achievement in itself, given the number of previous books, articles and chapters on the subject. In fact, both are likely to become required reading for students of the subject.

Despite the crowded field, each monograph marks out new territory. McIntosh's national study offers a powerful corrective to existing orthodoxy, by claiming that the 1598 and 1601 Elizabethan statutes really represented only the culmination of a process of parochial levies for the poor begun by Edwardian legislation in 1552. By contrast, Williams's monograph achieves what a number of other studies have promised, but which they

have rarely delivered, namely a thorough dissection of how the poor law actually operated within the parish in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

McIntosh's book is the fruit of almost thirty years of detailed archival reconstruction in which she has identified the records of 1,005 hospitals and almshouses in operation between the mid-fourteenth and the late sixteenth centuries, not to mention churchwardens' accounts from 206 parishes between 1404 and 1598. She uses these materials to substantiate several arguments.

Firstly, she suggests that the variety, sufficiency and reach of late medieval parochial charity, and endowed institutions, was much greater in extent than has sometimes been suggested. While almshouses tended to concentrate their efforts on the elderly and the sick, their levels of provision probably met the prevalent levels of need, as well as being motivated by the purgatorial imperatives of the founders. Indeed, one could argue (although McIntosh does not), that institutional care may have been particularly important in a late medieval society characterized by high death-rates, comparatively sparse kinship networks and potentially high levels of geographical mobility.

Secondly, the dissolution of these parish endowments had an acute and immediate effect on provision for the poor within these parishes. McIntosh shows the creative way in which many parishes sought to convert their parochial endowments or simply to hide them from the commissioners charged with dissolving the chantries and other 'superstitious' uses after 1547. Even so, she emphasizes that the problem of poor relief generated innovative national and local responses. Nationally, the (historically neglected) statute of 1552 empowered churchwardens to record the names of all those capable of contributing to the relief of the poor, and then to nominate two collectors, who were to 'gently ask and demand of every man and woman what they of their charity will be contented to give weekly towards the relief of the poor'. The recalcitrant were to be brought before the bishop, while the collectors were to render quarterly accounts to the parish. McIntosh has done very important research on these ephemeral paper accounts, showing that, although rare, they survive often and widely enough to indicate that the system probably operated nationally with some degree of uniformity.

Thus, McIntosh suggests that all subsequent Elizabethan statutes (in 1564, 1572 and 1598) were, to some degree, merely developments of this initial departure, not radically new steps. She also explains something that has often puzzled the reviewer: why the 'Elizabethan Poor Law' appears to have been adopted so swiftly, completely and comprehensively, in southern England at least. The definitive answer now appears to be that parishes had already had half a century of practice!

Williams's study is regional, rather than national, in scope, but it deserves a wide readership. She focuses on two Bedfordshire parishes, one the village of Campton, with 449 inhabitants in 1831, 80 per cent of whom were (under-) employed in agriculture, the other the small market town of Shefford, with 763 inhabitants in 1831, 40 per cent of whose families were employed in manufactures or trade. Both were located in the classic 'Speenhamland' region of rural immiseration during the Napoleonic era, where low wages, agrarian underemployment and (some) declines in rural industries led to an increasing dependence on poor relief, wage subsidies, work-fare schemes and the family allowances loathed by Malthusian reformers.

This study is particularly important because it deals with the issue of rural poor relief in the round. Firstly, it gives meticulous consideration to the range of relief payments provided by these parishes, both weekly pensions and occasional payments, as well as the effects of payments in kind (clothing and footwear), and for services (particularly medical care). Secondly, it explores the changing profile of recipients in great detail. As in other studies, Williams finds an increase in the number of able-bodied families receiving relief, but only really during the crisis years after 1795. Her nuanced analysis shows that relief was targeted, with the most generous pensions continuing to go to those deemed 'most deserving' (widows, single-parent families, and orphans), and other payments being spread quite widely, but quite thinly, too. As a consequence, Williams finds no evidence to support the Malthusian critique that generous payments to pauper families encouraged 'improvident marriages', because the levels of payment were supplementary, and declined in value in real terms between 1795 and 1834. Thirdly, Williams devotes attention to the payers of poor rates, an essential but not wholly sympathetic group, who are sometimes overlooked in studies of poor relief. She shows that the rapid increases in expenditure after 1795 were matched by significant increases in the number of ratepayers, with perhaps 40 per cent of Shefford's population constituting rate-paying families by 1821 (but paying for recipients who perhaps amounted to only 12–17 per cent of the population). She then explores the local and national 'policy' implications of this increasing burden, drawing on the contributions of the local JP and MP, Samuel Whitbread.

Finally, and most importantly, Williams's detailed reconstructions of the life-histories of poor relief recipients in these two communities allows her to

engage in a fine-grained and forensic analysis of the effects of the life-cycle, gender, ill-health, and the effects of under-employment on the propensity to receive relief, its duration and its consequences. These chapters set the experience of these parishes securely within a regional context, showing (for example) that elderly men were more likely to receive pensions by the end of the eighteenth century, in part because they were being crowded out of the local labour market. They also provide the essential human detail of individual stories and family histories that is sometimes lacking in studies in which attention is concentrated on the abstraction of aggregates. The great strength of this study is its combination of well-conceived and nuanced serial analyses with carefully selected and highly appropriate examples to personify broader trends and highlight the effects of local labour markets.

Although McIntosh's work is national in scope, while Williams concentrates on a specific region, both are the products of immense scholarly effort, highly detailed local analyses, and careful consideration and presentation of the results. While neither makes dramatic claims of new discoveries, both advance our understandings of the poor law substantially. Williams's work offers a model of how to explore the mechanics of the poor law, its scale, reach and its texture within daily life. While its approach incorporates the incremental refinements in analyses provided by a series of local and regional studies post-1760, it takes these to a new level and produces a study of innovative depth, complexity and clarity.

McIntosh's study has achieved the same thing, but on a national scale. Yet, it has also done something else. As in all her other historical writings, particularly her monographs on local courts and crime, and women's work, she has burst the bubble in which early modern historians sometimes like to operate. Her work is a must-read book because it forces us to think of the evolution of poor relief in a much longer historical perspective, and because it treats the period from 1400–1550 as an important one in its own right, not simply as the prelude to 'early modernity'. By telling the first half of the story of the English poor law so coherently, Marjorie McIntosh forces us to rethink the meaning of the rest of the tale.

H. R. FRENCH
University of Exeter

RICHARD HOYLE (ed.), *Custom, improvement and the landscape in early modern Britain* (Ashgate, 2011). x + 317 pp., 10 figs., 2 tabs. £65.

This welcome collection of essays ranges from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries and in place from Northamptonshire to the Scottish highlands. It focuses on the interplay of modernizing landowners and the customs and manorial traditions within which they operated. Three essays on general themes set the agenda. Richard Hoyle's introduction provides an overview of the themes of the book, and a fascinating discussion of the nature of early modern custom, which whets the appetite for his forthcoming study of early modern tenure. Paul Warde's dissection of the agricultural literature shows how slowly the modern sense of improvement developed towards modern concept of sustainable agricultural innovation, largely in the later seventeenth century. Henry French provides a national overview of urban commons 1500–1750, a neglected topic, and links the interplay of agriculture, industry, and commerce with the workings of custom in an urban setting.

Satisfying themes run through the case-study chapters, with rich interconnections. Most obvious is James Taverner's presence in both Richard Hoyle's and Nicola Whyte's studies of Norfolk. In Hoyle's he is a defender of custom in North Elmham, trying to restrain Lord Cromwell's encroachments eroding fixed fines and timber rights in Star Chamber cases from the 1560s to 1590s. In Whyte's, Taverner appears as Lord of Wighton manor, accused by copyholders of over-pasturing the fold course to their detriment. Battles over custom are part of the process of 'closure' in Matthew Johnson's sense of the narrowing and defining uncertainty in landownership in a society moving from under-population to the more crowded world of the seventeenth century. James Taverner was a Tawney-esque 'rising' entrepreneurial figure on the cusp of gentility, with brothers who were royal officeholders, translators of Erasmus, and evangelical reformers. As a younger son with a small inheritance, he combined local roots in Norfolk with access to kin legal and administrative expertise to consolidate and exploit his patrimony.

The Norfolk fold course is also dissected in Elizabeth Griffiths' chapter of Sir Hamon Le Strange's early seventeenth-century estate management at Hunstanton. Here the landscape is observed from family notebooks, estate archives, and Alice Le Strange's account books. Hamon revived family fortunes through land surveying, estate reorganization, and drainage, using wide reading of contemporary books on agricultural improvement to guide him. Yet he and his son always worked within existing tenurial systems, providing enhanced leases for tenants on better land in return for concessions to take over and improve poorer soils and marshlands.

Julie Bowring's chapter on the Bedford level drainage in Eastern England after 1663 looks at the aftermath

of a notorious courtier-driven project, to appropriate fenland at the expense of a peasant economy. The social dynamics of the post-drainage society reflect major ambiguities. Popular opinion was keen to ensure that the drainage corporation kept the dykes, banks and sluices in good repair so that farmers who had adapted to the changes did not lose out a second time. The decline of the drainage scheme was determined more by poorly understood ecological effects than by peasant opposition.

Popular verse enriches Bowring's analysis, but also articulated customary rights in Duffield Frith, Derbyshire, discussed by Heather Falvey who includes an interesting discussion of the interface between custom and its written articulation. Her poem was part of a wider corpus of writing by Anthony Bradshaw, a lawyer and property owner in Duffield but also a local office holder. In the last quarter of the sixteenth century, his meticulous court records protected both his own and the Earl of Shrewsbury's rights in the Frith. Bradshaw was dismissed before Crown attempts to sell off land, and his accumulated notes were used in the defence of custom. His written customals gave tenants an enduring alternative point of reference.

Bill Shannon's valuable study of the Lancashire lowland landowners' improvement of mosses and meres includes an important discussion of the neglected term 'approvement' enshrined in the Statute of Merton (1236). Shannon's Duchy of Lancaster approvement cases peaked between 1580 and 1599 and all but disappeared after the Restoration. Collusive actions by landlords and tenants were unknown, while cases defining township boundaries and ending inter-commoning were numerous. Violence generally small-scale, dispute specific, and a trigger for court mediation, not prolonged local confrontation.

Briony McDonagh follows the well-documented activities of Elizabeth Prowse, a childless Northamptonshire widow who for 45 years meticulously ran, improved, and expanded the family estates. Elizabeth read improvement literature and also observed practice on her mother-in-law's estate, while her brother James, a London ironmonger, used her estate to test new designs for 'roller' cart wheels and other implements. McDonagh argues (with good evidence) that the female touch in estate management added both a social element of concern for villagers' welfare, and an aesthetic dimension in landscape design.

Alasdair Ross examines 'clearances' and improvement on the Grant estates in northern Scotland after 1762. A grand project to replace extensive highland pastoral 'shielings' with 'improved' arable tenant farms, initiated by the family's extensively travelled and well-read tutor and later land steward William Lorimer, was undermined by tenants who preferred their profitable pastoral tradition, a poor local market for grain despite the founding of Grantown-on-Spey, and adverse climatic cycles and weather conditions. Many tenants with twelve or more years rent arrears were evicted in the 1790s when the Grant estates were in deep financial trouble. Ross argues that these 'clearances' served the Grant estates well by leaving only larger arable farms, and allowing much of the upland to return to extensive grazing, and eventually to deer forest or game shoots.

JOHN BROAD
University of Cambridge

CHRISTOPHER JESSEL, *A legal history of the English landscape* (Wildy, Simmonds & Hill Publishing, 2011). x + 210pp. £19.99.

What does it mean to own land? Jessel explores this apparently simple question over time, showing why it mattered to the landscape, for example because a tenant on a short lease is unlikely to invest in improvement, while a great estate in fee tail was legally incapable of being broken up. Although a relatively slim volume, this work delivers more than it promises and is priced at a level where there is no excuse for agricultural historians not to have it on their shelves. A worthy complement to his *Law of the Manor* (1998), the new book differs in its broadly chronological approach. Although Jessel argues that perhaps 'the landscape changed more in the twentieth century than in all previous times put together' (p. 169), the narrative is punctuated by other occasions when the land changed out of recognition, from Bronze Age field systems, to the rearrangement of the pre-Conquest landscape, to the parliamentary enclosures, and on to the more recent explosion of the suburbs.

Running parallel with this narrative is that of the law of the land. The landscape is largely a man-made thing. Change inevitably produces conflicts, which can only be resolved by negotiation, by violence, or by the law. The law has to be seen as fixed and certain if it is to be effective, yet has to evolve as well. This tension has led to a relatively small number of significant changes over the years, separated by periods when processes of increasing complexity grew up, allowing the law to bend with the winds of change. Jessel's story really takes off with the emergence of the legal framework for feudal tenures, particularly after 1154 when the rule of law began to replace private conflict, while Magna Carta (1215) established that no one could be disseized other than by law. That broad framework lasted largely until the Tenures Abolition Act (1660), when military tenures were converted to socage, although copyhold was only

abolished in 1925 (Law of Property Act), at which time manors ceased to have any meaning. However, much had happened in between, as the market for land, both freehold and copyhold, grew up, and as leases took on greater importance. Both required security and legal fictions were developed to provide that certainty, whilst the natural desire of people to leave 'their' land to whomsoever they pleased led to two major pieces of sixteenth-century legislation, the Statute of Uses (1535) and the Statute of Wills (1540).

Medieval and early modern historians might have appreciated a little more detail on the period 1348 to 1660, but then of course much has happened since 1660 too, so the balance is probably about right. One way or another, by the seventeenth century a clear idea of property had emerged, with few constraints as to what you could do, providing no nuisance was caused to the neighbours. The famous aphorism derived from Semayne's Case (1604) reported by Coke, that an Englishman's home is his castle, was not a figure of speech. This then was the high period of property, when the great estates remodelled much of the landscape. By the mid-eighteenth century, though, Parliament was increasingly taking it upon itself to override property rights in the public interest, whether for enclosure or for infrastructure. The nineteenth-century introduction of death duties and the impact of the First World War led inevitably to the break-up of the great estates, with perhaps a quarter of the farmland of England changing hands between 1915 and 1923 as tenants bought their freeholds. The 'state', a concept which had not previously existed, came to play a bigger and bigger role in the landscape and, during the Second World War, by its requisitioning of land and control of farming, came to rule in as absolute a manner as any Stuart monarch. Since then, legislation has allowed public access to private land, and forbidden certain farming practices in the interests of conservation, while the Town and Country Planning Acts up to and including the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework not only require permission for all forms of development, but even in certain circumstances prevent a landowner from cutting down trees on his own property without permission of the Town Hall. Arguably, we are today as far from allodium, the unfettered absolute ownership of land, as at any time in the previous thousand years. Indeed, legally we continue to hold our land of the Crown, as tenants in fee simple, in free socage. Meanwhile, the law continues to shape the landscape, as it always has done, and Jessel ends by suggesting that, in the same way as the rights of owners have become subordinated to the state, so the future may need legislation which transcends state borders, requiring new ways of making and enforcing such laws.

WILLIAM D. SHANNON
University of Lancaster

THOMAS FAULKNER, HELEN BERRY and JEREMY GREGORY (eds), *Northern landscapes: representations and realities of North-East England* (Regions and Regionalism in History, 12, The Boydell Press, 2010). xxi + 324 pp., 84 illus. £65.

The historical community is better served with studies of the North and northern identities than it was a couple of decades ago, and this recent historiographical trend informs much of the content of this useful book. Despite the work of a number of scholars, there remains much to be said about the interplay of urban and rural landscapes, economies and population. This wide-ranging book makes a valuable contribution to this literature and, through the discussion of landscapes and the processes by which they were shaped, aspects of a distinctive region emerge.

The book's eighteen chapters are grouped into five parts: 'the lie of the land', 'parks and gardens', 'living in the landscape', 'urban landscapes' and 'perceptions and representations'. The lengthy, though skilful, introduction valiantly attempts to bring coherence to the book by exploring broader themes, but the editors cannot compensate for the gaps and omissions left by the patchy coverage of the northern landscape in the remaining chapters. That this is a region of contrasts almost need not be said: here the picturesque, romantic, rural North is starkly contrasted with the mining and industrial landscapes of County Durham, Newcastle and the south-east of Northumberland.

However, for a region dominated by economic activities whose impact on the landscape is dramatic and large-scale (coal mining, heavy engineering and agriculture), it might surprise some readers to discover that none is given particularly full treatment in this book. Those who know the landscape of the region might be surprised to see large swathes of it completely absent from this book. The Cheviots and Kielder, representing sizeable areas on the margins of the region, are largely ignored, with the bleak uplands that characterize much of inland Northumberland not being fully explored. Urban landscapes too are skewed to the larger urban settlements exemplified here by studies of Darlington, Durham, Middlesborough, and Newcastle, which are treated as separate entities rather than as part of a wider regional urban structure. Settlement patterns more generally are not dealt with. Village layout and vernacular domestic architecture, both prominent features of the north-eastern landscape

could have been more fully explored, as could the network of smaller urban centres including Alnwick, Berwick, Hexham, Morpeth and Rothbury. The editors were only able to work with the papers presented at a conference a decade ago, and the addition of a few chapters has not given the book the clarity, comprehensiveness and coherence it needs to really succeed. One cannot help but suggest that this book would have worked better as a monograph, where much more control could have been exerted over the content.

Nevertheless, the book does have insightful contributions, and the general lack of coherence does allow the reader to read chapters in isolation. Readers of this journal are particularly likely to benefit from the first two parts of this book. Cousins' discussion of the retrogressive study of Prudhoe is an extremely useful introduction to this analytical method, although larger maps and further discussion would have strengthened this chapter still further. Purdue's brief account of the impact of the landed estate on the landscape during a period of economic expansion and relative political stability in the two centuries following Anglo-Scottish union is genuinely regional in scope. The impact of the gentry and aristocracy provides a useful backdrop to Caunce's study of agriculture in the region. Few authors understand with such clarity the nature and distinctiveness of northern agriculture, and Caunce's holistic survey of the role of agriculture in the development of the region is a genuine highlight of the book. Not content to focus on the minutiae, Caunce attempts to analyse landscape and the agricultural systems it supported within the wider contexts of mechanization, industrialization and urbanization. His survey is necessarily brief, and direct and more complete comparisons with the agricultural systems of other northern counties might have benefited this chapter. This book, and Caunce's chapter in particular, make it clear that a longer survey of northern agriculture in the three centuries after 1700 is long overdue.

The section on parks and gardens places the emphasis firmly on the landed elite and the polite landscapes they created, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This section explores a narrow, though important, social group and their impact on the landscape with focused studies of individual properties (Desmond on Hardwick gardens and Betney on Gibside) and broader thematic surveys (Goulty on walled gardens and Green on the creation of public parks).

Overall this is a valuable book. It is extremely well produced, eminently readable, and the editors have done an exceptional job in bringing it together. The introduction itself is an extremely useful discussion in its own right, not only of the content of the book, but of its intellectual origins and deeper purpose. The research base, wide-ranging methodologies and diverse themes make this a rich and valuable book which readers of this journal will find instructive; indeed, individually each chapter has considerable merit. Ultimately, however, this book offers a rather fragmentary account of the wider region and largely fails to convey a sense of a regional landscape that is the product of long-term processes, economic systems, underlying geology, transport infrastructure, population movement, cultural trends, and technological innovation. For a region that is widely held to have a robust regional identity, this has not been reflected in the intellectual framework within which this book has been written.

ANDY GRITT
University of Central Lancashire

SHAUN MORLEY (ed.), *Oxfordshire Friendly Societies 1750–1918* (Oxfordshire Record Society, 68, 2011). xiv + 508pp., 8 figs. £25 (available from The Secretary, Oxfordshire Record Society, Tithe Corner, 67 Hill Crescent, Finstock, Chipping Norton, OX7 3BT).

Fifty-five years ago, in an article in *The Amateur Historian*, Eric Hobsbawm, aware that friendly societies constituted the largest and most representative working-class organization in Victorian Britain, called on local historians to rectify their neglect by professionals. Few local historians have answered the call but, in this volume, Shaun Morley, in publishing a detailed annotated list of 755 Oxfordshire friendly societies, has more than risen to the challenge.

Using a wide range of sources, Morley provides the basic facts for each town or village club: the date established or first recorded; the date dissolved or last known to exist; the club headquarters, usually a public house; the anniversary or feast day; minimum and maximum age at entry; membership figures for certain years; and a list of primary sources.

The primary sources identified are almost solely the manuscript or printed rule books amongst the Quarter Sessions records at the Oxfordshire History Centre or those submitted to the Registrar of Friendly Societies now in the National Archives. Unfortunately very few collections of records of individual societies appear to have survived in the county, and only a couple of these include membership and minute books. Membership books are an invaluable resource, particularly for rural history, with information on occupations and fluctuations in membership figures reflecting economic and social change and, where annual address lists are given, they provide a unique source for mobility. In his most

useful, if too short, introduction Morley draws on the membership list of Stonesfield Friendly Society in 1881, which records over 45 per cent of the members as agricultural workers and 29 per cent as craftsmen, representing a high proportion of the villagers in these occupations. Similar figures are likely to have been the norm in village societies across the county.

The organizations recorded in this volume range from short-lived 'slate clubs' established at public houses and other societies that divided their funds periodically between members, through well-supported independent village clubs and branches of affiliated orders, such as the Oddfellows or Foresters, to the less successful county societies promoted by the county elite. Some of the organizations, including the Banbury Hail Storm Assurance Association and the Subscription Fire Engine Society, are out of place in a calendar that should be confined to societies that provided sickness and funeral benefits in return for regular subscriptions.

The volume has a number of useful appendices including a glossary, many extracts – largely from newspapers – of court cases, dishonesty and other disputes relating to friendly societies, and a list of 266 musical bands that were the essential ingredient of the club feast day. The development of the brass band movement, as much a feature of the village as the industrial town, owed much to the great expansion of friendly societies from the late 1830s.

There are a few minor errors, such as the wrong membership figures for the entry on p. 82, and the presentation would have been clearer if the place names had been in a larger and bolder font. However this is an important contribution to the study of friendly societies and it is to be hoped that it will lead to a fuller analysis of Oxfordshire societies and the publication of similar lists for other counties.

DAVID NEAVE
Beverley

JEREMY BURCHARDT and PHILIP CONFORD (eds), *The contested countryside. Rural politics and land controversy in modern Britain* (I. B. Tauris, 2008), viii + 212 pp., 6 figs., 2 tabs. £56.

Despite its subtitle, the controversies at the heart of this book are not really to do with politics or the land question. They are more directly about farming itself: about its place in the modern countryside and the problems of its public image. Published in 2008, but only lately sent in for review, the volume originated in a conference and presents eight contributions on the theme of 'The Contested Countryside', with a substantial introduction by one of the editors, Jeremy Burchardt. It sets out to offer historical contexts for contemporary debates including the role of organic agriculture, responses to animal disease, the incidence of rural poverty and the future of field sports.

Issues of food safety became central to popular and political indictments of farming methods in the late twentieth century, as anxieties about the impact of genetic modification and the spectre of 'mad cow disease' reinforced criticisms of industrial-style agriculture which had previously tended to focus on ecology and animal welfare. Philip Conford explores a more extensive history of connections between health and methods of food production in his account of the organic movement's emphasis on the nutritional, physical and spiritual advantages of its approach. Paul Brassley takes a much longer historical perspective on his topic: responses to animal disease, from some of the earliest references to veterinary medicine and cattle plagues, to the involvement in the state in policing food quality.

Simon Miller's chapter considers the problems of reconciling modern farming practice with more traditional images of the countryside, beginning from a premise which runs slightly counter to the overall theme of the book: far from a 'contested countryside', his interest is in exposing conflicts which have not flared into public debate. Miller questions the failure to engage fully with 'tensions between use and beauty, and between production and amenity': tensions which were evident in the Scott report and the minority report which accompanied it, but which have, he argues, been largely excluded from political discussion in the post-Second World War period. The reconciliation of aesthetics and economics, leisure and production, is a topic returned to in Alun Howkins' wide-ranging essay on ruralism and rural England, studded with illuminating detail, which offers a concise and rewarding route into the topic for any reader. Surveying a long twentieth century, Howkins discusses the implications of dominant ideas about the countryside in English life, concluding with the irony that the version of rural England invoked in so many debates about town and country no longer, in fact, exists.

Conflicts pitch town against country over questions about land use, methods of farming, access and privilege. Essays by John Marsh and Berkeley Hill explore some of the difficulties of perception about the role of the agricultural sector within the national economy. Yet, the issue of 'whose countryside is it, anyway?' also rages within rural Britain. Paul Milbourne discusses recent traditions of studying deprivation in the countryside, suggesting that the issue has attracted less attention than poverty in an urban setting: his assertion that academic and political interest in the subject dates back

only to the 1970s, rather wipes Rowntree and the Liberal campaigns of the early twentieth century off the map. Meanwhile, Graham Cox's piece on the Countryside Alliance asks to what extent the countryside can be construed as a coherent community, arguing that the campaign engaged in the 'imaginative enterprise' of shaping an idea of the countryside as an interest group, albeit an interest group dominated by some very particular concerns. In an interesting piece on a provocative topic he emphasises the significance of the Countryside Alliance's insistence that rural Britain is about people, rather than landscape, and offers some thoughtful reflections on the notion of 'marginal moralities': the position occupied by 'country sports' in contemporary culture.

In his introduction to the book, Burchardt observes that, 'Countryside controversies may be a necessary, even perhaps healthy, part of the modern condition' (p. 15). The protests of the Countryside Alliance, set against the backdrop of the debates over the future of hunting, provided an extreme illustration of the conflicts examined in this collection of essays. Though the scope of historical perspective varies between contributors (from long surveys to more present-day emphases), the purpose of the volume is to lay out a deeper context to recent problems and tensions. Those problems and tensions are, of course, constantly evolving. But the essays serve as a reminder of continuities as well: the problems of evidence and perception, the distinctive experiences of agriculture as an economic sector, and the long process of accommodation between cultural ideals about landscape and community and the experience of real people in real places.

C. V. J. GRIFFITHS
University of Sheffield

JULIET CLUTTON-BROCK, *Animals as domesticates. A world view through history* (Michigan State University Press, 2012). xi + 189pp., 74 figs. $44.95.

Given that there is only a solitary Anglo-Saxon paper in the 1960s, followed by Andrew Fleming's 'Bronze Age Agriculture on the marginal lands of north-east Yorkshire' (1971), the evidence would suggest that readers of the *Review* rarely travel into the realms of prehistory, or the Stone Age, in the ways that *Animals as domesticates* does. However, the book in question is worth perusing; this is a text that intrigues in its wide sweep and relative brevity. Thorough-going, it includes the classic literature, that is, Francis Galton and Charles Darwin; new material, citing current work by Sarah Blaffer Hrdy; and also established texts such as Canon Tristram's *Natural History of the Bible* (1867, though she dates it to 1889). Grounded in empirical observation and findings from a number of disciplines, archaeological, biological, palaeographic, archaeozoological, and using molecular, organic, material, linguistic, literary and visual evidence, *Domesticates* tells the story of domestication from post-Ice Age Europe onwards. The book is well-illustrated, with useful plates that help to ground the points and observations made. There is also an appendix of comparative nomenclature, and in the introduction the taxonomic issues are established within current academic debate. While recognizing the complexities, debates and uncertainties within this material, the book as a whole is organized along continental lines, and then goes animal-by-animal, including birds and bees. In this way the text ranges out across the whole of the world from Eurasia and Europe through to the Americas.

The book fits very clearly into the 'animal turn' and is positioned within the emerging work that takes mutualism as its basis – hence, in discussing the rise of dairying, the text mentions the Neolithic European genetic adaptation for the persistence of lactase, which allowed the adult digestion of fresh milk (p. 42) – and argues that domestic animals have adapted their behaviour to diverse human needs and environments, as part of the process of domestication. It outlines human practices in the agricultural management of animals for their bones and hides, hair/wool/feathers, dung, meat, blood, milk, but also other uses – cultural, companionate, religious and decorative, as much as nutritional and mechanical. Humans, it becomes clear, have always used the whole animal, and domestication is an extension of the uses to which hunted wild animals are put. The book begins by situating the origins of domestication within the human ability to nurture not just one's own but also others' children. Initially, it is argued, 'cute' young animals were nurtured as pets. Those that became domesticated in the long run (in the case of prey animals, those who did not run far; in the case of predators, those who lived in packs) were tamed, separated and, as they fell under complete human control, passed down their genetic characteristics through interbreeding to produce the full domestic form, and its (increasingly wide) range of variants. This was and is an effect produced by natural as well as artificial selection, as climatic conditions lead to certain adaptations. Pastoralism and herding, meanwhile, lead to the absorption of the domestic animal into human culture, that is, human social structures, and to a change in the animal's own culture, which was also passed down. The broad sweep of the book demonstrates how human success (from the human point of view) in domesticating an animal is predicated on that animal's behaviour, both at the

level of the species' habits and the temperament of the individual.

The book could have been less narrative; though there is a lot of material to get through, there is slightly too much exposition and the book is at its strongest when engaging in analysis and argument. The structure at times leads to something of a shopping list of discrete bits of information; some sections – for example, Chapter 7 on Bali Cattle, *Bos javanicus* (p. 88) – are only a few lines long. The narrative does help to put agricultural history into context; references to early agricultural advice, in both the Roman period – for example in respect of poultry (p. 79) – and in Ancient Greece, reveal clear evidence of early anxiety about animal welfare, which we might otherwise consider a purely modern concern (p. 80). But, there are some striking observations, such as that on the question of hierarchy and the status of indigenous animals vs. imported European animals in Africa in the nineteenth century (pp. 115, 117), that go undeveloped. In this respect, the situating material explaining the theory of domestication in the Introduction, together with the issues addressed in the Conclusion, are especially important in ensuring that the text coheres.

The Conclusion links the book more generally to an animal welfare approach, as might be expected given the Foreword by James A. Serpell. In the conclusion, the author reiterates that there were three 'progressive' (p. 133) phases in the historic relationship between humans and domesticates: firstly, an early phase of settlement, during which certain animals became 'enfolded into the human environment' (p. 133). Secondly, a phase during which livestock husbandry spread worldwide: the 'pastoral phase' (p. 134). The third phase – beginning in the late eighteenth century with the drive for 'improvement' (p. 135) – is linked to modernity and industrialization. Within this model, modern agricultural methods are brought into question. It notes, for instance, that human beings took livestock with them and moved them around the world in the earlier pastoral phase, but those that adapted to the local environment have been subsequently erased, it is argued, by improvers seeking to raise productivity by introducing European stock to native and local breeds. The author is particularly critical of both this practice, which has all but destroyed 'adaptation to local environments' (p. 135), and also the methods employed within modern livestock farming. The most problematic aspect of the latter in the author's view is the focus on stock, rather than on the individual animal, wherein the animals 'are no longer seen as individual sentient beings, but as rows of food-producing elements to be cultivated and then harvested in enormous numbers.' (p. 136). Though the author recognizes earlier instances of human brutality, it is the mass-production of modern times that holds her attention.

KAREN SAYER
Leeds Trinity University College

ANNIE POTTS, *Chicken* (Reaktion Books, 2012). 216 pp., 175 illus. £9.99.

This is a beautiful but powerful book. One of the latest in the Reaktion series on animals, it is richly illustrated, with some beautiful reproductions of paintings and pottery, as well as many photographs. But the author's purpose is far more than to produce the content for another consumer good. Rather, as the first sentence on the back cover blurb states, Annie Potts wants to show readers that 'No creature has been subjected to such extremes of reverence and exploitation as the chicken'.

Reverence first. The book begins with a summary of the natural history of the chicken, tracing the prehistoric and genetic evidence for the species' geographic dispersal around the globe. The 'hen craze' of the nineteenth century saw new breeds emerge, using selective breeding techniques, the Cornish, White Leghorn and Plymouth Rock breeds (the mainstays of the modern population) emerging then. Chapter Two surveys the evidence of chicken intelligence and social habits, emphasizing that the domesticated chicken, like all domesticated animals, is a highly intelligent species. Chapter Three then examines the relationship between the chicken and human religious worship. While we may all be familiar with the prominence of the chicken in Christianity (Jesus referring to his compassion for Jerusalem as a mother hen for her chicks; Easter Eggs celebrating his resurrection), and perhaps in Jewish practice (the Sabbath chicken), surely few readers will be aware of the remarkable presence of the chicken in other world faiths: in Ancient Chinese Shinto and Buddhism, in Ancient Greece and Hindu worship, as well as others, both eggs and roosters have had widespread significance. Chapter Four then summarizes some of the cultural references to chickens in literature and film in the twentieth century, where Potts suggests that prior to the industrialization of chicken farming, the bird's depiction in popular culture was balanced, but that since the development of the broiler industry, the chicken has become trivialized. This is a neat hypothesis, but one which needs to be tested. Equally, her assertion about chicken meat being relatively feminized (compared with red meat) and so a lower status, because chicken farming was largely the responsibility of the farmer's wife, is plausible. But there are many equally plausible

alternative explanations for the long-term preference for red meat.

The most powerful chapter in the book is Chapter Six, which focuses on the industrialization of chicken farming. While falling short of outright polemic, the author's sympathies are clearly with the bird, not the human consumers of its meat and eggs. Over 50 billion chickens are slaughtered each year for meat, almost ten per person on the planet; yet consumers are largely ignorant of the processes that convert live beings into meat on a supermarket shelf. If consumers were fully cognizant, it is truly debatable whether they would continue to accept the relegation of the chicken's status to a mere commodity. Yet humans want to eat meat; indeed, the richer they get, the more they opt to eat. Increasing global population and living standards add up to more meat being eaten around the world. And poultry meat is the healthiest, the most economical and the most environmentally friendly form of animal protein for human consumption. As consumers we may prefer to ignore such ethical dilemmas, but in the end we cannot. The book's greatest service will be that it will add to those works that seek to bring such currently hidden activities out into the open.

ANDREW GODLEY
University of Reading

VICTORIA DE RIJKE, *Duck* (Reaktion Books, 2009). 192 pp., 124 illus. £9.99.

Victoria De Rijke's *Duck* belongs to Reaktion Book's very striking Animal series of short, popular texts; a series, for those who are not yet familiar with it, which encompasses other birds such as the chicken and the sparrow, but also rather less ubiquitous animals such as the camel. As one of this series, *Duck* is beautifully produced and includes a total of 124 colour and black-and-white figures drawn from fine art, illustration and photography.

The book is written wittily and is wide-ranging. The first chapter on the natural history of the bird reads in places rather like a Victorian primer. The taxonomic history and description of habitat do not get any critical treatment, no placing or situating within wider academic debate, but, rather, draw on naturalists from the nineteenth century, who are then placed alongside twentieth-century field studies to delineate the duck's habits. This situates the animal within its empirical context by time and place, meets the needs of the wider audience, and introduces some early points about the duck's environment and relationship with (and interpretation by) the human species, which are developed later. The next chapter focuses on the various uses to which the duck has been put by its human captors and keepers – it tackles the very many ways in which it has been trapped and hunted worldwide and throughout history, its domestication, its consumption, and its depiction in art and literature. The third, entitled 'The Duck's Quack' deals with its literal utterance 'quack', human descriptions of duck language and the human meanings attaching to 'duck' in idiom and slang. The next two chapters focus on the duck as represented in human culture – mechanical ducks, ducks in Disney films and fine art, duck ornaments, duck buildings, toy ducks and so on – and the conclusion addresses the meaning of ducks.

Duck is a catalogue of ducks and duck-ish things: it tackles the material and natural, as well as the cultural history of the bird, and contains some striking and thought-provoking observations, yet in many instances the author did not develop them further, and this is a real shame. The series to which *Duck* belongs means that the text is somewhat restricted, because of the limits placed on its length, which can be seen in a tendency to generate an inventory of interesting points in most of the chapters, and an almost breathless style. The book contains a number of astute observations, however, and is at its best when it dwells a little longer on them, such as those in connection with the use of decoys.

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Europe and Elsewhere

HARRY KITSIKOPOULOS (ed.), *Agrarian change and crisis in Europe, 1200–1500* (Routledge, 2012). xi + 364pp., 23 figs., 17 tabs. £80.

The idea of a later medieval crisis that followed several centuries of economic and demographic expansion is deeply embedded in writing on European economic history. Accounts of the timing and nature of the crisis vary; some discussions emphasize the problems of the early fourteenth century, while others focus on the Black Death of 1346–51 and its effects. The crisis was clearly a complex, multi-phase and long-lasting event, so it is not surprising that debate about its causes has raged. These essays further this debate, providing surveys of the state of knowledge relating to eight European regions. Many previous essay collections have addressed trends in these centuries, but this one is novel since it engages unusually directly with the concept of crisis and offers a relatively wide geographical perspective.

There are chapters on England (Kitsikopoulos), France (George Grantham), Italy (Paolo Malanima), Byzantium (Kostis Smyrlis), Spain (Ana Rodríguez), Scandinavia (Janken Myrdal), Central Europe

(Grzegorz Myśliwski), and Russia (Janet Martin). The editor provides an overview in a substantial introduction and epilogue. Although the geographical coverage is impressively broad, there are also (as the editor concedes) important gaps owing to the lack of chapters on the Low Countries and Germany. In the epilogue Kitsikopoulos brings in material on the former region, but a specialist's account of the crisis in the Low Countries would have added an interesting further dimension to this book.

Some of the contributors are based in economics departments, while the majority are historians. This mixture of backgrounds does not prevent a welcome evenness of approach. Virtually every chapter consists of a review of empirical findings under a number of common headings followed by an interpretative section on the character and causes of crisis. The only real exception to this pattern is Malanima's chapter, which provides a macroeconomic analysis of the Italian economy as a whole and gives less attention than the others to social structures.

The detailed conclusions of the different chapters are rather diverse. An underlying diversity among the regions is exacerbated by some striking variations both in the availability of relevant primary sources, and in the development of a secondary literature on the crisis. But some clear themes do emerge. One is the trend for economically damaging warfare to increase in its frequency in regions right across fourteenth-century Europe, from Macedonia to Sweden. Another general point is that there is a division between those regions which already faced the threat of a crisis caused by overpopulation at the start of the fourteenth century (England, France, Byzantium, Italy), and those which did not (Spain, Central Europe, Russia, most of Scandinavia). In the epilogue, the editor labels the former set of countries 'Group A' and the latter 'Group B'. For Group B regions, the crisis was instead associated mainly with plague and other factors like warfare, though Central Europe appears hardly to have experienced crisis at all.

Kitsikopoulos draws on the regional chapters to present his own distinctive general interpretation. He divides Group A further into 'progressive' and 'laggard' regions. The 'progressives' (for example, eastern England, Flanders) demonstrated a 'greater ability to cope with the spectre of the Malthusian trap' than the 'laggards' (for example, the rest of England, southern France, most of Italy), which in the early fourteenth century were at risk of 'imminent systemic implosion' (pp. 343–4). For Kitsikopoulos, the key difference between the groups was the institutional environment, which here largely means seigneurial institutions. Favourable seigneurial institutions were an essential precondition for successful economic expansion through the growth of markets, specialization, and improvements in agrarian techniques and productivity. Kitsikopoulos argues similarly in his England chapter, suggesting that the English agrarian economy of *c.*1300 was a 'train bound for derailment, sooner or later' (p. 42). In emphasizing the determining effects of the strong 'feudal institutions' that characterized much of England, Kitsikopoulos rejects a view of the fourteenth century as a series of autonomous natural catastrophes which struck a population largely capable of being supported from the available resources. Here, of course, Kitsikpoulos is explicitly attacking the work of Bruce Campbell, though his fire is concentrated mainly on the latter's *English Seigniorial Agriculture* (2000), and it is less clear that he has absorbed the implications of Campbell's 2005 article on the early fourteenth-century crisis (*Past and Present*, 188).

This book is unlikely to find universal favour. As already noted, it gives relatively short shrift to arguments about deteriorating environmental conditions that are currently gaining momentum in discussions of the later Middle Ages. It also has little to say about monetary factors. Yet on the whole it is a useful and rich volume which deserves a wide readership.

CHRIS BRIGGS
University of Cambridge

FLORENCE BOURILLON and NADINE VIVIER (eds), *La mesure cadastrale. Estimer la valeur du foncier* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012). 258pp. €20.

Following their earlier collective volume, *De l'estime au cadastre en Europe: les systèmes cadastraux aux XIXe et XXe siècles* (2008), co-edited with Pierre Clergeot, Florence Bourillon (Université de Paris-Est Créteil) and Nadine Vivier (Université du Maine, Le Mans) have assembled a dozen essays that look back to selected examples of European experience during the eighteenth century, cover the development of cadastral systems in six countries during the nineteenth century, and embrace urban as well as rural examples.

In their introductory essay, they highlight three guiding themes: experimentation to produce appropriate methods for taxing landed property; determination of the economically and politically acceptable level of taxation in relation to land use, area and quality of land; and incorporation of changes in property and taxation levy following initial surveys. Taking the French model for constructing the *ancien cadastre* in the first half of the nineteenth century, which generated registers listing land use, quality,

surface area and ownership, as well as detailed maps covering each individual parcel of property, they reveal an array of differing approaches adopted elsewhere. For example, in European sections of the Ottoman Empire, taxation was reorganized by individual landowners rather than by rural communities as whole entities, whilst Spanish attempts to produce a genuine property-based taxation system failed during the second half of the nineteenth century. Calculating the appropriate fiscal levy for each parcel was achieved in varying ways, sometimes by looking back to earlier experiments from which adjustments were made, but more often by organizing special enquiries. These were administered by tax collectors and official land surveyors, or involved local experts (drawn from adjacent administrative units to minimize corruption) as well as civil servants. In Bosnia–Herzegovina, military surveyors played an essential role in the whole process of calculating tax as well as drawing up maps and registers, whilst in Spain declarations by individual landowners were of prime importance, doubtless contributing to the difficulties encountered. Not surprisingly, different territories adopted different methods to adjust and revise their cadastral taxation systems as fields and meadows were gradually replaced by suburbs as the nineteenth century progressed.

La mesure cadastrale is composed of three equal sections, each of four chapters, which reflect the volume's three guiding themes. Thus, experimentation is illustrated in the context of eighteenth-century Lombardy, Ottoman cities in the nineteenth century, Bosnia–Herzegovina under Austro–Hungarian rule, and nineteenth-century Spain; fiscal determination is discussed in *ancien régime* Languedoc, part of Upper Normandy, the city of Paris at the start of the nineteenth century, and the environs of Istanbul; and the dual challenge of cadastral and fiscal adjustment in the nineteenth century is exemplified by Belgium, Italy, the Parisian suburb of Gentilly, and sites in inner Bordeaux. These distinctive case studies are integrated with skill and ingenuity by the editors, and add important evidence to our knowledge of the operation of cadastrally-based taxation systems in various parts of Europe. Source material is indicated by a wealth of footnotes and most essays are illustrated by facsimiles, statistical tables, graphs or quantitative maps. These are valuable complements to the text and are usually very effective, but it is a pity that the three maps of northern Italy on pages 22 and 25 were not drawn to a standardized base (as is obvious by comparing the depiction of lakes and coastlines) and that there is no legend to describe the different forms of shading on the map on page 158 showing Istanbul and its surroundings. At a mere €20, the Presses Universitaires de Rennes have once again produced an attractive and well-priced addition to their History list, which grew by sixteen titles during the first quarter of 2012 alone.

HUGH CLOUT
University College London

JEAN-MARC MORICEAU, *L'homme contre le loup. Une guerre de deux mille ans* (Librairie Anthème Fayard, Paris, 2011). 479pp., 12 illus., 23 tabs. €26.

In his *Histoire du méchant loup* (Fayard, 2007), Jean-Marc Moriceau investigated three thousand incidents of wolves attacking country-folk in France between the fifteenth and the twentieth centuries. In *L'homme contre le loup*, the professor of rural history at the University of Caen adopts a much wider time frame that extends back some two thousand years. He begins and ends by examining the drastic re-evaluation of the wolf that has taken place in recent years, from being seen as a threat to man and beast only fit for destruction, to being recognized as an endangered species to be protected. Having been eradicated from French territory during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, wolves returned to France in the early 1990s, coming from northern Italy into the Mercantour area of the Southern Alps. For many centuries, hunters who killed wolves were rewarded but, following French ratification of various European directives on habitat conservation and biodiversity, such action now gives rise to penalties and the full force of law. Just as woodlands are to be conserved rather than cleared, marshlands cherished rather than drained, and heaths protected rather than reclaimed, so wolves must now be tolerated to live alongside mankind and grazing animals.

Fifteen chapters draw on a vast array of evidence to depict the threat posed by wolves at various stages in the past. Sheep and goats were especially vulnerable, but wolves would also attack deer, other large animals, and human beings. Young children or old folk who were entrusted with watching over flocks were most at risk, whilst adults performed more arduous forms of work close to the farmhouse. Moriceau shows how the distribution of wolves varied through time and across space, becoming more numerous when human vulnerability increased during periods of famine or disease, and occupying transitional environments of heaths and rough pastures, where human densities were low, rather than intensively cultivated farmlands with higher densities of settlement. Thus, wolves were relatively rare in the Ile-de-France, Normandy and the basin of Aquitaine, but were numerous in and around the Massif Central, the Vosges, Alps, and Pyrenees.

Nonetheless, they also entered villages and towns, even venturing into the streets of Paris on occasion. Lighting fires, creating noise, employing effective guard dogs, putting grazing animals in pens at night, and praying long and hard were age-old measures to counter the threat. From the time of Charlemagne, an official body (La Louveterie) has existed to organize wolf hunts. With the passage of time, traps and poisons became more sophisticated but, of course, harmless grazing animals and careless humans could fall foul of them. The final phases in the story of the wolf hunt came during the nineteenth century, as financial rewards became more attractive and guns both more effective and widespread. The Association de Lieutenants de Louveterie still exists but its role has changed to controlling the proliferation of wild boar in many parts of France, and offering advice on the most ecologically sound ways of practising *la chasse*.

The new, protected status of wolves in France has created fury in sheep-rearing communities in the Alps and other 'transitional environments', and has attracted a great deal of media interest. Moriceau's book adds a valuable historical dimension to this ongoing controversy. It is illustrated with a dozen maps, two dozen tables, and eight pages of full-colour plates. The text is complemented by a detailed chronology, beginning with a law of the sixth century BC that attributed rewards for destroying wolves, and ending with reports of wolf attacks in the Vercors massif, near Grenoble, in early 2011. A very detailed bibliography, running to 20 pages of small type, demonstrates the wealth of historical research into this topic. Professor Moriceau's next objective is to extend his enquiry into the controversial relationship of wolves to mankind from France to the continent of Europe at large.

HUGH CLOUT
University College London

PAUL BRUSSE and WIJNANDT W. MIJNHARDT, *Towards a new template for Dutch history. De-urbanization and the balance between city and countryside* (Balance between city and countryside 4, Uitgeverij Waanders / Universiteit Utrecht, 2011). 113 pp., €19.

Despite the annoyingly high pretensions expressed in the title and parts of the text, this actually is in many respects a nice book on Dutch de-urbanization processes in the period 1750–1850. These processes are illustrated through a convenient English summary of three interesting and very recent Dutch monographs on developments in the economic, political and cultural realm in the Dutch province of Zeeland in the period 1750–1850, written by, respectively, the first author, Paul Brusse, Jeanine Dekker and Arno Neele. Although urbanization seems to be a development which is not easily reversed, there are numerous examples of pre-industrial and industrial societies showing falling shares of urban population during long periods.

In what is now the Netherlands, and especially in the provinces of Holland and Zeeland, a massive and rapid urbanization took place from the late middle ages until about 1680, making the Dutch Republic one of the most urbanized regions of the world. There then followed nearly two centuries of de-urbanization, initially due to an absolute decline of cities, but from about 1815 until 1850 also because the increase of the urban population lagged behind that of the rural population. As there were large temporal and quantitative differences between cities, the authors use a typology dividing cities into five categories: 1) government seats; 2) military cities and naval ports; 3) centres of international trade; 4) industrial centres; 5) centres of regional trade (agricultural centres). Later on, in addition to this categorization, the authors also point to some cities where the inhabitants owned extensive rural properties, which resulted in large income streams going from the countryside to the cities.

Although the authors acknowledge that cities can have a hybrid nature, the urban categorization proves useful, as they are able to show that Dutch urban decline took place mainly in centres of industrial trade or industry. The shift from urban to rural or agricultural was largely due to a loss of previous strong positions in international and industrial activities. As local and regional conditions played a large role in this loss, differences in the development between cities could be large. Dutch cities that functioned mainly as centres of an agricultural hinterland were hardly affected, because of the advantageous developments in agriculture from 1750 onwards. Though plausible, this analysis could have benefited from a more quantitative and systematic investigation of the urban and rural developments under consideration. This would, for instance, have shown that the continuous, slow de-urbanization process in the Dutch inland provinces had already started in the sixteenth century.

The authors propose to make urbanization and de-urbanization the central criterion for a new periodization of Dutch history, which would be less political than the 'old-fashioned' one which extends from the start of the Dutch Revolt in 1568 to the period around 1800 when the Napoleonic political turmoil ended in the constitution of the Dutch monarchy. This new periodization would better integrate economic, social and cultural factors, but is also designed to

produce Dutch history which is less focused on the urbanized main province of Holland, and which pays more attention to diverging developments in other provinces and in the countryside. The authors' attention to the rural farming elite as increasingly independent economic and administrative community leaders is also interesting.

The book closes with a concise new narrative of 30 pages summarizing Dutch history from the late middle ages to 1700, from 1700 to 1850, and, very briefly, the recent period. This review is not the place to discuss the many aspects touched upon in this often appealing new picture of Dutch history, which tries to integrate economic, cultural and political dimensions of developments from an urban–rural perspective. One major argument is that the economic and cultural roots of Dutch society today lie not in the impressively wealthy commercial Dutch Golden Age, but rather in the period 1750–1850, when a revival of the countryside resulted in a growing importance of agriculture.

A weak point, however, is the confusing use in the overview of ill-defined territorial demarcations, like the apparent inclusion of coastal Groningen and Friesland in the inland provinces, frequently also denoted as 'the East' as opposed to 'the West' (comprising only Zeeland and Holland). Unfortunately this results in a simplified picture, only substituting 'the West' for Holland as the standard against which developments elsewhere are measured. The authors even suggest a clear distinction line between a Republic of Burghers in 'the West' and a Republic of Nobles in 'the East'. This seems a very limited improvement on the previous 'Hollandocentric' historiography. Such a simplification does not take into account, for instance, that the rural parts of Northern provinces Groningen and Friesland were in many ways much more similar to Holland and Zeeland than to the inland provinces. Unfortunately, these simplifications and some exaggerations (like, for instance, depicting the newly developed nuclear household system within the Western Netherlands in the seventeenth century as extraordinary in a Europe still characterized by extended households) diminish the general value of this study.

RICHARD PAPING
University of Groningen

MATS OLSSON and PATRICK SVENSSON (eds), *Growth and stagnation in European historical agriculture* (Brepols, 2011). 307pp., 46 figs., 56 tabs. €71.

Quantitative-econometric research on European pre-modern agricultural growth has strongly intensified during the last two decades. The present volume, which is based on contributions to a workshop organized by Mats Olsson and Patrick Svensson at the University of Lund, presents a very good overview of the state of the art in this innovative field of recent economic history.

The contributions encompass a long period from the early medieval times to the post-war period after 1945. They mainly focus on the period 1700–1950. Two points distinguish this book. First of all, it does not concentrate solely on Great Britain and the Low Countries or even on north-west Europe but, rather, presents a genuine pan-European perspective. What becomes very clear in reading the book is that paths of agricultural growth differed across Europe. The lack of a full-scale agricultural revolution according to the 'British model' did not automatically mean complete stagnation. For example, looking at Spain and Italy it seems that despite all difficulties and long phases of stagnation their agriculture developed more dynamically than previously supposed. Additionally it becomes clear that in some cases liberal agrarian reforms had the potential to push agricultural growth onto a new and more dynamic trajectory, as convincingly proven for southern Sweden, but that in other cases long-term developments were much more important and any 'reform impact' much weaker. Consideration of the ecological aspects of agricultural innovations, as is done in the chapters concerning the Iberian Peninsula by Helder Adegar Fonseca and Jaime Reis on the Alentejo 1750–1850 as well as by Vicente Pinilla and Ernesto Clar on Aragon 1885–1985, is a promising way to deepen our understanding of stagnation or comparatively slower agricultural growth in the (semi-)arid Mediterranean region before 1950.

Besides presenting the astonishingly diverse European experience concerning agricultural growth, the second strength of the book is in the intense use of the concept of total factor productivity (TFP), which is the best measure to assess the performance of agriculture and to identify phases of growth and stagnation. Moreover, it is convincingly shown that despite all difficulties and remaining uncertainties the data-demanding concept of TFP can be successfully applied to the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, thus opening new perspectives for research.

The essays demonstrate that concentrating on a small region, for example Friesland in the Netherlands, 1700–1850 (Merjin Knibbe), Scania in Sweden, 1702–1864 (Mats Olsson and Patrick Svensson), the Alentejo in Portugal, 1750–1850 (Helder Adegar Fonseca and Jaime Reis), Navarre in Spain, 1780–1910 (José-Miguel Lana-Berasain) leads to really promising results of quantitative-econometric research for the pre-1870 period. The astonishing variety and density of quantitative archival sources, which is available for most

European regions even for the early modern period, offers new opportunities for research. To demonstrate this is not the least merit of the book. However, John Beckett and Michael Turner's chapter on English agricultural productivity 1700–1914 reveals that, by using farm records, a 'bottom-up approach' can be successfully applied even for an entire country.

Giovanni Federico's chapter on Italy 1861–1940 is exemplary in showing that dealing intensively and carefully with the available data necessarily leads to a reappraisal that challenges the hitherto conventional wisdom concerning phases of agricultural stagnation and growth. Carol S. Leonard tries the same for late Tsarist Russia using a much more disparate set of data. Comparing her results concerning Russian annual TFP-growth for the 1890s and 1900s to European ones in the book and in the literature in general suggests that Russia's agriculture not only escaped agrarian stagnation around 1900 but realized a very, if not the most, successful agricultural catch-up growth among the less developed European countries: a challenging thesis indeed, which we hope will lead to further debates and research.

Alexis Wilkin's chapter discussing agricultural growth during the Carolingian age indicates that there was more agricultural growth and development than assumed in the older historiography. His stimulating essay introduces the reader to one of the most controversial debates on the economic history of early medieval Europe. Likewise, Frank Konersmann connects rural social and economic history in discussing the important role of the so called 'peasant merchants' for the commercialization of agriculture and progress in farming in south-west Germany, 1760–1860.

This carefully edited sixth volume of the series 'Rural history in Europe' financed by the 'European Action COST A35' of the European Union presents an important contribution to modern agricultural history using state-of-the-art econometric methods and theoretic models. It should be read by everyone who is interested in the historical dynamics of agricultural growth.

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BJØRN POULSEN and SØREN MICHAEL SINDBÆK (eds), *Settlement and lordship in Viking and early medieval Scandinavia* (Brepols, 2012). 337 pp., 18 figs., 7 tabs., 16 maps. €95.

Compared to the enormous influence of authors such as Bloch, Duby and Ladurie in bringing studies of medieval feudalism and the western European peasantry to an international audience, Scandinavian writing on medieval lordship and landed culture has so far had less impact. This is not because the field is devoid of useful, exciting research because, as this book shows, there is plenty of that. This handsome edited volume arises from an interdisciplinary conference at Aarhus in 2008, and includes contributions from the Scandinavian countries and the UK. Historical analyses are accompanied by contributions on settlement archaeology, burials, poetry, architecture and runic inscriptions. A core theme of the volume is in debating the transition between lordship in the Viking period and into the middle ages, characterized as one moving from a society based on warfare, paganism, tribute and personal relationships between lords and free peasants, to one based on serfdom, alienable land rights, Christianity, kingship and legal status. A recurrent contention throughout this collection of papers concerns the debate between those (termed 'primordialists') who believe that medieval estates in Scandinavia are direct successors of Iron Age and Viking practices of landholding, and 'modernists' who perceive a major step-change in landholding culture, coincident with religious conversion and economic changes, in about 1000 AD. Indeed, some may even feel that this collection conveys a hint of how landholding could have developed in England, had not the Normans invaded and eclipsed the legacies of Cnut and his successors.

Judith Jesch, Anne Pedersen and Lars Hermanson bring evidence from runic inscriptions (particularly those which contain references to land ownership), burial finds, and military organization, to bear upon the perceived ideological transition, where Christianity and its ideology of divine ordination of kingship eclipsed earlier reciprocal social bonds, to the extent that by the twelfth century churches were being built over high-status tenth-century pagan graves with no respect for, or even knowledge of, their presence. Inevitably in this context, the concept of status in rural settlement archaeology is explored in detail. Excavations of hall-houses and major medieval magnate farms in Jutland are explored in relation to their Viking Age antecedents by Morten Sovsø, and the archaeological evidence for the insertion of churches into these settlement complexes is explored by Jens Jeppesen. Landscape and architectural expressions of aristocratic status are discussed by Martin Hansson. These papers are accompanied by historical and toponymic studies of demesne farms, manors and parish formation in (Danish) Sjaelland and (Swedish) Östergötland by Erik Ulsig, J. G. G. Jakobsen and Clas Tollin. Further analysis of the impact of Roman Catholic institutions

on land is provided by Nils Hybel, while Carsten Porskrog Rasmussen provides an overview of related secular developments in Danish crown lands before and after 1230 AD. Bjørn Poulsen speculates on the types and impacts of taxes, rent and render, which may have existed in Denmark in the Viking Age to medieval transition.

Dagfinn Skre debates the changing role of Viking Age royal power in relation to trade and markets, testing concepts such as central place theory, and situates nascent urbanization in places such as Birka and his own excavation site at Kaupang in relation to magnate politics, local assembly governance, craft production and the development of central tribute-gathering estates. Søren Sindbæk contributes a historical and toponymic study of outfield development and the opening up of new lands and resources to agriculture, which keys with two other contributions later in the volume. These, by Frode Iversen and Janken Myrdal respectively, focus on the role of slavery and freedmen, and the daily grind of agricultural production in the landscape, the latter adding a down-to-earth agrarian flavour to the synthetic and thematic overviews of several of the other papers.

The volume is a relatively dense collection of papers, well-freighted in research detail, and it also benefits from a useful and clear introduction which sets out its stall well. The illustrations are few and not of particularly high quality of reproduction, although the cover is attractively designed. It is by no means a cheap purchase. To active researchers in this particular field it will be an indispensable acquisition but many other interested scholars may decide to wait for their library to acquire it.

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