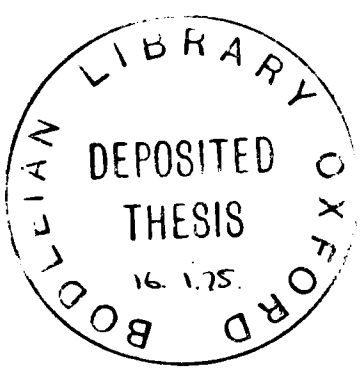
THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE
FACULTY OF MODERN HISTORY
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THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITION OF THE PEASANTRY IN SOUTH EAST LEICESTERSHIRE A.D. 1300 - 1700

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List of Abbreviations

I Depositories

B.M.	British Museum
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
Leics. Museum	Leicester Museums and Art Gallery, Department of Archives
L.R.O.	Leicestershire Record Office
M.M.	Merton College Muniments
N.R.O.	Northamptonshire Record Office
P.R.O.	Public Record Office Cal. Pat = Calendar of Patent Rolls Chanc. Misc. = Chancery, Miscellaneous

II Books and Journals

Ag.HR	Agricultural History Review
Am.HR	American Historical Review
Annales	Annales Économies, Sociétes, Civilisations
Arch.Jl.	Archaeological Journal
Birm.HJ	University of Birmingham Historical Journal
BIHS.	Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research
Brit.Jl.Soc.	British Journal of Sociology
Jl.Brit.Arch.	Journal of British Archaeology
Camb.H.Jl.	Cambridge Historical Journal
Comp.St.in Soc. and Hist.	Comparative Studies in Society and History
DB	Domesday Book
EHR	English Historical Review
Ec.HR	Economic History Review
Ec.HS Occ.Papers	Economic History Society. Occasional Papers
Ec.Jl.	Economic Journal
Ec.H	Economic History

Ec.H.Jl.	Economic History Journal
Geogrl.Jl.	Geographical Journal
Med.Arch.	Mediaeval Archaeology
Midland Hist.	Journal of Midland History
P & P	Past and Present
Rec.Soc.	Record Society
Royal Anthrop. Inst.	Royal Anthropological Institute
Scand.Ec.HR	Scandinavian Economic History Review
Scand.St.Law	Scandinavian Studies in Law
TLAS	Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society
TRHS	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
VCH	The Victoria History of the Counties of England 1900 in progress
Yorks Bull.Econ. and Soc.Resc.	Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research

In quotations from original documents abbreviations have been expanded where possible, the extensions being indicated by brackets. Errors of spelling or grammar have not been corrected and not usually especially noted.

The spelling of surnames has been standardised, except in direct quotations or where the reader is referred to a specific document, in which cases the form used in the particular document is reproduced unaltered.

Chapter One

Introduction

KIBWORTH HARCOURT
ITS GEOGRAPHY, EARLY HISTORY, AND HISTORICAL SOURCES

The manor and civil parish of Kibworth Harcourt lies about nine miles south-east of Leicester on the main road from Leicester to Market Harborough. The parish, roughly triangular in shape and 1475 acres in extent, occupies part of a ridge running from south-west to north-east and forming the watershed, at a height of 350-450 feet, between the head-waters of the River Sence to the north-west and the tributary streams of the Welland to the south-east.[1]

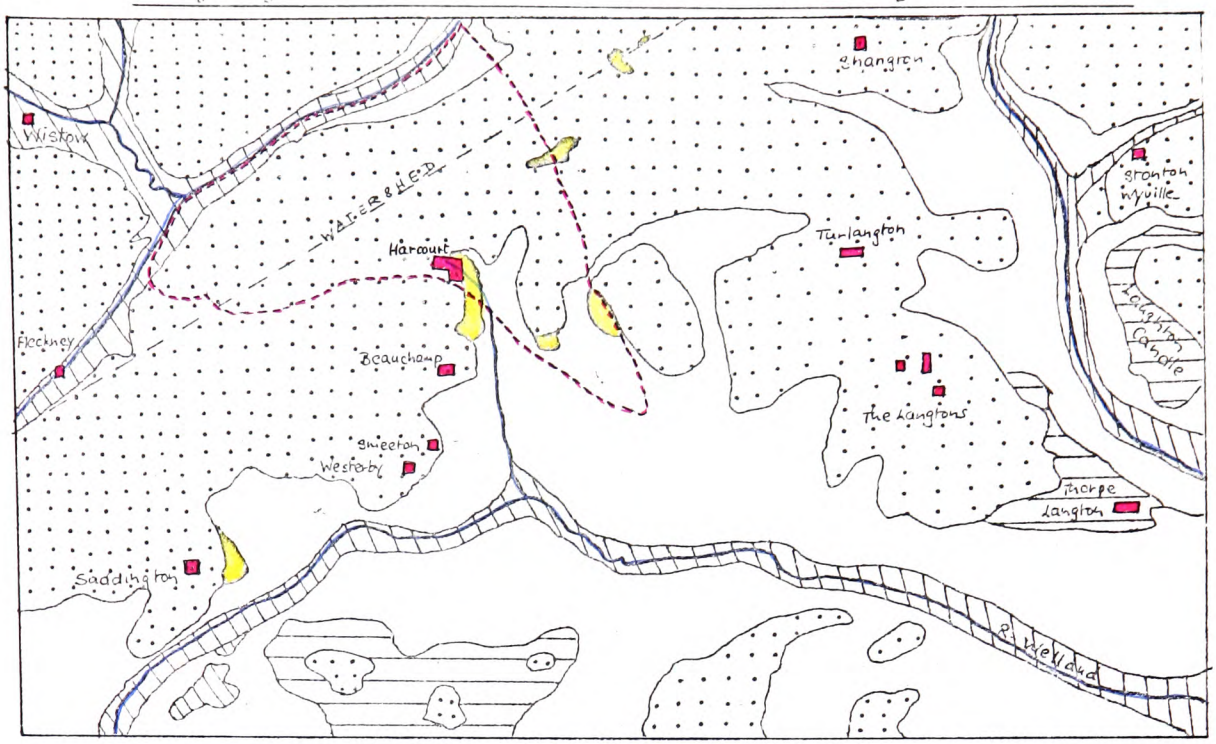
Like so many Leicestershire villages, it lies on the spring line where heavy boulder clay gives way to glacial deposits of sand and gravel lying over impermeable rock. As can be seen on Maps 1 and 2 the sand filled basin of impervious lower lias was in fact too marshy a site for the village, which lies on the edge of the boulder clay to the west of it. Numerous wells, sunk to the underlying gravels, provided the village with an ample water supply.[2] To the north and west the village arable and pasture extended over fertile boulder clay. To the south-east lay lower lias with its characteristic drainage problems and most of this area was kept under permanent pasture. The village is one of the best sited in the region, a strong argument for its antiquity

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1 V.C.H. Leics. V. p.178.

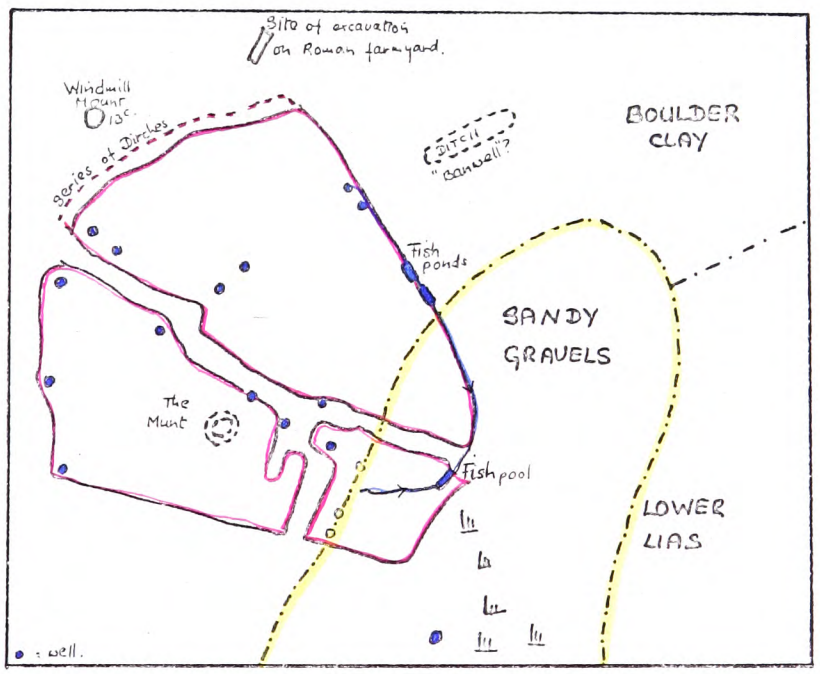
2 M.M. 1635 Map of Kibworth. Also L. Richardson 'Wells and Springs of Leicestershire' (H.M.S.O. 1931), p. 78.

Map 1. The Geological situation of Kibworth Harcourt and the neighbouring villages.



Boulder clay
Middle Lias
River deposits
Sand and gravel
Lower Lias
Manor boundary

Geological Survey of G.B. Solid and Drift Sheet 170 (1963). [section of.]



Map 2. Sketch map of Kibworth Harcourt to show the spring line and archaeological features. • : WELLS

vis-à-vis its neighbours. The whole region, which is shown in Map 1 has been described by R. M. Auty as 'the best fatting pasture of the Eastern region (of Leicestershire) and possibly of England'.[1]

The village has been fortunate in its communications. Today the A6 links it with Leicester and Market Harborough. In 1726 this road became a turnpike road and in 1744 the first coach from London to Leicester via Northampton and Dunstable passed through Kibworth, ushering in a period of prosperity for its five hostelries. The first mail coach used the route in 1785, and in 1810 a by-pass was made through Hall Close in order to avoid the narrow right angle corner of the village street and its difficult gradient; thus the older part of the village has been spared the noise and grime of modern traffic. However, this is a relatively new road, which probably developed out of a chain of inter-village tracks in the later twelfth century to link the new township of Market Harborough, founded in 1160-70, with Leicester.[2] Before this period the principal road had been the east-west one linking the village with the market town of Hallaton in the east and running westwards through Wistow, Kilby and Countesthorpe to Cosby. By the sixteenth century and possibly earlier, the road was known as the Cole-pit Way.[3] At Cosby one branch ran north-east to the Coalville area, the other ran eastwards to the Bedworth coal pits in Warwickshire. A still earlier track, known as the Ridgeway, ran into the

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1 R. M. Auty. Part 57: Leicestershire, in 'The Land of Britain' ed. D. Stamp (London 1937), p. 254f.

2 W. G. Hoskins. Provincial England. (MacMillan 1965), pp. 53-67.

3 M.M. 6402. Colisbrigge 1334.

village at Cole Bridge Ford, followed the southern headland of Banwell Furlong and then struck north-east towards Carlton Curlieu. This may have been a section of the conjectured Jurassic Way which ran from the Wiltshire Downs to the Yorkshire wolds in pre-Roman times.[1] Not far east of the village ran the Roman road from Leicester to Colchester known as the Via Devana and locally as the Gartree Road.[2]

In spite of its advantageous position, Kibworth Harcourt never became a market centre. Kibworth Beauchamp secured this privilege for reasons which have probably more to do with the activities of the Harcourt and Beauchamp families at higher levels than with geographical convenience. But there was a market on most days of the week at one or other of the local villages within walking distance, where small surpluses of grain, butter and cheese could be bought and sold. By the sixteenth century specialised markets were developing rapidly in the region. Market Harborough had become famous for its cattle, horse and sheep markets. Northampton specialised in horses and in leather goods, Coventry in cattle, Leicester in cheese, leather goods and wool.[3] The absence of a grain market is noticeable. Leicestershire was 'too far remote from any means of exportation of corn'[4] for there to be

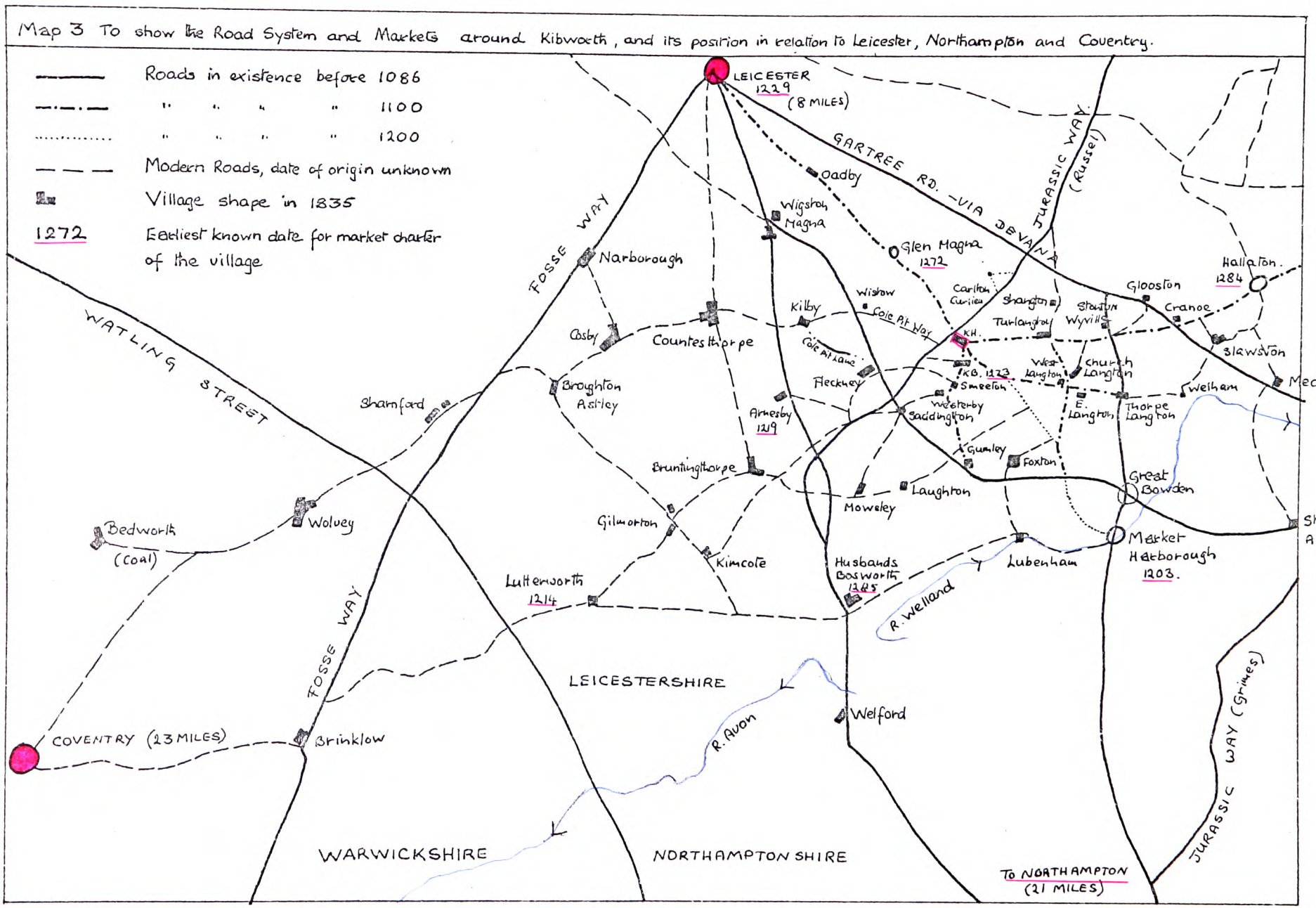
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1 P. Russell, 'Roads' V.C.H. Leics. III. p.57 and map p.60.
W. F. Grimes, Aspects of Archaeology (London 1951), p.144-171.

2 Col. Bellairs, 'The Roman Roads of Leicestershire.' TLAS. VII (1893) p.292-98, 357-364, map p. 357.

3 L. A. Clarkson, 'The Leather Crafts in Tudor and Stuart England'. Ag.HR.XIV (1966) 25-29.
A. Everitt, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce' in 'The Agricultural History of England and Wales' IV. ed. J. Thirsk, (C.U.P. 1967) p. 466-589.

4 P.R.O. S.P. 14.112.91.


Map 3 To show the Road System and Markets around Kibworth, and its position in relation to Leicester, Northampton and Coventry.
Roads in existence before 1086
" " " " 1100
" " " " 1200
Modern Roads, date of origin unknown
Village shape in 1835
1272 Earliest known date for market charter of the village
LEICESTER 1229 (8 MILES)
GARTREE RD. -VIA DEVANA
JURASSIC WAY (Russel)
Oadby
Wigston Magna
Glen Magna 1272
FOSSE WAY
Narborough
WATLING STREET
Cosby
Countesthorpe
Kilby
Wistow
Cole At Way
Cole At Lane
Fleckney
Broughton Astley
Shamford
Arnesby 1219
Bruntingthorpe
Gilmorton
Kimcote
Lutterworth 1214
Bedworth (COAL)
Wolvey
COVENTRY (23 MILES)
Brinklow
FOSSE WAY
LEICESTERSHIRE
WARWICKSHIRE
NORTHAMPTON SHIRE
R. Avon
Welford
Husbands Bosworth 1285
R. Welland
Moweley
Laughton
Carlton Curlieu
Shangton
Stanton Wyvill
Turlangton
K.H.
K.B. 1173
Smeeton
Westerby
Saddington
Gumley
Foxton
West Langton
Church Langton
E. Langton
Thorpe Langton
Glooston
Cranoe
Hallaton 1284
Slawston
Welham
Medbourne
Great Bowden
Market Harborough 1203.
Lubenham
Stoke Albany
JURASSIC WAY (Grimes)
To NORTHAMPTON (21 MILES)

any profit in producing corn in excess of local need. Corn prices were, therefore, marginally lower than in the south Midlands, but the value of good pasture land was appreciably higher; for example, fallow pasture was valued at 20/- an acre in Leicestershire in the mid-seventeenth century but at only 5/- an acre in Oxfordshire.[1] If all the demesne lands in Gartree Hundred were really producing grain to their full capacity during the period of high farming, it is difficult to imagine to whom it was sold; few producers could have built up a grange system as sophisticated as that of Leicester Abbey.[2] The leasing out of demesne for rents make sound economic sense in Leicestershire, but little work has been done on the subject. Again, if the prosperity of the average land-holder in Harcourt during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is indicative of the level of prosperity in the neighbouring villages - and there is no reason to believe that it was not - then there was little in the way of surplus to exchange, and the fact that a village was issued with a charter to hold a market has an artificial ring about it; the market, one suspects, was a very small affair.

The early history of the Manor

Conspicuous in the village is a conical, flat-topped mound some 16 yards in diameter at the top and 122 yards in

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1 Comparison of unprinted Leicestershire Inventories with M. A. Havinden's Oxfordshire Inventories 1550-1590. Oxf. Rec. Soc. XLIV (1965).

2 R. H. Hilton. The Economic Development of Some Leicestershire Estates in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries. (O.U.P. 1947) p.80-82.

circumference at the base, while the height in the slope is 18 yards, vertical height 9 feet. So large a man-made feature cannot be lightly dismissed. It should be able to shed some light on the origin of the settlement, or at least upon its development. However, the Mound, as it is called, is extraordinarily reluctant to yield its secrets; not only is it difficult to get experts to agree as to its measurements, but opinion differs as to its origin and function - it could either be an early Roman barrow or a medieval motte.

Apart from a short stretch on its north side, the mound is surrounded by a ditch measuring 9 feet wide and 5 feet deep to the south-west. It was excavated in 1863 by H. Dryden and measured and planned in 1965 by Mr. A. Aggas and Mr. G. Yates.[1] Dryden's plans survive but they are uninformative without the notes which are lost.[2] A somewhat incoherent account of his work appeared in the Transactions of the Leicester Archaeological Society for 1863 in which it was reported that the mound in Hall Close, together with 'an elevated barrow connected with it' had been excavated. The 'elevated barrow' was almost certainly that 'considerable barrow' which Nichols described in 1778 as lying to the north-west of the village.[3] This was excavated recently by Aggas and Yates and proved to be the site of the thirteenth-century wind-mill. The Mound itself has proved more baffling.

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1 Plans in the possession of the excavators; copies in the Leicester City Museum.

2 Catalogue of Drawings made by Sir Henry Dryden (1912) p.41, deposited at the Public Library, Northampton.

3 V.C.H. Leics.I p.275 and Nichols, Leics.Vol.II p.639.

According to the Leicester Journal for Friday, August 7, 1863, the mound had first been excavated in 1836 or thereabouts when a trench was cut into the western side of the mound. In 1863 a second trench was cut, this time from north to south. Traces of both trenches can be seen today, and neither cut through the centre. According to the newspaper report, the 'depth of the cutting was in the centre eight to nine feet. About five feet deep was found a layer of black soil and what sometimes appeared ashes and burnt wood. In this layer were found bones, teeth and one or two pieces of roman pottery. On a level with the same layer a pavement of large stones about four feet by two was discovered. A bone bodkin was also found and an iron candlestick. At a depth of from eight to nine feet there was a regular layer of black soil; looking as if that was the old natural ground, and the above made up ground'. According to a note on Dryden's plan, the pavement was found, not in the mound, but near the hedge some 70 feet from the ditch on the east side. It was four feet six inches under the surface and a second pavement was found a further four and a half feet below the first. Dryden's plan shows the Mound as round, on Mr. Aggas's plan it is oval.

One cannot draw firm conclusions from such garbled accounts. According to the Leicester Chronicle for Saturday, August 8, 1863, The Reverend Edward Trollope of Leasingham, whose views were evidently held in high esteem, gave it as his opinion that the mound was 'a ring barrow, and probably that of a Roman military officer or agricultural colonist'. The evidence does indeed suggest a Roman barrow, an unusually

large one, on what is known to have been the site of a Roman settlement, but Mr. Dunning found the evidence inconclusive.[1] In his opinion the mound is too large for a Roman barrow, and seems to have been altered at some later date, possibly to provide part of the earth works of a medieval manor house. Dr. Webster felt it was more probably a medieval motte than a Roman tumulus.[2] Both these distinguished archaeologists had only the plans of Dryden and Aggas to work on and the garbled accounts in the transactions and the local press. Neither suggestion is wholly satisfactory. The village has always been a member of a far-flung estate within the period of recorded history for the area. It has never been the Caput of the Honor and it has never been held by a mesne tenant. Consequently there has never been the need for a manor house. The bailiff occupied a modest building with a garden and dovecote to the north of the Main Street. It may have been used as a temporary motte but this cannot have been its original function since it lies in a slight hollow below the general level of the village and enjoys no strategic advantage whatsoever. So even if it was fortified in Stephen's reign or by the Danes to form a link in their chain of 'burhs' to the south-west of Leicester commanding the Welland frontier,[3] it must in origin date before both periods; before the establishment of the village and its

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1 G. C. Dunning and R. T. Jessup, 'Barrows' Antiquity X (1936) p.37-53. Also letter addressed to the writer, 17 May 1972.

2 1972, letter from Dr. Webster.

2 W. G. Hoskins, 'Further Notes on the Anglian and Scandinavian Settlement of Leicestershire' TLAS. XIX (1935-7) p.94-109.

fields on the higher, strategically more suitable site. If it is not a fortified site then it is probably a burial site, and a tumulus containing Roman pottery on a Roman site brings us back to the suggestion that it was a large, northerly, Roman barrow. In which case, quite an important personage lived in Harcourt.

This personage may have been a Romano-Celt, and he certainly employed Celts. With the decline of direct Roman influence, either the local Celtic community or a group of Anglian settlers ploughed over the site of the Roman buildings and established a village immediately north of the Mound. We know this much at least because excavation in Banwell furlong, which, as will be explained later,[1] is almost certainly one of the oldest furlongs, revealed the cobbled yard of a Roman farmyard lying beneath its ridges. The situation of Kibworth Harcourt on the Ridgeway, on a spring-line, on a Roman site, in an area extensively cleared and settled in the Roman period, makes it very improbable that it was deserted for long, if at all. This would tip the scales in favour of Celtic settlement in spite of the strong Saxon flavour of the field names. Fortunately, Scandinavian attitudes towards family land are so similar to those of the Welsh, that it is not of crucial importance to the thesis to establish a firm conclusion with regard to the Celtic or Anglian origin of the community. Of greater importance is the fact the village did not grow up round a fortified site; it did not owe its regular holdings to a military land settlement

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1 See p. 94.

scheme: its founders were not migrants from many regions but were members of a single kin-group who were either Celtic or Anglian.

The presence in 1086 of six sokemen in Kibworth Harcourt and one Frenchman would seem to reflect the invasions of the ninth and eleventh centuries. All the sokemen of Gartree Hundred owed suit to the King's court at Great Bowden, which was separate from the Hundred Court.[1] In a society where title to land rested on hereditary right, where status depended on the amount of land a man held and the length of his pedigree and where criminal offences were dealt with according to status, it is obvious that there was little protection for the outsider. If a man was not a slave, and so had no master to guarantee his protection, and he had no kin to act as oath helpers, and no right to the land, no 'odal', or, as Gurevič would argue, no 'alod', then his position in that society was extremely exposed.[2] He was 'without law' and conversely was not bound by law. It was an administrative necessity to set up regional courts to meet his needs. Similarly, the Conqueror had to make special arrangements to protect the interests of his French followers in England.[3] There were

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1 F. M. Stenton, 'Types of Manorial Structure in the Northern Danelaw,' in Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History, Vol.II. ed. P. Vinogradoff (Oxford 1910), p.44 note I.
R.H.C. Davis. Kalendar of Abbot Samson. Camden Soc. lxxxiv (1954) p.xxix-xli.

2 A. Gurevič. 'Répresentations et attitudes à l'égard de la propriété pendant le haut Moyen Age.' Annales 27. 1972(3) p.523-547.
F. W. Maitland, Domesday Book and Beyond (C.U.P. 1907) p.153.

3 W. Stubbs, Select Charters (Oxford 1921) pp.98, 219, 376, 394.

Frenchmen and sokemen at Kibworth in 1086 who were presumably the ancestors of the 'freemen' of the thirteenth century, and their freedom consisted in freedom from suit at the court for customary tenants, the manor court, and freedom, therefore, to contravene the custom of the manor and alienate their land. They also paid less in the way of rents, which, if they were the descendants of conquerors, need cause no surprise. The origin of the sokemen is the centre of an erudite and considerable literature into which one cannot enter in a brief introductory chapter such as this. I wish only to make the point that if, as I shall argue, inheritance custom was central to the tenurial system of the medieval peasant community, then those people who were excepted from that custom stand out so conspicuously that they must in fact form a distinct group. Hence the importance attached to sokemen who were in many other respects no different from their neighbours. I am suggesting that the sokeman did not hold hereditary land, therefore, his status did not depend on the length of his pedigree or even on the amount of land he had acquired; it depended on the power of the King's court which was convened from time to time to deal with the cases of all sokemen within juridical areas known as sokes. As is well known, many sokes became the private jurisdiction of certain monastic houses and of laymen, in which case it was they who extended their protection to the sokemen dependent on them. Since most sokemen are found in the Danish occupied regions of England, and the Danes were intruders, it seems reasonable to suppose that the first sokemen were Danes. Once the

administrative system had been established, then, of course, any person who acquired non-hereditary land, a Frenchman for example, could be called a sokeman, and could hold in free socage, without necessarily being of Danish descent.

By King Edward's time Kibworth Harcourt formed one of a group of manors held by a certain Aelric, the son of Meriet, a freeman. The estate was considerable, and all of it seems to have passed to Robert de Veci[1] with the exception of a group in Kesteven which one Baldwin held in 1086 but which, it was claimed, had been granted by Aelric to Westminster Abbey.[2] Thus the Veci estate in 1086 consisted of Wolvey and Nether Whitacre in Warwickshire, Braybrooke in Northamptonshire, Great Steeping, Caythorpe, Friston, Normanton, Willoughby, Brandon, Suanitone, and Hechintune in Lincolnshire, and in Leicestershire, 14 carucates at Gilmorton, 12 carucates at Kibworth Harcourt, 10 at Newton Harcourt, 6¼ at Shenton, 4 at Kilworth, at Gumley and at Husband's Bosworth, 3¾ at Thorpe Langton, and 2 at Shangton; a total of 59 carucates in Leicestershire alone, with 47 ploughs. He kept only the two Harcourts in his own hand, the rest he sub-infeudated to mesne tenants.

According to the Leicestershire survey made in 1130, one Ansketil was holding the de Veci manors in Gartree Hundred, namely, Kibworth Harcourt, Shangton and Thorpe Langton.[3]

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1 F. M. Stenton. V.C.H. Leics. I p.323.

2 Domesday Book. folios 377, 242, 225, 346, 234a.

3 C. E. Slade. The Leicester Survey (Leics. 1956) pp.14, 95.

Unfortunately, the remaining manors were not included in the Leicestershire survey, nor in the Lindsey Survey of 1115-18.[1] G. F. Farnham and H. Round were of the opinion that this Ansketil was Anchetil de Harcourt, the son of Robert and Grandson of Anchetil de Harcourt.[2] The second Anchetil begot William, who begot Ivo, who begot Robert who married Isabel of Stanton in Oxfordshire. Their grandson, Richard, married Arabella, daughter of Saer de Quincy. Richard died in 1258 leaving two sons, William who held the Bosworth fee and in whose line it descended until 1509 when it was sold, and Saer, the younger son who received Kibworth Harcourt.[3] Saer married Agnes de Segeville[4] and they had two sons, Richard and Simon.[5] Saer supported the cause of Simon de Montfort and forfeited his lands in 1265.[6] According to the extent made in that year for Exchequer purposes, the manor at Kibworth consisted of 1 messuage and nine virgates of land in demesne, worth £7 12s. Od. (i.e. from rents, since the demesne was by this time leased out in small parcels), 18½ virgates in villeinage, each virgate being worth 16/-, rents from free tenants and cottars worth 38/10d, the assized rent from one virgate freehold worth 6/8d[7], a mill worth 26/8d, and 6d in

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1 H. Round. Fedual England (London 1909) p. 181f.

2 G. Farnham. 'The Harcourt Family.' TLAS. XV (1927) p.104-5.

3 J. C. Wedgewood. 'Harcourt of Ellenhall.' William Salt Arch. Soc. (1914) p.187-210.

4 M.M. 6376.

5 M.M. 6388.

6 PRO. Cal. Inq. Misc. I. p.102.

7 Probably held in fee farm, since 6s.8d was the standard sum for the services due from one virgate.

lieu of four capons at Christmas. The total revenue amounted to £26 Os. 8d.[1] The manor was restored to him by the Dictum of Kenilworth[2] but in 1270 he granted the above lands together with the Court Leet and the advowson of the free chapel to Walter of Merton, reserving only to himself an annual rent of 20/-.[3] The manor has remained in the hands of the college until the present day.

The historical sources

The purchase of the manor by Walter de Merton inaugurated that extensive collection of archives relating to Kibworth Harcourt which is still housed in the muniment room of Merton College. It comprises a series of court-rolls, rentals, account rolls, surveys with maps and a miscellaneous collection of deeds and memoranda which has made possible the following study of the peasant landholders in the village during the medieval period, the size of their holdings and their inheritance customs.

Of greatest interest among these are the rentals and court-rolls, which between them provide a complete record of land transfers.[4] A bundle of seven membranes provides lists of tenants, their holdings and rents around the date 1300. The next rental was drawn up in about 1340 and was kept up to date by interlining until 1372 when it was superseded by a new rental ordered by the Steward, Simon Pakeman. Pakeman's

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1 PRO. Excheq. 50. H.III. No.10. Leics.

2 PRO. Cal. Pat. 1266-72, 150, 264.

3 M.M. 2886 and Chap.2 p.27.

4 Full references for these and other sources described in this section are given in the Bibliography.

rental has not survived, so we have no working copy of a rental until the next one, in the form of the record of a Court of Recognitions held in 1439, confirmed and updated by a list of rents among the account rolls for 1449-51. In 1484 a new rental was drawn up followed by one in about 1500 and the last in 1527. It is possible that another was made in the late 1580's or 1590's when the twenty-one year leases were introduced but this has not survived. After this date surveys replaced rentals. A survey was made in 1609 following the dislocation caused by plague, but only the map survives and the note in the court-rolls that the tenants were to meet on 23 September, 1611 to make a 'perfecke survey'. The survey for 1635-6 survives together with its map. From 1679 onwards a court was held every seven years for which a list was drawn up of all the free-holders who owed attendance, of all the tithing men, of all the copyholders and their tenements, of the by-laws to date and of any other matter worthy of record. In 1780 the manor was enclosed and an excellent pre-enclosure map was drawn up to facilitate the allotment. Unfortunately, the schedule to accompany this has not survived, so although the furlongs are subdivided and numbered, we do not know to which tenant they belonged. However, the names of owners are written in on the map against each house in the village, as indeed they are also on the 1635 and 1609 maps. It is, therefore, possible to associate particular houses with specific families and their inventories. No copy of the post enclosure map survives among the Merton Archives but a copy can be found in the Leicestershire Record Office, together

with a leatherbound copy of the schedule made in 1821 by T. Eagle. One or two nineteenth-century maps and sketch maps of the village and of particular holdings survive at Merton which throw light on the more recent history of the village, but of which I have not made use.

The rentals provide a convenient summary of the land-holding scene in particular years at widely spaced intervals. The court-rolls provide the detailed, half-yearly record of leases and of transfers from one generation to the next, without which the rentals would be open to a wide range of interpretations. The court-rolls run from 1276-1298 and from 1320-1460 with only the occasional odd year missing. From 1460-99 the series is intermittent, it is complete from 1500-1511, continues intermittently until 1553 and then ceases until 1584. Rolls survive for 1584, 1594, 1599-1600, 1610, 1679, 1686, 1693, 1700 and beyond. The post Restoration rolls are accompanied by bundles of preparatory notes and of the actual 'copies' of some of the copyholders dating from 1636 onwards.

When Walter of Merton acquired the manor he also acquired the right and duty to hold the View of frankpledge.[1] Accordingly, the View was held twice a year, in spring (April-May) and in the autumn (October-November). A 'Parva Curia' or court baron was generally held at the same time and on rare occasions an extra court baron was held at some intermediate date. In theory the court was meant to sit every

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1 M.M. 6373.

three weeks for so it is recorded in the lists of services due from the tenants. However, no written material from such courts has survived or any indication that they were in fact held. The totals of receipts of court in the account rolls usually tally with the amounts recorded in the court rolls, so if additional courts were held by the bailiff no fines were taken at them. The record of surrenders and admissions is therefore more or less complete as we have them, except for occasional gaps notably for the period 1384-90 when the continuity was broken, and for 1445-47 during a period of reorganization. After 1460 many of the rolls have not survived but there is reason to believe that the courts were held as usual since the random samples which remain are, with only two exceptions, for spring or autumn. No rolls survive for the late sixteenth century and for the mid-seventeenth.

Very few administrative changes were made in the method of keeping and recording the court rolls. Under Warden Henry Abyndon (1422-38) courts were often held in June and the accounting year was altered to run from August 2nd to August 1st instead of from St James, July 25th. Throughout the troubled period 1400-50 fines, building accounts, strays and the like are described in detail in the court rolls and omitted or entered as a lump sum in the account rolls often under the wrong year, while in the account rolls details such as small sums owed by named individuals in fines as well as for rent arrears are jotted down on the back of the rolls

for the years 1403-14. There seems in fact to have been some hesitation as to how to record unusual situations and little thought given to devising a format; clerks just muddled along as best they could. The rolls of the fifteenth century begin to include a small number of by-laws concerning repairs, the cleaning of ditches and other matters of communal interest and from 1448 onwards they record the names of the Vice Warden and Bursars. A major change was made in 1679 when a system of holding a court only once in seven years was introduced. The court rolls from this period onwards are elaborately engrossed and the rough copies for them survive. These working papers are of interest because they include the actual slips or 'copies' of the copyholders, notes in English on the by-laws, tithing lists, notes concerning disputed rights to the use of certain wells, names of persons who must plant trees and so on. Leases were granted for 21 years but a fine seems to have been exacted every seven years.

Paper instead of parchment was being made use of as early as 1509, arabic numerals were first used in 1478, and the writing itself is usually in a hand well ahead of its time. The clerks were sufficiently well educated, but their interests and those of the college evidently did not lie in developing better methods of book-keeping nor in the most efficient methods of estate management.

Many of the early court rolls have been filed together, Exchequer fashion, on loops of twisted parchment. More than

one court is recorded per membrance, each session is dated but the membranes are not numbered. According to the Merton College system only the bundles are numbered and this is the number I have quoted as the reference number in footnotes, but beside it I have added the number of the membrane in chronological order; this is for my own convenience and may help others to find a particular court session in a bundle of twenty or so membranes more speedily, but as I have said, the searcher will not find the membranes themselves thus numbered.

The bailiff's account rolls run in almost unbroken succession until 1547, and intermittently until 1679 and beyond. The demesne had already been leased in small parcels before the college took over the estate, so there is no grange account. The items recorded, such as rents, court fines, and steward's fees, are standard and repetitive so that the accounts themselves are not informative. Any unusual entry, such as a heavy repair bill is usually described in detail in the corresponding court roll. In the later account rolls, entries concerning leasehold properties are enlarged upon in the Book of Fines. The bailiff's accounts, therefore, are not of great historical value save in so far as they confirm what is learnt from other estate documents. For example, filed among the accounts are two alternative attempts at a detailed break-down of the expenses incurred in the building of Brown's Place, the third attempt is separately filed under miscellaneous documents. The three together form a very interesting study in themselves.[1]

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1 M.M. 6465, 6324.

Of greater use are the college deeds and memoranda referring to Kibworth Harcourt. The early deeds are concerned almost exclusively with the consolidation of the apportioned rents of the manor in the hands of the college. A group in the late fourteenth century relate to the advowson of the free chapel at Harcourt. An entertaining letter from the butcher to the Warden, written in about 1448, explains why the former is refusing to pay his rent and finishes by recommending a promising young grammarian to the college. The few remaining deeds refer to the leases of freeholders, encroachments on college ground, a list of Gumley men who owed suit at Harcourt and extracts from the court rolls designed to prove that the Polle family and the Manns were villeins.

Outside the Merton College muniments records are mainly to be found in the Public Record Office, The Leicestershire County Record Office and the Archives Department of Leicester City Museum.

Copies of the Subsidy Lists for Kibworth Harcourt and the surrounding villages survive in the Public Record Office for 1327, 1333, 1377 and 1380, for 1524, 1525, 1545, 1547, 1549, 1572, 1577, 1594, and for 1611, 1622, 1625 (? not dated), 1628, 1629 and beyond. The lists for 1377 and 1381 can be shown from the court rolls to give a complete count of the inhabitants of the village including those who did not hold land. The remainder are incomplete in coverage and of little use, including the 1524 returns. The small number of other documents housed in the Public Record Office will be referred to in the text.

The probate documents housed in the Leicestershire Record Office are described in Appendix VII. The Humphrey family papers are also housed here and the copy of the Enclosure Award. In the City Museum are the Parker papers, the Haymes papers and a terrier of School Lands made in 1675. A complete set of aerial reconnaissance photographs of the county can also be consulted here. The Foxton family papers are in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The Parish Registers from 1574 are still kept in the vestry of the parish church of St. Wilfrid, Kibworth Beauchamp.

Chapter Two

MANOR AND VILLAGE, 1270-1700

Two sentences from an unpublished Ph.D. thesis by D. R. Mills may well serve as an introduction and theme for what is, unavoidably, a long and many-stranded chapter. He writes, 'neighbouring villages, so close to each other as to enjoy almost identical natural endowments, could be and often were, utterly different from each other by way of size, appearance and most of all by way of social structure and stratification. The presence of a landed estate in a parish was generally the most important single fact about that place. Where there was a large number of small proprietors this fact had also made an indelible imprint on the social structure of the population'.[1] Among examples of estate villages he pointed to Carlton Curlieu, and as an example of a peasant village to Burton Overy, both immediate neighbours to each other and to Kibworth Harcourt. He could equally well have chosen Kibworth Harcourt and Kibworth Beauchamp, or Shangton and Turlangton. The interaction of local economic fluctuations and estate policy will be the subject of this chapter, and this is accompanied by an examination of the changing relationships of different tenurial groups. These virtually represented the whole village population inasmuch as most men were closely related to a landholding family, and themselves held land during some part of their lives. More detailed chapters will

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1 D. R. Mills 'The Social Geography of Rural Leicestershire in the mid-nineteenth century' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester 1972).

deal with the size of holdings, the size of households, the peasant budget and peasant inheritance customs.

Since before the Conquest, manor and vill had coincided at Kibworth Harcourt, and the lord had always been an absentee lord. The indications are that the community had been allowed to develop fairly freely and with little seigneurial control. The population had vastly increased during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, encroachment onto the village street and square had apparently been allowed to go unchecked, the demesne had been broken up into quarter virgate holdings at high rents, and by the late thirteenth century the standard tenement was the half virgate of roughly twelve acres.

By reason of the number of its tenants the manor yielded £39 a year in 1323, the highest figure it was ever to yield. The community seemed set in the direction of a populous but poor peasant village which could have been classed as such by Mills in the nineteenth century. However, events altered this course in the early modern period and by the seventeenth century the village had generated from its own stock a small group of yeomen and gentry who, by inserting themselves between Merton and the village, converted the latter into an 'estate village' in the fullest sense of the term.

Clearly, estate policy is of immense importance and much work has been done on it, especially for the modern period when 'policy' became almost synonymous with 'efficiency', and with the deliberate reorganization of agricultural practice or of the tenurial system.[1] For this period the historian can

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1 M.E. Finch. Five Northants Families, 1540-1640 (Oxford 1956).
E. Kerridge. The Agricultural Revolution (London 1967).
G.E. Mingay. English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century (London 1963).
F.M.C. Thompson. English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century (London 1963)

work with an abundance of documentary evidence on the genesis of a policy for a particular estate and on its implementation. This is not the case for the medieval period where efficiency was not at a premium. It is true that on some estates in certain years there was activity, often desperate activity to meet a desperate situation - exceptional taxation, a heavy fine or a slump in rents - but the day-to-day attitude tended to be conservative, to keep the familiar, accepted system going. Therefore, the medieval historian has less material to work on. He can describe at length the accounting systems, he can describe the expedients taken to meet specific crises, he can guess at motives but it is very much more difficult for him to isolate this activity from the web of political events and social structures in which it was set.[1] Convenient as it would be for comparative purposes to devote a separate section to Merton's estate policy, I found it impossible to meet this demand. Merton's policy was for the most part a response to events in the village and to explain it requires an exposition of the history of the village. It is therefore better seen in the context of the social history of the village. However, a few general observations will not be out of place here.

Until the late sixteenth century, the estate was visited annually by each of the three bursars. The bursars were young, however, of only two to five years standing as fellows of the college, and were consequently not only inexperienced in the problems of estate management, and probably not very interested,

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1 R. H. Hilton op. cit.
E. C. Lowry, 'The Administration of the Estates of Merton College in the Fourteenth Century with special reference to the Black Death and the problems of labour' (Oxford D. Phil. thesis 1936).

but were not in a position to influence policy decisions. Theirs was simply the task of visiting the manor and bringing back the rent money which had been collected by the bailiff. Such an arrangement was ordered to maintain an established system rather than to inaugurate change. In addition, the estate was visited twice a year by the steward whose duty it was to hold the Court Leet and the Court Baron. The fines taken for petty offences seldom covered his fee but he was often an experienced administrator as well as lawyer and his advice may have been considered of value to the college.

The only steward of Kibworth Harcourt who can be identified is Simon Pakeman, appointed in 1352.[1] Pakeman came from one of those 'recognised professional families which supplied the official land agent class of men both for the crown and its greater subjects'.[2] He was steward of the Honor of Leicester and also of Leicester Abbey, he represented the shire in the parliaments of 1333-34, 1346, 1347-48, 1364-65, 1366 and 1368, he was a Justice of the Peace and was frequently engaged on royal business, although, unlike most of his type, he never became wholly absorbed in royal affairs.[3] His duties under the Earl of Leicester would have brought him annually to Carlton Curlieu, Shangton, the Langtons, Smeeton Westerby, Stonton Wyville, Glooston and Cranoe, so he would seem an

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1 M.M. 6405.

2 Levi Fox. The Administration of the Honor of Leicester in the Fourteenth Century. (Leicester 1940) p.72.

3 Ibid, p.35.

obvious choice as steward of Merton's estate at Kibworth. Unfortunately, since we do not know the names of any other medieval stewards at Kibworth we can not know whether or not Merton made a practice of using the steward of the Honor of Leicester. (In the 1440's the college was using its own fellows but this was a period of exceptional reorganisation at Kibworth.[1]) Pakeman did more than preside over the court at Kibworth. In 1352 a new rental was begun in his presence but for some reason abandoned.[2] In 1371 a new rental was made 'by order of Simon Pakeman'.[3] It was under his presidency that newcomers were permitted to take up old customary land on the old terms of hereditary tenure whether by adoption or by simple transfer in court. On many other estates at this date customary land was let to new tenants on leasehold tenure with far-reaching consequences for their descendants.[4]

Other decision making persons were the auditors, of whom we know the names of only two, William Lynthwayte and Baron Derwentwater in 1442-43, and the Warden or Vice-Warden. The arrival of the Warden in the village generally coincided with a fund raising campaign for some College project. Under Henry of Abyndon (1422-38), for example, who built the tower and transepts and installed the bells at Merton College, the

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1 M.M. Bursar's rolls. 3763-3769, 6426b.

2 M.M. 6405.

3 M.M. 6407. 20.

4 B. Harvey. V.C.H. Oxon VI. p.205-215. Also 'The Leasing of the Abbot of Westminster's Demesnes in the Later Middle Ages'. Ec.H.R. 2nd series XXII (1969) p.17-27.
F. R. H. du Boulay. 'Who were farming the English Demesnes at the end of the Middle Ages'. Ec.H.R. 2nd series XVII (1965) p. 443-455.
G.A. Holmes. The Estates of the Higher Nobility in Fourteenth Century England (Cambridge 1957).

deadlock over rents was ended at Kibworth. Clerical reorganisation took place under the energetic Richard Fitzjames. Grain rents were introduced by another firm administrator, Thomas Bickley, and these were increased in value under Sir Henry Savile who built the Fellows Quad of the college in Oxford and the western part of the present street front.[1]

Thus unless driven by extraordinary circumstances, college estate policy was passive in character. It maintained the status quo which in the case of Kibworth would seem to have been in accordance with the attitudes and norms of the villagers themselves. When it could have expanded the demesne in the fourteenth century it did not; when it could have jacked up entry fines in the sixteenth century it did not. Was Merton exceptionally benevolent or simply acting according to commonally accepted norms? It is worth giving serious thought to the latter possibility.[2]

For an analysis of the villager's idea of what was just and proper, a rather careful analysis of family structure, of hereditary rights, and of tenement size is necessary, but much can be learnt from the simple narrative of events from 1270 to 1700.

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1 G. C. Brodrick. Memorials of Merton College (Oxford 1885) pp. 164, 166.

2 E. Stone, 'Profit and Loss Accounting at Norwich Cathedral Priory' T.R.H.S. 5th ser. vol. 12 (1968) p. 25-48.

Part I : 1270-1348

A. THE FORMATION OF THE ESTATE

A chronological description of the acquisition of the manor in 1270 or earlier by Walter of Merton, Bishop of Rochester and Founder of Merton College, has already been given in outline first by the Rector of Kibworth, the Rev. M. F. Osborne in 1870,[1] and again in greater detail by Prof. R. Hilton in 1949.[2] The negotiations surrounding the sale need not detain us here, therefore, and we can proceed directly to the main lines of policy worked out by the new owners in the closing years of the thirteenth century.

It seems to have been Walter de Merton's intention to add the manor of Kibworth Harcourt to the corpus of estates belonging to his college. In his second Charter, that of 1270, he mentions Kibworth among the several other estates he had assigned to the college and he makes a particular provision out of it in a memorandum at the end of the Charter. Moreover, both Richard, Earl of Warwick, and Richard son and heir of Saer de Harcourt assert the Founder's concession of the manor to the college; Warwick in his concession of the manor '*quod est de feodo nostro*' in 1272, and Harcourt in his composition made with the college in 1284.[1]

The Founder however, seems to have envisaged the college as little more than administrator and rent collector, for he

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1 M. F. Osborne 'The Manor of Kibworth Harcourt', *T.L.A.S. II (1870)* p.222-224.

2 R. Hilton 'Kibworth Harcourt: A Merton College Manor in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries', *T.L.A.S. XXIV (1949)* p.17-40.

divided the demesne and customary land between six of his relatives, leaving the college no land which it could exploit directly. An extent made in 1265 of Saer de Harcourt's land (which does not include the 10 virgates held of de Harcourt by the Apetoft family) gives the following picture of the estate:

> One messuage and 9 virgates of land in demesne worth £7 12s. 0d.
>
> 18½ virgates of land in villeinage, each virgate being worth 16/- per annum.
>
> Rents from free tenements and cottars amounting to 38s. 10d. per annum.
>
> Fixed rent from one virgate freehold worth 6s. 8d. per annum.
>
> One mill worth 26s. 8d. per annum in rents.
>
> A render of 4 capons at Christmas worth 6d.
>
> Total value of the manor, £26 0s. 8d. per annum.[1]

When this is compared with the rentals and inquisitions made in the late fourteenth century by the college,[2] it becomes clear that the entire estate had been shared out among the six relatives; Edith Tayllard, Christina de Worting, Agnes de Ewelle sisters of the Founder, and Peter de la Clyve, Alan de Portemuwe (Portsmouth) and Richard Olyver nephews of the Founder. (See table on following page.)

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1 P.R.O. Misc. Inquisitions No. 295.

2 M.M. 6366-6374.

Holder	Demesne	Bond	Free and cottage rents	Manorial buildings
Portsmouth	land in 3 fields	2½v.	1½v. + 1 rod + 2 placea	4 capons, share in dovecot and mill etc.,
Ewelle	2 virgates	2½v.	2 cots + 1 placea	6s. 8d. share in dovecot and fishponds,
Oliver Clyve	3 + x virgates	6½v.	5¼v. + 1 placea + 8 acres	13s. 4d., double share in dovecot etc.,
Worting	2 virgates	2½v.	4s. 1½d.	---
E. Tayllard	1 virgate	2½v.	1 cot + 2 placea + 55s. 0¾d.	---
R. Tayllard	---	2½v.		---
TOTALS:	8 + x virgates	19v.	5 cots, 6 placea, 8¼ acres, 1½v. 59s. 2¼d.	Assize rent of 6s. 8d., mill, dovecote, fishponds, Hall Close.

Table 1 : The Distribution of Rents among the Six Beneficiaries of Walter de Merton's Grant, 1270

Further inspection of the rentals shows that in several cases a tenant held of more than one of the Founder's legatees. Reference is often made to a Custodian and in the early days there were always two reeves, a practice sometimes repeated in years of stress during the fifteenth century. The role of the Warden and Fellows of Merton was to ensure the continued smooth running of the social and agricultural life of the village and to distribute its rents among the legatees. Their initial task was to decide which free and customary tenements should be grouped together to make up the required number of virgates for each of the legatees, then to discover the rents and services due from each of these groups. Hence the series of enquiries into lands, rents, services and the antecedents of each tenement. This was by no means an easy task and it comes as no surprise to find the college buying out the Founder's heirs.

In 1278 Peter de Clyve sold his share for 13 marks and the education of his two sons at Oxford, they being provided with a reasonable allowance of food and clothing, one cap and gown a year, two pairs of linen '<u>pannorum</u>', six pairs of socks and three pairs of shoes '<u>si tanto indigeant</u>'.[1] In the same year Richard Oliver sold his share for 12 years purchase at 66 marks.[2] Evidently a university education for a boy was estimated to cost about 26 marks at that time. In 1279 Robert and William de Ewelle, sons of Agnes de Ewelle, released their share to Merton, for what sum we are not told.[3] At about

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1 M.M. 2857

2 M.M. 2900. Ten years purchase was normal for this period.

3 M.M. 2902-2906, 2861.

the same time Alan de Portsmouth released his share[1] and at some date soon after 1283 Thomas son of Christina de Worting transferred his share at 10 years purchase for 60 marks.[2] The Tayllard lands seem to have formed part of the dower land of Agnes, widow of Saer de Harcourt, and they did not come into the hands of the college until her death in 1309.[3] In 1284 Robert and Richard de Withside gave up their interest in two messuages and two bovates for 100s.0d; this land had been granted to William Withside de Thorp in 1263 by Saer de Harcourt.[4]

It was then possible for the college to draw up a single rental for the whole manor such as the one numbered 6371 by Stevenson in his Calendar of the Merton MSS. It has been thought worthwhile to set out the whole rental here with certain additions. The type in capital letters refers to occupiers in roll 6371, the type in italics shows the subtenants as they are listed in shorter rolls belonging to this period. The number of the roll is in each case given in brackets. The numbering against each name is my own and is simply an aid to discovering the total number of landholders in the village.

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1 M.M. 2901.

2 M.M. 2907, 2909, 2860.

3 M.M. 2911, 2871, 2944, P.R.O. De Banco Rolls, 48 Hilary, II Ed. I. 1283m46d. Leyc.

4 M.M. 2867, 2893, 2895, 3017.

Table 2 : The Free and Customary Tenants of Kibworth Harcourt c.1300

Free Tenants

1.	WILLIAM DE PEKE	3 virgates	Rent 8/- p.a.
	(6370) Henry Parson held it for 10/-		
	(6369) William de Pecco held it for 10/-		
2.	WILLIAM DE REYNES	½ virgate	3 capons and certain services
	(6377c) W. de Reynes's tenants are:		
	48. Robert Swan		
	49. William Heyne		
	50. William atte crosse		
	51. Roger Ferour		
	52. William Osborne		
	53. Alice Heyne		
	54. Adam Sybile		
	9. John Sybile		
	55. Stephen and Roger de Pek, brothers		
	56. John de Reynes		
	57. Amabil Heyne		
3.	NICHOLAS POLLE	½ virgate	Rent 1/- p.a.
4.	ROBERT SHARON	1 virgate	Rent 1s.1d p.a.
5.	NICHOLAS FABER	1 virgate	Rent 6s.8d *(Apetoft land)*
6.	RICHARD SON OF ROGER	1 virgate	Rent 2/-
	(Had been Agnes de Harcourt's dower land, held by Roger son of Robert, reeve)		
7.	HENRY POLLE	½ virgate	Rent 1/-
8.	JOHN BOTON	½ virgate	Rent 6s.1½d
	JOHN BOTON	¼ virgate	Rent 9d

9.	JOHN SYBILE	¼ virgate Rent 9d	
	(6374 and 6373B)	*54. Adam de Kibworth (Sybile) held 5½ acres for 9d which were part of William de Langton's 11 acres.*	
	Adam's tenants:	*55. Roger Pek*	
		48. Robert Swan	
		58. Roger Hildesley	
		3. Nicholas Polle	
		53. Alice Heyn	
		50. William atte Crosse	
		59. Roger Polle	
		60. Matilda Bonde	
		61. Dom John Godwine	
	The remaining share of William de Langton's land was held by:		
		55. Richard de Pek (Roger?)	
		48. Robert Swan	
		53. Alice Heyn	
		58. Roger Hildesley	
		54. Adam Sibile	
9.	JOHN SYBILE	1 messuage Rent 3/-	
	(6367) John Sybile 'per aula' Henry Parson 1s.6d. + 1 lb pepper		
10.	WILLIAM BRON	1 messuage Rent 1d	
11.	ALICE & MATILDA STERRE, sisters, 1 plough share Rent 4d + ½(?)		

Customary Tenements			Rent	Works
12.	JOHN POLLE	½ virgate	6s.9d p.a.	3s.4d p.a.
13.	HUGH MAGISTER	½ virgate	6s.7½d	3s.4d
14.	WIDOW SCHOLATE	½ virgate	6s.1½d	3s.4d

15.	ROBERT son of REGINALD (SYBILE) alias ROBERT AD FONTEM	1 virgate	12s.3d	13s.4d
	(6370) Gives detailed list of the services he owed.			
9.	JOHN SYBILE	½ virgate	6s.6d	3s.4d
34.	BEATRICE SYBILE	½ virgate	6s.1½d	3s.4d
16.	WILLIAM son of ROBERT	½ virgate	6s.0½d	3s.4d
27.	WILLIAM son of the REEVE	1 virgate	11s.10½d	6s.8d
38.	JOHN son of the REEVE	½ virgate	7s.1½d	3s.4d
20.	RADULPH, REEVE	½ virgate	7s.2½d	3s.4d
17.	ROGER JOYE	½ virgate	6s.9d	3s.4d
18.	HUGH BONDE	½ virgate	6s.3½d	3s.4d
19.	JOHN GODYER	½ virgate	7s.0½d	3s.4d
32.	HIGH GODWINE	½ virgate	6s.4½d	3s.4d
22.	RADULPH CARTER	½ virgate	6s.10½d	3s.4d
23.	JOHN son of WALTER	½ virgate	6s.0d	(torn)
24.	ROGER WADE	½ virgate	6s.3d	3s.4d
25.	ALOT WYGEN	½ virgate	6s.1½d	3s.4d
26.	ROBERT MICHOL	½ virgate	5s.6d	3s.4d
28.	HUGH HARCOURT	½ virgate	5s.9d	3s.4d
29.	ROBERT WADE	½ virgate	6s.1½d	3s.4d
30.	ROBERT LE COUN'	½ virgate	6s.1d	3s.4d
31.	WILLIAM SISSOR	½ virgate	6s.3½d	3s.4d
33.	NICHOLAS son of JOHN	½ virgate	6s.3d	3s.4d
35.	EMMA GILBERT	½ virgate	6s.1½d	3s.4d
36.	HUGH SILVESTRE	½ virgate	7s.1d	3s.4d
37.	NICHOLAS THORN (AD SPINAM)	1 virgate	12s.6d	6s.8d
39.	NICHOLAS LE YONGE	½ virgate	5s.6½d	3s.4d
			TOTAL:	£9 3s.8¾d £6 10s.0d

Note: The rents of numbers 40, 37, 27, 20 and 19 were allocated to the Tayllard bequest.

Cottages			
40.	ROBERT TRITURATOR	1 toft	Rent 2/-
41.	ALICE GODWINE	1 toft	Rent 2/-
42.	ROBERT LE BROCHAR	1 toft	Rent 2/-
43.	ROBERT LE MEDICO	1 toft	Rent 2/-
44.	WILLIAM LE BROCHAR	1 toft	Rent 2/-
Cottages owing rent to the Tayllard bequest			
46.	ROGER MILLER	1 toft	Rent 2/-
47.	ALICE WASHERWOMAN	1 toft	Rent 2/-

Manor and Demesne

Was worth 16/; less 1s.9d for the dovecote (6381) paid to Walter de Evesham, Steward of Agnes de Harcourt.

The mill was worth 42/- less 4s.8½d paid to Walter de Evesham.

The 8 virgates of demesne were worth £9 12s. Od.

TOTAL: £12 10s. Od less 6s.5¼d to W. de Evesham.

Court Fines were worth between 25s. 7d and 35s.3d.

In addition to the messuages and arable described above there were ten virgates which did not come into the possession of the college until 17 Edward II (1323). According to M.M. 3094, this land had been granted to Laurence d'Apetoft in the first quarter of the thirteenth century by William de Harcourt, grandfather of Saer de Harcourt. It was later held at farm by William, priest of Ayleston, then by John del Haye, later by John le Fferun, and finally it was held in fee by Walter de

Merton. Another MS fills out the picture; it tells us that in 1295 William of Ingwardby and Aubrey his wife granted to two Merton fellows, Henry of Fodringaye and Robert Gerveys of Candevere six virgates and two acres of customary land and four marks worth of rent-paying land, and fortunately the names of the tenants are given.[1] Fodringaye and Candevere subsequently conveyed the land to the college in June 1301,[2] and Thomas de Abbetot released his interest in 1323-24.[3]

A college rental, (6374.2) and another (6372), headed Tenements of Laurence Apetoft give the names of the tenants, their holdings and rents. These correspond with the Ingwardby tenants and tenements. This makes it clear that the Ingwardby virgates are the same as the Apetoft virgates, and we are probably not far from the truth in equating Hubert de Told's two and a half carucates, reported in the Hundred Rolls for 1279,[4] with the Apetoft ten virgates. The land was reckoned at half a knight's fee circa 1300, worth £8 15s. 4d.

It should be noted that the Apetoft land was not a manor; it had no court of its own nor any share in the court, mill, dovecote, rights to chevage, etc., which pertained to the manor of Kibworth Harcourt. Apetoft and later Ingwardby followed by Fodringaye and Candevere were regularly amerced for not attending the manor court, and in 1286 the court discussed whether Laurence de Apetoft should plough and harvest for Merton College as he had done for Saer de Harcourt. In 1289

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1 M.M. 2935

2 M.M. 2868. Also G. C. Brodrick op. cit. p.175-6 and P.R.O. Fine Hilary 26 Ed. I.

3 M.M. 2919, 2959.

4 R.H. Hilton T.L.A.S. XXIV (1949) p.21

the tenants of Laurence de Apetoft swore that they had always been distrained and amerced by the court of Saer de Harcourt and that the heads of tithing and the ale-tasters of d'Apetoft owed suit to the court of Saer de Harcourt every three weeks.[1]

The Apetoft tenants and tenements can now be added to the list of tenants already given in order to give a complete picture of the village and its arable in the early fourteenth century, but not earlier than 1324.

Table 3 : The Apetoft Tenants c.1300-1320

Rent paying tenements (3 virgates, 2 bovates - elsewhere referred to as two half virgates - and 5 messuages) Note: these tenements paid ordinary customary rents and must have been in origin customary tenements, but by the fifteenth century they are classed as free tenants.

28.	HUGH HARCOURT	1 mes. + 1 virgate	Rent 13s.4d
	(6374b) subtenants	*48. Robert Swan*	
		5. Nicholas Smith	
		62. Constance Sybile	
		54. Adam de Kibworth (Sybile)	
		63. John Chapman	
		50. William atte Crosse	
		59. Roger Polle	

1 By the seventeenth century the most prominent characteristic of a manor was its court, which served to record copyhold transactions, by-laws and the customs of the manor. The function of the lord was to provide the administrative machinery and he could be, and often was, the representative of the corporate body of villagers themselves. What Stenton wrote of 1086 was even more true of 1600, namely, that the manor 'bore no necessary relation to the facts of agrarian organisation'. Therefore, where Kosminsky used the word manor to describe any complex of villein, free and demesne land greater than one carucate, I have substituted the word 'estate'.

	52. William Osborne	
	64. Robert Harcourt	
	65. John Mann	
	66. John Smith	
	58. Roger de Hildesley	
	67. Juliana Harcourt (wife of Hugh Harcourt)	
75. WILLIAM POLLE, capellanus	½ virgate	Rent 6s. 8d
49. WILLIAM HEYNE	1 mes. + 1 virgate	Rent 13s. 4d
76. JOHN SMITH	½ virgate	Rent 6s. 8d
77. ROBERT HOLKE	1 virgate	Rent 13s. 4d
(6374b) subtenants	*48. Robert Swan*	
	49. William Heyne	
	50. William atte Crosse	
	59. Roger Polle	
	3. Nicholas Polle	
	52. William Osborne	
	9. John Sybile	
	68. Nicholas Harcourt	
	58. Roger de Hildesley	

Customary Tenements (6 virgates, 2 acres, and 8 messuages)		
9. JOHN son of SYBILE	½ virgate	Rent 10/-
69. HENRY WYAT	½ v. + 1 acre	Rent 11/-
70. ROBERT BRON	1 v. + 1 acre	Rent 21/-
68. THOMAS HARCOURT	1 v.	Rent 20/-
71. WILLIAM MANN	½ v.	Rent 10/-
72. ROBERT ASTEL	½ v.	Rent 10/-

73. JOHN ROBYN	1 v.		Rent 20/-
74. HENRY WYTE	1 v.	*subtenants:*	Rent 20/-
		R. Wright ½ *v.*	
		N. Polle ½ *v.*	

We are now in a position to be able to look round the estate as the Warden saw it in the 1320's. The college owned the whole manor, which was comprised of the village and lands of Kibworth Harcourt, part of Gumley wood,[1] the view of frankpledge for Kibworth Harcourt, the court baron for Kibworth Harcourt and Gumley,[2] and the advowson of the free chapel[3] at Kibworth Harcourt. This amounted to one knight's fee.

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1 M.M. Court rolls, passim. and 6367.

2 M.M. 2945, 3015, 6373.
P.R.O. I.P.M. Nich. Gryffen. 16 April I Hen. VIII. 1510.

3 M.M. 2931, 2932, 2942, 2956, 2960, 2967, 2987, 3009, 3011, 3012, 2970, 2986.

B. TYPES OF TENURE

(i) Cottagers

The tithing list for 1280, (set out and analysed in Chapter 6) when compared with the court rolls for the same period and with the rentals of the early fourteenth century, shows beyond doubt that every family in the village held land - though not every adult member necessarily held land. There was no landless, wage dependent class at this period. There was also acute under-employment and over-crowding on tenements. Retired members and landless younger brothers dependent on the family holding either lived in the family dwelling or in a separate cottage.

Of cottages there were nine on the waste, standing on the site of the present Old House and paying a penny each in rent.[1] Their inhabitants are never named, but since we know the names of all the villagers, they must be included among the known village families and were in all probability widows or younger sons of mature years. In addition there were the seven demesne cottages occupied by similar persons: Robert the Medico or 'le Leche', two brokers, the miller, Robert Thresher, Alice Godwine and Alice the Washerwoman.[2]

(ii) Customary tenants

Land was scarce in Kibworth Harcourt and rents, if competitive, should have been high, along with the fines. They were not. Both rents and fines were at the standard

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1 M.M. 6372

2 M.M. 6367, 6368.

Leicestershire rate, rents being between 5s. 6d and 7s. 1d for a half yardland of 12 acres. This is marginally above average for the more westerly Midland counties, but Leicestershire labour services were less and when commuted were worth only 3s. 4d the half virgate. Altogether, a customary tenant paid 5½d to 6½d per acre which is what a free tenant paid for rented land. This does not suggest competitive rents but rather, rents fixed by local custom, which is what one would expect in a society which constantly sought to defend itself from competition.

(iii) Free tenants

The free tenants in the village fall into two ill-defined groups. There were those who were actually called free in the rentals, most of whom paid very nominal rents such as a shilling, a red rose or a pound of pepper. They held standard virgate or half virgate tenements which suggests that free tenants accepted the same estimates for the minimum family-size holding as did the unfree. They often held customary land in addition to free land and they married freely into customary families. Then there were those who held land which was not classified as customary but paid full customary rents. They are not classified as free on the rentals either, but they were free to alienate land from the family. Thus Hugh de Harcourt and Robert Holke had at some time in the recent past each alienated a virgate of Apetoft land owing full rents, and William de Reynes, Adam de Kibworth and William de Langton had alienated half virgates of virtually rent free land. What is more, they had alienated these lands permanently,

not only did their descendants never recover them, but the tenements themselves were permanently broken up in a manner which utterly destroyed their function as holdings capable of supporting a family. They were broken down into parcels seldom larger than an acre in size leased out by the college to other families in the village. For the most part they were used as dower land, but two men built up standard holdings. As can be seen in Appendix II Robert Swan pieced together about 28 acres out of five men's land, and Adam Sybile half a virgate out of three of these disintegrated tenements. Thus two standard tenements re-emerged very rapidly from the fragments, but the remaining parcels remained as 'small change' in the land market, serving as dower portions until the reorganisation in the fifteenth century. It is not clear why these families alienated their land. Holk had no other land and no heirs and he himself, at the time of the rental, was dead, so his land may be said to have escheated to the college. Reynes, Adam and Harcourt had other lands in the hands of other members of the family. One is tempted to conclude that their freedom lay in their freedom to alienate land from the family, and that they were practising this freedom.

It is interesting that the above lands passed to the college and that the new holders paid their rents directly to the college. This seems to reflect the recent Statute of Quia Emptores (1290) which laid down that in all unconditional grants of a fee the grantee should, by operation of the law, take by substitution, and hold of the grantor's lord, and

not of the grantor.[1] Here we see the college perhaps exercising its rights. The earliest reference to carte in the Kibworth court rolls can be dated to 1290-93 and reads 'Inquisiccio carta apud Kibworth per dand ' denegel''[2] which implies the existence of peasant charters testifying to land transactions, presumably these unusual transactions wherein land passed out of a family forever.

Thus the freeland in the village consisted of a small number of standard virgates and half virgates and a limited number of those single acre and half acre parcels of use primarily as dower land, which led Edmund King to describe the Peterborough peasant charters as a 'register of daughters and younger sons'.[3]

(iv) Demesne

Lastly, there was the college interest. Merton held eight virgates of demesne, and could add to this customary land which escheated to the lord. Grain prices were high in the towns but against this must be set the difficulty of transporting grain to high price areas. Rural overpopulation in Leicestershire must have created a local market in cheap grain, but against this must be set the cost of production. However, if the demesne was leased in small parcels to members of the village community not only would the local demand for cheap grain be met but production costs could be eliminated.

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1 A. W. B. Simpson, An Introduction to the History of the Land Law (O.U.P. 1961), p.51.

2 M.M. 6389.

3 E. King, Peterborough Abbey 1086-1310. A Study in the Land Market (Cambridge 1973), p.124.

We will never know the line of reasoning taken by Saer de Harcourt or the warden and fellows, but the upshot was the decision to lease out the demesne. An entry on the court roll for 1286 informs us that Richard de St John and Richard de Werblysden of Merton College agreed to demise to Robert Sybile, Robert ad Fontem (Sybile), Nicholas son of Robert and Robert his brother, Hugh Silvestre and Ralph Carter, all tenants of the warden, the mill and the demesne for £12 16s.0d reserving to the college the pasture of four oxen (already leased to the Parsons family), one placea (probably the aula also held by Parsons) and the profits of court, wardships, reliefs and heriots and the view of frankpledge.[1] The mill was worth £2 2s.0d so they were asking £10 19s.0d for the eight virgates and some curial buildings. This arrangement seems to have come to an end by the 1320's when the demesne was separated from its buildings. The Sybiles kept the latter until 1346 when they returned them to the college[2] who subsequently leased them for terms of years. (Richard Chapman, for example, held them from 1389-94 and then took a life lease.) The eight virgates of demesne continued to be let for 24/- a virgate until the reorganisation in the fifteenth century. The rental for 1340-71 shows it to have been held in quarter virgate parcels by regular village families. There were no buildings attached to these demesne quarter virgates and therefore no heavy structural repairs to set against the annual revenue of £9 12s.0d.

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1 M.M. 6377.

2 M.M. 2926, 2943, 2923, 2925.

At 9d the acre the college was charging more than the normal rent on cultivated land. It also charged 6s. 8d for commuted services per customary virgate which yielded an annual revenue of £8 10s. 0d. The demesne alone thus yielded £18 2s. 0d. Had the college kept the demesne in hand the receipts from grain and wool in 1300 would have been in the region of £30 before the deduction of production, and transport costs.

Fines paid in court for petty offences were negligible but fines paid for land transfers could amount to significant sums. Medieval accounts usually include entry fines under court revenue which can lead the unwary into the mistaken belief that courts were a profitable source of income. If the holder of a court held no land he would receive no entry fines and his revenue from 6d fines for minor offences would be unlikely to cover his steward's expenses. I would, therefore, prefer to include entry fines under rents.[1] The evidence for a policy on entry fines is insufficient. In the period 1280-1298, 36 land transfers were made in the manorial court, and only 14 entry fines were demanded; these range from 1/- on a messuage to 13s.4d on half a virgate, but the most frequent charge was 6s. 8d on half a virgate. It seems that an entry fine was only charged when land passed within the family from one generation to the next. It was not charged on transactions inter vivos. This was presumably because transfers of customary lands during the lifetime of the holder could not

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1 A. N. May, 'An Index of Thirteenth Century Peasant Impoverishment? Manor Court Fines'. Ec. H. R. 2nd series XXVI (1973) 390-391. 'Fines for land, marriage and tithingpenny were far more valuable than jurisdictional fines'.

be more than leases. Although this is an important point, since it affects our understanding of the peasant land market, it is a difficult one to prove conclusively since there are so many instances when the court scribe merely noted that A took land without stating from whom. Between 1320-47, 37 land transfers were dealt with and 15 entry fines taken. The level of fine was slightly higher than in the previous century. One shilling was still charged on a cottage and 20/- on a virgate, but four marks were charged on a half virgate of demesne together with a customary virgate, and five marks were charged to John Heyne and John Wade for unspecified amounts of demesne land.[1]

1 M.M. 6394.

Part II : The Plagues of 1349-1400 and their after-effects

A. THE TURNOVER OF TENANTS

In 1348 old Adam Sybile died and young Robert Polle and possibly Robert Swan, and Robert Heyne. Nine villagers took up land, two others were compelled to take land, and Robert Chorch journeyed to Oxford to petition to be allowed to keep his land which had been seized for some misdemeanour in the previous year. The impression is one of a normal and healthy interest in land.

However, in the later part of 1349, 44 landholders in the village died.[1] Only 4½ bond virgates and 2½ demesne virgates were not affected. In spite of the nightmare conditions the court met as usual that year, deaths were recorded, heirs found, custodians appointed for the land of minors, and, as the plague continued to take its toll, the process was repeated in the following year.

How quickly were the vacant tenements filled? The roll for 1349 concludes 'adhuc remanet in manu domini unus virgatus de Ch. Harcourt'. Two fifths of the tenements were taken by widows and heirs, many of the latter being minors; one fifth was taken by other villagers voluntarily, one fifth by other villagers under compulsion and, in spite of the above remark, one fifth remained in the lord's hand. Fines were imposed for carrying off timber from empty messuages and for allowing buildings to fall into decay.

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1 M.M. 6405. 23 Ed III.

It seems that there were more deaths in 1354, and in 1357 an enquiry was made into how much land certain of the tenants held and whether or not certain other tenants were capable of cultivating their demesne land and paying the full rents. Three were compelled to take demesne land.[1] In 1356 occurs the first reference to a 'nativus' fleeing the manor and his relatives being ordered to fetch him back. Plague struck the village again in 1361; eleven died, involving 10 messuages and 6½ virgates, some of which remained untenanted until 1365. Five tenements in Hoglane became permanently empty and it was difficult to fill six others. In 1363-64 rent arrears rose to £3 10s. 3d, and £10 13s. 6d worth were pardoned. There are references to 'pestilence' in 1376 and the death rate for the 1370's and 1390's remained higher than usual.

The practice of forcing tenants to take land while at the same time the reeve had custody of minor's lands must have made it difficult to maintain the previous extent and standard of cultivation. Phrases such as 'iacet frysca et tenementa wasta', 'domus ruinosa' or 'totaliter in decasu' became not infrequent.

The rate of turnover of tenants increased. In the period 1352-72, 98 land cases were dealt with in the manorial court, compared with 36 in the period 1280-98. Examination of rental 6372 which ran from about 1340 to 1371 confirms this statistical impression. Not every transfer was entered on the rental but at intervals it was brought up to date. It is not difficult to supply the intermediate transfers from the court rolls. A couple of examples will suffice: the names underlined are

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1 M.M. 6405 31 Ed III.

those which occur in the rental, the remainder are taken from the court rolls.

1. 1 virgate at 12s. 3d + 6s. 8d for works.
   Isabella Polle, died 1349 ... son, William Polle, died 1363 ... widow Margaret, who subsequently married Robert Gron. Gron refused to pay the entry fine demanded.... 1365 Nicholas Polle ... William Sybile took it without licence, it was therefore seized and given to the next of kin of William Polle, namely Robert Smyth.... 1376 John son of John Carter.... 1393 widow Margaret Carter.... 1397 John Carter.

2. ½ virgate at 6s. 1½d.
   Hugh Man, died before 1358.... 1357 William Godyer.... 1358 John Heyne, died 1361 ... widow Alice ... 1362 John Carter.

Incidentally the Carters were an old village family but one of the few to take advantage of conditions in the late fourteenth century to accumulate land.

This rapid turnover of tenants is an important symptom of change in the personnel of the village and in attitudes towards land and inheritance. It is therefore analysed in some detail in Chapter Seven but naturally it had repercussions in other spheres as well, especially in the sphere of employment and migration and in the decay and abandonment of both buildings and land.

The comparison made in Chapter Six between the tithing list of 1280 and the poll tax list of 1378 reveals a marked

drop in household size as younger sons left home to work in areas where labour had become scarce, or to take up land where lords of vacant tenements were prepared to let on easy terms.

B. MIGRATION FROM THE VILLAGE

The first men noted as leaving in 1356 were Roger and John Man, who went to the nearby village of Shangton, and John, son of Robert Godyer, who went to Wistow, John Couper who went to Carlton, and William Wylmot, who ventured further afield and took up residence with John Pocking at Leicester. According to rental 6372, John Man held half a virgate of bondland, and various other members of the Man family also held land including free tenements. Robert Godyer held a half-virgate of bondland and he took another half-virgate in 1357. Other members of his family also held land. Likewise, Couper and Wylmot left land. The trickle of departures continued and were duly noted in the court rolls together with the whereabouts of the absentees until 1407 when the four chief pledgers refused to present '_nativi_' living away from the manor. Thereafter the list ceased until 1440 when, for one year only, the list of familiar names appeared once again. In that year also the court rolls were searched to prove the villein status of the Man, Polle and Sander families.

Whither did they go and why? The Mans moved from village to village within a short radius of Kibworth Harcourt. In 1356 they were in Shangton, in 1359 in Kibworth Beauchamp, in 1363 in Sadington, in 1365 in Stonton (Wyville), in 1366

back in Shangton, in 1374 in Shenesby and Sadington, in 1379 in Shenesby, in 1380 John Man 'operarius' was taxed at Fleckney,[1] in 1388 they were in Nosely or Mosely, in 1391 in Kibworth Beauchamp, in 1408 in Kibworth Beauchamp and Gildmorton, in 1440 in Coventry and by 1524 three Mans were worth £18 in goods in a village in Gartree Hundred whose name is unfortunately illegible.[2] Many went to Coventry; Robert Godyer and John Heyne in 1363, Roger Sherman, the son of Robert Godyer in 1365. The latter lived with Arthur the Wiredrawer. William Chapman went in 1408 to Melbourne Grange near Coventry. Others merely went to Nether Kibworth as Kibworth Beauchamp was commonly called. A branch of the Mans lived there, also some of the Godyers and the Carters. John Harry, one time reeve of Harcourt went there for a time before moving to John Harrington's house at Grantham. A branch of the Polles lived at Westerby. William Bond went to Fleckney in 1363, Robert atte Crosse to Shinston in 1375, Robert Heyne to Wistow in 1388, Hugh Godwyn to Waltham on the Wold in 1391 and to Ilston in 1408 and William Herry to Turlangton in 1430.

As can be seen at a glance, most migrants went to neighbouring small villages. Unless one were to make a careful survey of the conditions and particularly the estate policy of these villages it is useless to speculate upon the motives which induced men to give up land in their own village and venture upon the uncertainties of fortune.

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1 P.R.O. E.179. 133/29.

2 P.R.O. E.179. 133/109.

However, some went to towns, and we are fortunate in being able to follow the career of one family in particular. The Browns were an old family in the village, holding parcels of free and customary land. (As will be described in Chapter Four, their freehold eventually became college leasehold and was known as Brownsplace.) In 1381 Adam Brown is described in the tax returns as a draper. In 1397-98 he granted ~~the~~ a freehold tenement to four men of Market Harborough and in 1404-05 these men granted it back to Adam Brown with remainder to his son, William and William's wife Agnes, the daughter of Richard Dykenhall of Coventry. In 1434 William Brown's son, another Adam granted the land to William Wymondeswold of Coventry and Thomas Brown of Kibworth, in which deed he described his father as 'William Brown of Coventry and Kibworth'. The witnesses to this grant were John Michell, Mayor of Coventry (1434-35) mercer, Robert Southern and William Donnington, bailiffs (W. Donnington was Recorder for Coventry 1434-48 and held land in 1407 in Cossington and Willoughby Waterless in Leicestershire), Richard Wymondeswold and Roger Okburn (of Smithfield St., Coventry), together with four men of Kibworth. In 1437 Wymeswold and Brown returned the land to Adam Brown, chaplain, and in 1437 Adam granted the land to Master John Arundel, Rector of Kibworth.[1] This last transfer may have followed on an action taken by William Repington, parson of the parish church of Kibworth against Thomas Brown of Kibworth Beauchamp for 100/- in 1432.[2] According to

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1 M.M. 2929, 2934, 2939, 2941, 3000, 3010.

2 G. F. Farnham, Leicester Medieval Village Notes. 6 vols. (Leics. 1929-33) Vol. V, p.252.

Emden, John Arundell was Rector of Kibworth in 1436 and was re-admitted in 1447. In 1459 he became Bishop of Chichester and physician to Henry Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick. He died, a large scale pluralist, in October 1477. It seems probable that he left this insignificant piece of land in Kibworth Harcourt to his old college. At any rate from 1477 onwards Brownsplace became part of a block of leasehold land held by the college and leased by indenture rather than by copyhold. This followed naturally enough since this had been freehold not customary land.

No more is heard of the Browns in Kibworth Harcourt after 1484 but their activities in Coventry can be followed. There William and John Brown were both prominent men; both were councillors in 1424 and John was also a collector. In 1435 William Brown, Draper, contributed as much as 6s. 8d towards the loan of 500 marks to the king; in 1437 he was bailiff, probably of Erle St.; in 1439 he and John Brown were Electors of the city officials; in 1444 William was a member of the Mayor's council and one of the 'wurthy men' who lent the Earl of Warwick 100 marks. In 1449-50, Thomas Brown, weaver, could 'contribute cloth towards the needs of the army' and in 1451 Thomas Brown, lynen draper, was one of the 89 worthy men called upon to consider the fortifications of the town, to consult upon a new charter and to raise 100 marks for Queen Margaret. In the late 1470's it is Nicholas Brown who comes to the fore as Warden of the City in 1478 and member of the Council. In 1481 he agreed to provide an extra 40 soldiers for the king. He was Elector in 1483 and

1484.. In 1485 the Recorder's Office became vacant and was offered to John Brown if Thomas Kebell did not accept it. In an extant letter, John Brown of London wrote to say that he knew nobody in Coventry save Robert Oulay the Mayor and Mr. Symonds who had been Mayor in 1477.[1] Thomas Kebell was also a Londoner, he was a sergeant at law and his family held land in the Kibworth area. Nothing more is heard of the Browns in Coventry after 1497 and the scene changes to London. There, William Brown, mercer, merchant of the Staple of Calais and son of John Brown, knight, Alderman of the City of London, married a wealthy heiress, Katherine, daughter of Edmund and Juliana Shaa, knight.[2] We need not follow the Brown fortunes further except to note that they had business connections with the Brudenells and the Verneys and an interest in an estate at Rufford in Oxfordshire and elsewhere.[3]

It is unfortunate that Brown is such a common name, but the fact that they remained in the cloth trade and that we know with certainty that the Kibworth Browns moved to Coventry, there to move in the upper echelons of the town's oligarchy, and that the Coventry Browns moved to London at the same time as a Brown appears on the London merchant scene, makes the continuity more than a possibility. The family seem to have had a knack of knowing when to abandon a sinking ship; they left Kibworth in the lean and chequered days of the early fifteenth century for Coventry in the heyday of prosperity,

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1 The Coventry Leet Book 1420-1555, ed. M. Dormer-Harris, E.E.T.S. Nos. 134, 135, 138, 146.

2 P.R.O. I.P.M. C series II, Vol. 13, 143, 985.

3 P.R.O. I.P.M. C series II, Vol. 18 (70).

and they left Coventry in the lean days of the 1480's. It was not clogs to clogs in three generations for this family.

To balance the loss of its native families, Kibworth Harcourt received a flow of outsiders coming into the manor. In 1358 the court rolls mention William de Wistow and William de Clipston. Men came from Langton, Sadington, Burton, Noseley, Fleckney and Turlangton. Others came from further afield, Leicester, Wigston, Walton and Medbourne in Leicestershire, Rothwell, Daventry and Maydenwell in Northamptonshire. Most of them were amerced for one reason or another, but few took land. However, new men whose names were not connected with places were taking land.

Curiously enough, this period of greatest social and geographical mobility within the village, between 1400 and 1440, was also characterised by vigorous collective action vis à vis the lord. The leading figures in these moves were all outsiders demanding a reduction of rents, and the abandonment of villein tenure and villein liabilities such as the payment of merchet and chevage. Their strategy of campaign was to surrender, in 1401, eleven tenements involving nine messuages, two cottages, and eleven virgates.[1] This land remained in the lord's hand for years, yielding no rent, though in practice the previous holders continued to cultivate them. The situation was not resolved until 1427 when the college finally agreed to reduce the rent on bond virgates by 3s. 4d

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1 M.M. 6411.

and on demesne virgates by 6s. Od.[1] Alongside this campaign against rents was launched an attack on villein tenure. In 1407 the homage refused to present the names of 'nativi' who had left the manor, and kinsmen refused to take any steps to bring back those who had fled.[2] Outsiders who had taken up land objected to holding in bondagio and insisted that the tenure be changed to ad voluntatem domini. Only the 'old' families continued to be called nativi in the court rolls. In 1439 the Warden visited the manor and a court of recognitions was held. It was agreed that all holdings should in future be held 'at the will of the lord according to the custom of the manor'; and the term nativus was dropped forever.

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1 M.M. 6421.8.

2 M.M. 6415.2.

C. TENANCIES OF HOUSES AND LANDS

The sense of instability created by the constant coming and going of faces old and new was even more apparent in the fields and along the village street. References accumulate to tenements left 'ruinosa et terra inculta' or deteriorated with time, of entry fines being waived 'propter debilitatem tenementi', of houses and barns in decay or fallen to the ground. From 1429 onwards the obligation of repair and maintenance was put upon the tenant, though in some cases the rent was remitted for one or more years in order to facilitate repairs to decayed buildings. Moreover, a series of building accounts which have survived among the court rolls, shows us that in fact the college provided the heavy timber for repairs, representing in effect about one third of the costs. At the same time the court rolls record a tightening up on the felling of ash and elm without permission for building purposes. From 1432 onwards the village was frequently amerced for not repairing its fold, bakehouse, pavements, ditches, boundary stones and hedges. At the same time we find damages being charged for the first time on outgoing tenants, of land or chattels being seized until repairs have been completed and a commission called the 'Supervizores terrae et tenementorum' making an annual presentment of decayed land or buildings.

It seems that by the end of the third decade the college had worked out a policy concerning buildings. It was not in any way an unusual policy; by the fifteenth century most landowners provided heavy timber but made the lessee responsible

for damages through neglect.[1] However, the arrival at a definite policy was significant. In the period 1400-30 the engrossing of holdings was slowly taking place and as two or three half virgates came into the hands of one tenant so their messuages became superfluous and were converted into barns or allowed to decay. For a time the college tried to insist that these messuages should be rebuilt but without success. By 1430 it had accepted the fact that some messuages had gone forever with a corresponding drop in rents. Other messuages, separated from their land became cottages. Similarly, 'uncultivated' land may have meant land put down to pasture. Seen in this light the impression of decay is to some degree moderated, for a new economic structure was being slowly erected on the ruins of the old; it was resisted at first, but by 1430 it had come to be accepted.

So it would seem from one aspect; let us look at it from another. In 1422 a newcomer, John Burbage by name, '<u>recessit extra hoc dominio</u>' abandoning a messuage and two half virgates worth 22s. Od in rent. In 1425 Thomas Smyth, from a family of long standing in the village, abandoned his messuage and garden worth 4s. Od. In 1427 John Warde abandoned two messuages, a cottage, two half virgates of bondland and one half virgate of demesne land worth in all 41s. 11½d. In 1432 Philip Barre abandoned a messuage and half virgate and John Aunger abandoned a cottage worth 3s. 6d. The history of the Aunger family is illuminating. In 1414 Angerus Skeppar (basket maker ?) was presented for having a dilapidated house.

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1 F.R.H. du Boulay and Harvey <u>op. cit. supra</u> p.25.

In 1423 he died leaving a cottage worth 2s. Od in the hands of the lord together with a russet cloth worth 8d by way of heriot. In 1428 John Aunger, probably his son, took a cottage for 3s. 6d which John Warde had lately abandoned. In 1430 he felled an ash without licence wherewith to repair the end of his house and in the following year the steward ruled that he should keep the tree and carry out the repairs. However, in 1432 he abandoned the manor taking all his goods with him. But William Aunger immediately took over the holding and added a quarter virgate of demesne to it that same year. In 1433 William took a messuage and half virgate at 8s. 4d from Robert Fleckney, in 1437 he took another messuage and half virgate at 8s. 4d from John Saunders and in 1484 John Aunger held a messuage, a toft and one virgate for 13s. Od. By 1500 John Scomfet held John Aunger's tenement, by 1527 it had passed to Nicholas Mugyr. Shortly afterwards Robert Oswin took it and it remained in the Oswin family until about 1700 - it appears as tenement 15 on the 1635 map. Here is a clear example of a family, after a rough start, doing well, of two half virgate tenements becoming permanently united at a reduced rent and with the reduction of one messuage to the condition of a toft. It also illustrates the reshuffle of tenants that took place in the early sixteenth century and the long period of continuous tenure by one family so typical of the late sixteenth and the whole of the seventeenth century.

What caused men to abandon land during the period 1422-37 is not clear, but it leaves the impression of a fair amount of opportunity for speculation in land holding whether on a

small scale or a relatively ambitious one, and of uncertain conditions.

D. THE LORD'S REVENUE AND ESTATE POLICY

The account rolls for the manor tell much the same story of economic dislocation in late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries until a new equilibrium was attained in the 1430's.

In 1359 fixed rents from the customary and Apetoft virgates, the demesne virgates and the mill amounted to £39 3s. 9½d. Forinsec expenses, the steward's fees and repairs totalled approximately £2 18s. Od p.a. and income from sales and court fines totalled approximately £2 Os. Od p.a.[1] Thus variable income and variable expenditure more or less cancelled each other out. By 1360 not all the tenements were let each year so the full £39 estimated income was seldom collected. A careful note was made of arrears and few of the reeves who held office in the years before the peasant's Revolt managed to relinquish their office free of debt. Thus:

Reeve	Left office	Arrears	
J. Thorpe	1349	£8 3s. 7¾d	Outstanding until 1381
R. Bron	1355	13s. 4d	Remitted 1368-70.
R. Bron,) R. Polle) J. Carter)	1355-56	£1 12s. 7¾d	Outstanding until 1381.
R. Carter	1360	£3 11s. 3½d	Outstanding until 1365
J. Joye	1364	£23 11s. 1d	£10 17s. 6d pardoned in 1364. £12 13s. 7d outstanding until 1381.
R. Carter	1365-66	17s. 10½d	Outstanding until 1389.
R. Langton) J. Heyne)	1369	£2 18s. 4¾d	Outstanding until 1381.
N. Gilbert	1372	£2 5s. 4d	Paid off 13s. 4d in 1378-79. Remainder outstanding until 1381.

Table 4 : Reeve's Arrears 1349-1389

1 M.M. 6251.

The cause of the arrears was unpaid rents and entry fines. If, as will later be argued, land pertained to a family rather than to one individual within that family, it followed that that family continued to owe rent even if no particular member of it had accepted responsibility for it in court. This seems to be the reason why reeves were held liable for arrears of rent and entry fines on tenements which do not appear to have been occupied. By the same token, heirs could be ordered to take up their family land. Not until 1381 was it accepted that no rent could be charged against vacant holdings, by which date there was literally no natural heir to many traditional family holdings, the entire family having become extinct.

For the late fourteenth-century the net income averaged out at about £36 p.a. In plague years such as 1361-63 and 1395 it fell to £20 and £27 respectively. Major repairs to the mill brought it down in 1362 and 1385-6. Unusually high court fines in 1367 raised it to £43.

For the first half of the fifteenth century income was erratic. In 1423 there was a marked drop. This was due to the decision to cut the level of rents by 3s. 4d per bond virgate and 6s. Od per demesne virgate. So much land was still in the lord's hand that receipts in cash fell to around £15 - £20 during the thirties, the remainder was accounted for in a long and detailed list of allocations at the end of each account roll. The situation seemed to recover after 1440 and in 1450 a new system of accounting was introduced.

Many questions have to remain unanswered for this period of change. For example, how was land in the lord's hand farmed? The acreage was considerable, villagers could no longer be forced to cultivate it, no mention is made in the account rolls of wages for landless labourers. From 1417 onwards the reeve received 40s. 0d a year '<u>pro laboribus suis</u>' as against 6s. 8d at an earlier date, so it is possible he was employing some labour. The pasture appurtenant to untenanted virgates was leased out annually for small sums: in 1425 for example 8¼ virgates yielded 41s. 6d. In 1441-42, the reeve, Robert Polle was referred to as the '<u>firmarius</u>' in the account rolls, in the 1460's there are indications that John Clerke may have been called 'firmarius', but these may both be scribal misnomers. If the manor had really been farmed out we should expect the account rolls to have dwindled to a mere note of receipt for £26 annually. Instead, though shorter and simplified, they continue to record annual visits by each of the three bursars, accounts for repairs and other disbursements. It is possible also that the clerke misunderstood the altered social position of the reeve. From 1387 onwards it had become the norm for reeve to hold office for very long periods, possibly for life. From the 1440's onwards he held the largest single holding on the manor, 3½ virgates together with certain manorial buildings for 54s. 0d p.a. held by indenture. He held his own family land as well and enjoyed distinct economic advantages over his erstwhile peers.

It is not entirely clear when this indentured holding first came into being. In 1439, 3 bond virgates and ¾ virgate

of demesne remained in the lord's hand and the rent on the land was reduced to give a total of 22s. 6d. Clearly this was not an economic rent. In 1441-42 a barn was built on the site of a cottage on the reeve's land which cost the college £3 4s. Od.[1] (In 1447-48 the building of Brown's Place and other college property cost £23 10s. 2½d.) In 1439 William Peek held the Hallclose for 12s. Od and four messuages, 3½ virgates for 30s. 6d. In 1451 John Clerke replaced Peek as reeve. In 1477 John Clerke took a 30-year indenture on the Hallyard and other tenements amounting to 4 messuages, 3 virgates and Brownsplace for 54s. Od p.a.[2] This block of three virgates made up of both bondland and demesne land can be looked upon as symbolic of the change which had taken place over the previous forty years and of its recognition and endorsement by the college. Gone was the whole theory of bondland and demesne land, just as in the same year had been swept aside the notion of tenure by services. Tenure, until 1929, was to be either by copyhold or by leasehold - as the land held by indenture for a term of years came to be called.

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1 M.M. 6321.

2 M.M. 6340, 3355.

Part III : The period 1440-1550

A. SOURCES

With the court of Recognitions in 1439 the practice of recording every land transfer came to an end. The steward continued to hold a court at least once a year, but the matters dealt with were restricted to petty offences within the jurisdiction of the Court Leet, village by-laws and the upkeep and repair of buildings. The court did not act as a land register again until 1594 after a gap of 144 years.

This weakness in the documentary evidence for peasant land transfers is fairly widespread in England for this period and raises several questions, one of which would be, why when tenure by copy of court roll is thought to have been establishing itself as a form of tenure recognised by the legal profession, do the court rolls cease to record land transfers? The earliest official reference to the word 'copy' occurs on the 1527 rental which classified those who did not hold freely, as holding 'ad voluntatem domini per copiam'. But there is no corresponding record in the court rolls of which the tenants could hold a copy. The earliest actual copy is for Robert Standon, dated 4-5 Philip and Mary.[1]

In the absence of court rolls dealing with land transfers, the only sources of information on this point are the rentals. Four survive: one for 1484 which has been interlined and kept up to date; one dated by internal evidence to 1500 which shows little sign of having been used as a working document;

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1. Leics. Museum, 46' 28/166.

one for 1527 which actually describes each tenement and has been much interlined, but which is unfortunately written in an almost illegible hand and has been badly damaged; and the fourth, in book form like the third, which has had the top torn off and is therefore incomplete but can be dated to the mid-sixteenth century.[1] From these rentals several observations can be made. In the first place the format of the rental has been changed; the land is no longer divided into free, customary and demesne, instead there are only two categories, those held 'at the will of the lord' and those held freely. There is no leasehold, a category which was becoming increasingly common on other estates. The nearest we get to leasehold in this period is the bailiff's three virgates held by indenture. In 1484 the old half-virgate units are still adhered to, for example, William Polle is recorded as holding half a virgate for 6s. 8d and another half-virgate for 6s. 8d. By 1527 the separate identity of the old units has been dropped and tenants are described as holding one virgate, or one and a half and so on.

B. TENANT's HOLDINGS

Secondly, the formation of larger holdings was accompanied by a tendency for messuages to become separated from their arable and to become cottages and tofts. Thus a messuage, a toft and a virgate held by Edward Goodman in 1484 had become a messuage held by R. Jay in 1500 and

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1 M.M. 1373, 6447b, 6375, 6443.

a toft and virgate held by R. Pyfford. Similarly, a toft and half a virgate held by Matilda Heyn in 1484 had been divided between William Polle and T. Fysh by 1500. Thus as the number of large holdings increased so too did the number of cottages and tofts. Many of these cottagers were artisans, others may have been dependant relatives, yet others wage labourers of the traditional sort, the village shepherd and swineherd. One must not too readily assume a process of stratification into yeomen and wage labourers, one could equally well conclude that the 'family' was spilling over into more houses.

Thirdly, the number of freemen had increased. The freemen of the period 1300-1340 held between them 9-10 virgates including the Apetoft land. The freemen of the 1440-1550 period held between them 13½-15 virgates. Therefore, the number of free virgates had risen by from 4½ to 6 virgates. During the interval 1340-1440 the total number of demesne and customary virgates had only dropped by 2½ virgates, from 31 to 29½. The difference may have become free land but it is not possible to trace how this happened. In 1340 the Polles held two half virgates freely and by 1484 this had risen to two full virgates, others may also have been able to assimilate their bondland into their freeland. One can raise an eyebrow when one reads that T. Hacket, miller, and T. Good were paying rents like 14s. 2d and 15s. Od for free land in 1484, but one cannot do more than entertain suspicions.

C. SUB-TENANCIES AND MORTGAGES

The mention of Thomas Hacket introduces another query to which there is as yet no clear answer. The turnover of names on the rentals from 1440 to 1484 and beyond is extremely high, and yet many of the names which appear on the 1484 rental and are not present on that for 1500 reappear on the 1527 rental. For example Moor held land in 1484, by 1500 it was held by Parsons and Goode, but by 1527 it was held by Moor again. Similarly, Parker, to Swan and Saunder and back to Parker; Marshall to Fysh and Jay and back to Marshall. Hacket is another name which only appears on the 1500 rental, this was William, but at Saddington Thomas Hacket was worth £8 in goods in 1524, Robert Hacket was worth £20 at Turlangton, and at Galby John Hacket was worth £5.[1] In 1505 Thomas took over three virgates from the Saunders in Kibworth Harcourt. The presence of a member of a wealthy family such as the Hackets on the 1500 rental leads one to suspect a long lease which is really a mortgage. It had always been the custom to record the occupier on the rental rather than the owner. Thus during the fourteenth century a man would be recorded as taking up his father's virgate, he would be recorded at intervals as transferring this virgate to a succession of individuals, and at his death he would be recorded as holding one virgate which passed to his wife. At no point would he be recorded as taking any other land. Clearly, he has been leasing his virgate to a succession of occupiers. A rental made while the land was out of his hand would record

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1 P.R.O. E.179. 133/100 and 179. 133/115.

the name of whoever paid the rent, a court of recognitions would be more likely to record the actual owner. It would not be surprising, therefore, to find the names of mortgagees on the 1500 rental. The whole question of debt in a village community is an immensely important one, but about which it is singularly difficult to form a coherent picture. The early court rolls contain many references to small sums claimed by one villager from another. The seventeenth century family papers contain copies of mortgage bonds, and the probate inventories list credits and debts and occasionally refer to the laying out of money at interest. From these sources one can gain an impression that lending and borrowing formed an important element in village life at all levels. Further than this one cannot go. If, however, some of the names on rentals are those of mortgagees, then the turnover of names from one rental to the next cannot be accepted as a very reliable indicator of peasant mobility.

Another oblique indicator to the leasing or mortgaging of customary land and another caution against the name counting technique as a method of estimating peasant mobility, is the continued presence in the village of persons who held land for a short period only and did not pass it to heirs.[1] Thus John Caunden held land from 1401-1439 but continued in the village until 1458 at least. Richard Wynlove is mentioned in

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1 Dr. R. Faith, 'The Peasant Land-Market in Berkshire during the Later Middle Ages'. (Leics. Ph.D. thesis 1962). Also A. Jones, 'Land and People in Leighton Buzzard in the later Fifteenth Century'. Ec.H.R. XXV 2nd series (1972) p.18-27.

1473 but held land as far back as 1412-43. John Pyfford is first mentioned in 1458 but did not hold land until 1484-1500. John Russell is referred to in 1497 though he held land in 1422-25.

D. THE LANDLORD'S REVENUE AND ESTATE POLICY

From the landlord's point of view the period 1440-1500 was one of comparative stability in rents and farms. As on other estates, Merton showed a new interest in the machinery of administration. The layout of the account rolls was altered slightly, and a new rental prepared. The warden visited the manor in 1450 and the question of rent collection was thoroughly gone into, together with the building costs of Brownsplace[1] and the advowson of the chapel.[2] Thereafter the names of the bursars who visited the manor and collected any part of the rents are recorded in the account rolls and the name of any manorial official who had the handling of money. The name of the vice-warden or his representative is always given.

Prices began to climb after 1490 and before 1520 many great establishments were seeking to close the gap between rising expenditure and fixed income by raising entry fines. The Percys asked one year's rent on leasehold and 1½ year's rent on copyhold, and they asked for it rather frequently. Other lords demanded steeper fines at longer intervals.[3] Merton

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1 M.M. 6324, 6326, 6465.

2 M.M. 2897, 3009.

3 Bean, op. cit. p.43ff.

seldom exacted a fine and when it did it was at the fifteenth century level. At a time when 'certain landlords were seizing any opportunity to abolish customary terms of tenure and to let out lands on short or terminable leases ...' Merton was not even recording land transfers, evidently like the crown and the monasteries it was an 'unenterprising rentier' and a 'conservative influence'.[1] The tenants of Kibworth were fortunate indeed, for agricultural prices were soaring. Not until the 1571 Statute[2] did the college introduce grain rents on new leases and thereby bring the annual receipts from the manor back to its pre-plague level of around £40, though of course at vastly depreciated value.

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1 R.H. Hilton V.C.H. Leics. II p.195

2 18 Eliz. cap. VI.

Part IV : The period 1550-1700

A. SOURCES

The estate documents for the late sixteenth century are very meagre. They consist of two incomplete rentals; one already mentioned for the 1550's and one for the close of the century. One complete rental survives for 1651, in addition to a few court rolls for the period 1594 to 1611, and the Book of Leases which dates from 1578.[1] Fortunately, the probate records are good for this period and the parish register was begun in 1575. The wills replace the court rolls as a source from which the descent of tenements can be traced and the inventories provide valuable insights into farming practices; thus, happily, continuity can be maintained.

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1 M.M. 6443, 6447.3. Also Bodleian Library. Ms Top Northants b.l.f.2.

B. ESTATE POLICY

Towards the end of the century a major innovation was introduced, designed to increase the revenue from the estate. Tenements held at will were transformed into tenements held by twenty-one year leases and old demesne was likewise converted into leasehold to which in addition grain rents were attached. It was Thomas Reynolds, Warden from 1545-59 who introduced the policy of leasing old demesne by indenture, according to Brodrick, and Thomas Bickley (1569-86) 'a firm administrator' who instituted the Book of Leases.[1] The Statute of 1571 made it obligatory upon colleges to lease for three lives only[2] and it seems probable that the conversion of copyhold to leases for three lives was put through shortly afterwards, it was certainly in effect by 1594 when a court roll lists the lessees of copyholds.

In practice the conversion to leasehold did not affect the hereditary nature of what continued to be called copyhold held 'according to the custom of the manor'. The object of the insertion of a new phrase into the terminology of tenure seems to have been to make possible the introduction of a fine payable every seven years. Rents remained at the 1440 level but 'there is in everie of the said copis a clause of re-entrie for non payment of the saide fynes or any parte therof'.[3] The fines imposed amounted to about £14-£15 a virgate and

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1 Brodrick op. cit. p.164,166.

2 13 Eliz. cap. X, XI. In the same year Brasenose College introduced 21 year leases on its Cropredy Estate. VCH Oxon X (1972) p.165.

3 M.M. 6657, 6447.7.

£4-£10 a half virgate. In other words, the old rent of 1440 was taken as the base, and this varied slightly from virgate to virgate, it was multiplied by 2.5 for each year, charged as a lump sum every seven years, and paid off by the tenants within the following two or three years. Relative to the early sixteenth century these fines were of course very high, but seen against the country as a whole they were well below average. Two to three years annual improved value was normally regarded as reasonable for copyhold with arbitrary fines. Common law courts allowed only 1½ year's value, Chancery allowed 1-2 year's value, or one year's value plus heriot, or two and a half year's rent. Merton adopted the last option, two and a half year's rent per year on a valuation of 8d an acre at a time when the current value was nearer 6s. Od an acre. They also took heriots, but again reckoned according to pre-inflation prices. When cows were fetching 20s. Od they were asking 2s. 4d or 6s. Od. The highest ever demanded for heriot was £5 in 1686 from one of their yeomen tenants, Watts, at a time when a good cow could fetch £2 10s. Od.[1] The copyholders at Kibworth Harcourt could consider themselves fortunate in their landlord! Relative to their size and value smaller holdings tended to pay more than larger ones, but this was usually the case everywhere, and on occasion rents and fines were reduced or excused in cases of hardship. In 1679, for example, West's fine was reduced 'by reason of his great charge of children'.[2]

Copyhold held by twenty-one year leases continued to be called copyhold and to be held by hereditary tenure.

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1 M.M. 6452

2 M.M. 6448.

The demesne, however, when converted to leasehold, became such in the normal sense of the term. It was held for a limited number of years and passed from one family to another. To this old demesne land was added the three virgates of bondland which had been held as a single tenement by indenture since the 1440's. It too became leasehold. It is interesting that the demesne should have retained its separate identity in spite of the radical changes of the fifteenth century. Explicit references to it cease after 1440. However, in 1607 three holdings consisting of 2½ virgates, 2½ virgates and two virgates were united to form a single block of leasehold land. It is possible to trace these holdings back to the 1484 rental when the indentured 3½ virgates of bondland also made its first appearance. Significantly enough, none of these holdings, amounting to 10½ virgates, appear in the 1440 list which deals with only 19¾ virgates, 10½ short of the total number of virgates on the manor, apart from freeland. It would seem that the demesne was divided into three holdings which were treated as copyhold in the sixteenth century until their tenure was altered to leasehold in accordance with the doctrine that demesne could not legally become copyhold.

2½ virgates (Ten. 3)

Held by Iliffe 1484-1599 and by Bingley 1599-1601. Escheated.

2½ virgates

Held by Parker 1484; by Saunder and Swan in 1500; by Kynde in 1527; by Parker in 1538. Not mentioned thereafter.

2 virgates (Ten. 21)

Held by Clerke/Carter in 1484; by Polle in 1527; by Coxon in 1593. Not mentioned thereafter.

In 1607, when these three tenements were reunited to form a single leasehold tenement, the opportunity was taken to impose a grain rent of 4 quarters of wheat and 4¼ quarters of barley malt. The monetary value of this grain rent together with the fixed rent of £4 13s. 10d a year brought in for the college from £13 13s. 5d to £22 9s. 4d a year, and had the effect of raising the annual rent receipts from around £27 a year to the region of £40.[1] With the holding went the office of bailiff which was filled by the Ray family throughout the seventeenth century and then passed through marriage to the Fox family and later the Foxtons.

Other oddments of old demesne or of waste to which the college had a claim were also converted to leasehold. The Book of Leases was begun for the college estates in 1578 and in 1583 the account rolls record the first of such leases at Kibworth.[2] In that year the three virgates which had been held by indenture since 1477 were leased to John Barnard for an annual money rent of 22s. 1d and an annual corn rent of 6 bushels of wheat and 1 quarter 1 bushel of barley malt.[3] This move was probably in response to the recent Elizabethan Statute which required that colleges should take some at least of their rent in grain.[4] It raised the income from this

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1 M.M. Book of Leases 1578 p.141b and Account Rolls 6362ff.

2 M.M. Bailiff's accounts 6354.

3 M.M. Book of Leases p.66b.

4 18 Eliz. cap. VI: in all new college leases the lessees should pay one third of the old rent in corn or malt and at a fixed price.

holding from 54s. 4d to around 70s. 0d. Barnard held the lease for 33 years, until 1616. His successor, Cooper, held it for only three (1617-20), Bryan for six (1621-27), Standon for fourteen (1628-42) and Guy was still holding it in 1655. By 1755 Robert Hames held it and when the manor was enclosed Thackney Leys was allocated to Hames in lieu of this leasehold.

In 1593 a similar lease was negotiated for 2 acres arable and 2 acres meadow in the open fields called the Swathes. Parker and Eliot were to hold this for a fixed money rent of 5s. 4d together with 2 bushels 2 pecks of 'good and sweet Wheat' and 1 bushel of barley malt. If transport proved difficult a money equivalent could be paid according to prices in the Oxford market held next before Michaelmas.[1] Sacheverell held the lease in 1616, Burdett took it in 1627 and still held it in 1655.

The Hall lands and Balks were leased for 12s. 10d.[2] The collection of yards and small pieces of land which had previously gone with the indentured bondland were separately leased for 18s. 10d to Mr. William Gage who had married Nicholas Ray's widow. He did not keep them for long but in 1611 leased by copyhold the bakehouse, a cottage, a meere, and a rod in Westfield to Isabel Hubbard, and the remainder was equally divided between Nicholas Porter and Margaret Goodman to hold by copy of court roll.

The seventeenth century saw the making of two surveys, one in 1609-10, the other in 1635-36. In 1609 a 'plat'

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1 M.M. Book of Leases p.31.

2 M.M. Bailiff's Accounts 6448.

or map had been prepared showing the parish bounds, and each house within the town ditch together with its owner's name. No attempt was made in this map to show the furlongs in the three main fields or to indicate strips in these fields. The court roll for 1611 ends with the following instructior to the jury

> 'to meete together at the mannor house upon Munday being the thudd and twenteth daye of this monethe (September) by orther of the clerk in the mourninge of the same daye and they shall make he perfecke survey of all the lands of this mannor ... as faire as they knowe and believe and they shall subscribe the same with their lands and deliver the same to Robert Raye before the 27th day of this moneth upon payne of everie one makinge defaults to forfeit 20/-. And if any of them shawe obstinat in not agreeinge to the rest of his fellows he shall forfeit 40/-.'

Unfortunately, the written schedule which should have resulted has not survived, if indeed it was ever made.[1]

Plague in the years 1609-10 had taken its toll of village landholders, and this may have made a new rental necessary. However, it may be more than a coincidence that in 1607 John Norden published his 'Surveyor's Dialogue', thereby putting within the reach of dons some of his experience in estate management. The publication of Fitzherbert's 'Boke of Surveying' in 1523 was followed by a more than usually detailed rental made in 1527.[2] Barlee's 'Concordance' appeared in the same year as the college Book of Leases. Charles Calthorpe's 'The relation betweene the lord of a mannor and the coppy-holder his tenant' came out in 1635 and in that year Abraham Allen was commissioned to prepare a map and written survey of Kibworth

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1 M.M. 6447.2ii and 1609 map. Also Book of Leases p.41b.

2 M.M. 6375.

by the warden, Sir Nathaniel Brent. (In 1636 Henry Paxton prepared a survey accompanied by maps of the neighbouring Brudenell manors of Slawston, Glooston, Cranoe and Stonton Wyville. A map was made of the manor of Wistow in 1638.[1]) The written survey of 1635 shows no signs of having been used as a working document and was not in fact a very useful one since it gives no indication of who the sitting tenants were or how the land was actually being used. It divides the land into meadow, arable and pasture, valuing these three categories at 8s. Od, 5s. Od and 4s. Od per acre respectively. It thereby provides a basis for the optimum evaluation of the land although in fact much of the arable was under grass. We have no surviving evidence for fines in the mid-seventeenth century, but those of 1679 onwards bear no very close relation to the evaluations arrived at by Abraham Allen.

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1 Richard Norwood surveyed and mapped the Spencer estates at Wormleighton and Stoneton in 1634.

2 M.M. 5.17 and 1635 map.

C. SPECULATION BY THE GENTRY IN KIBWORTH HARCOURT

At this time a number of gentry took an interest in house sites in the village. Bale leased the hedges and ditches for 6d from 1605-21. Parker leased 'le mure' for 6d from 1610-21, Rylye took it from 1624-34, Mr. Joseph Sacheverall from 1634-36, Wilkinson from 1636-42, who passed it on to Parsons. Sir Tobias Hawes of Stoke Albany, Northamptonshire, leased 'le Pale' near the town cross[1] for 4d a year from 1611-16 after which it was held by two tenants each paying 4d.[2] Coleman's share went to William Sheffield of Great Bowden in 1648. Sheffield had been ejected by the Puritans from the rectory at Ibstock and resided in Kibworth until his death in 1673 for the sake of his children enjoying the benefit of the school.[3] He had bought the rest of the Coleman land in 1646. Harold's share went to Buswel in 1621. This Buswel was probably of the same family as Sir Euseby Buswel Pelsant of Cadeby, bart. who was a feoffee for the school in 1722.[4] Hawes and Buswel also held Tenements 23a-b, 30, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37. They seem to have been interested in providing cottage accommodation for their farm labourers. Both Smeeton Westerby

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1 Bodleian. Ms Top Northants. b.1 f.103.

2 M.M. 6362.1, ff. and 6447.1.

3 Nicholls, Vol. II Part II.p.6-0.

4 Ibid p.640. Also Hoskins noted that one George Buswell gent, bought 30 acres of land in Wigston Magna in 1623. He was an outsider and bought up other small properties in the village. (Midland Peasant p.203). In 1798 John Buswell of Islington, broker, was handling the financial affairs of the Rev. Thomas Thomas, husband of the Foxton heiress, Elizabeth. (Ms Top Northants b.1. f.64).

and Kibworth Beauchamp developed as weaving centres, but there is no evidence that Harcourt followed suit. A few other small tenements were held by humbler folk: Iliffe and Polle held a cottage for 4d which passed in 1617 to the Morley family who held it for the rest of the century, and, as has been said, the Gage copyhold was held by three villagers.[1]

The presence of gentry in the village was a portent of change. The Parkers were the first to arrive in both senses of the term. They made their first appearance in the village in the late fourteenth century. By the mid-fifteenth century they held several freehold and copyhold tenements including tenement 6 which remained their main dwelling house until 1678 when they moved to the very fine renaissance mansion on the village square, today called The Old House. Tenement 6 was thereafter inhabited by a series of bailiffs; John Lamplugh, attorney, Captain Corrance and George Eyre, all themselves younger sons of gentlemen families. By 1737 Joshua Reynolds who had married Rebecca Parker in 1616, ran it as the Crown Inn. After standing empty for many years it once more found an owner in 1971. Unfortunately, I have been unable to discover the origins of the Parker family or how they made their fortune, but there is no doubt but that they added 'tone' to the village by the seventeenth century.

The Parkers were joined in 1558 by Sir Thomas Ray, yeoman

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1 M.M. 6362.1-6362.19.

of the wardrobe of the beds to Queen Mary, 'In consideration of his service' the Queen granted him the leases of the Tynemouth Priory lands in Preston, Eschirton, Whitley, Monkseyton, Morton, Enesdon and Backeworthe worth £105 7s. Od in grain and rents.[1] He was also made collector and bailiff of Burton Lazars, Burton Lisle and Kibworth Beauchamp.[2] The family continued to remain based upon the parish of St. Martin in the Fields and to be connected with the Inns of Court throughout the seventeenth century. It is not clear what was their original connection with Merton College but Thomas's grandson, Robert, was a scholar at St. Albans Hall, Oxford and was named co-attorney for Kibworth Harcourt in 1605 with William Savile.[3] The Savîles of Orton, Northamptonshire were bailiffs of the manor from 1560-77 and 1598-1606. The Rays, the Saviles and probably the Parkers belonged to the professional class of lawyers and academics.

The Foxes, the Foxtons and the Hames were of yeoman origin. The Foxes held freely in the village before the Black Death, so did the Hames if they were the descendants of the Heyns. Both families built up lands by careful husbandry and equally careful marriage alliances. Thus the Bryan, Lount and Watts inheritances were joined in the hand of William Hames in the late seventeenth century and his daughter's son, Lebbeus Humphrey, settled in the village and bought up the Sheffield and Parker estates together with other tenements.

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1 P.R.O. Cal. Pat. 6, Nov. 1558.

2 P.R.O. Patent of Court of Augmentations, 20 Dec. 2 Ed VI.

3 M.M. Book of Leases p.132.

The Foxtons allied with the Foxes and eventually took over the Ray leaseholds. These yeomen gentry proved more persevering than the Rays and the Parkers and by the enclosure in 1781, Hames, Humphrey and Foxton between them owned two thirds of the village in freehold, leasehold and copyhold.[1] Of other fourteenth century peasant families only the Carters survived, holding a few acres of freehold. The family papers of the Parker, Hames and Humphrey families speak of a steady policy of buying up small sites. Lebbeus Humphrey bought up the whole of the south side of Hogate, and the site of the chapel and several medieval dwelling houses lie awaiting excavation beneath the lawns and orchards of the Old House.

Thus did Kibworth Harcourt become an estate village, dominated by three resident squires. By blood they could trace their ancestry to the copy holders of the sixteenth century but they owed their green acres to the amalgamation through marriage in that century of solid yeoman farms which had been created in the fifteenth century by the engrossing of villein half virgates. The years of agricultural depression in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries hit hardest the surviving half-virgaters; the big fish ate the little fish.

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1 Bodleian. Ms Top Northants b.1. f.34.

Part V : Population

Domesday statistics show South East Leicestershire to have been relatively densely populated, with 10-15 persons per square mile as against 2.5-10 persons over most of the rest of the west Midlands.[1] Kibworth followed the general pattern with 22 householders and 3 serfs on 1,203 acres. The standard holding had already been reduced to 24 acres but we have little idea of the size of household such a holding was considered capable of supporting.

The level of population rose steadily during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and at the point when the Merton muniments take up the story most of the twenty-four virgates had been subdivided into 12 acre tenements each supporting a household of 5 to 7 persons over five years of age.[2] The extension of arable at the expense of pasture in the fields and the encroachment of housing onto the village roads and green bear witness to this phenomenon. A Malthusian crisis seemed to be approaching, but there are indications that the members of the village community were not unaware of the fact and took their own precautions. Land was not subdivided any further and adults without land or an established trade remained celibate. The number of reproductive units was thus limited to the number of tenements and the rate of population growth checked. Nevertheless, holdings were small, households large, and the standard of living dangerously low, thus leaving the population particularly vulnerable to famine, cold and epidemics. In the light of seventeenth century experience, we

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1 H. C. Darby and L. B. Terrett ed. The Domesday Geography of Midland England (C.U.P. 1954) Fig. 149, 150.

2 See Chapter Six.

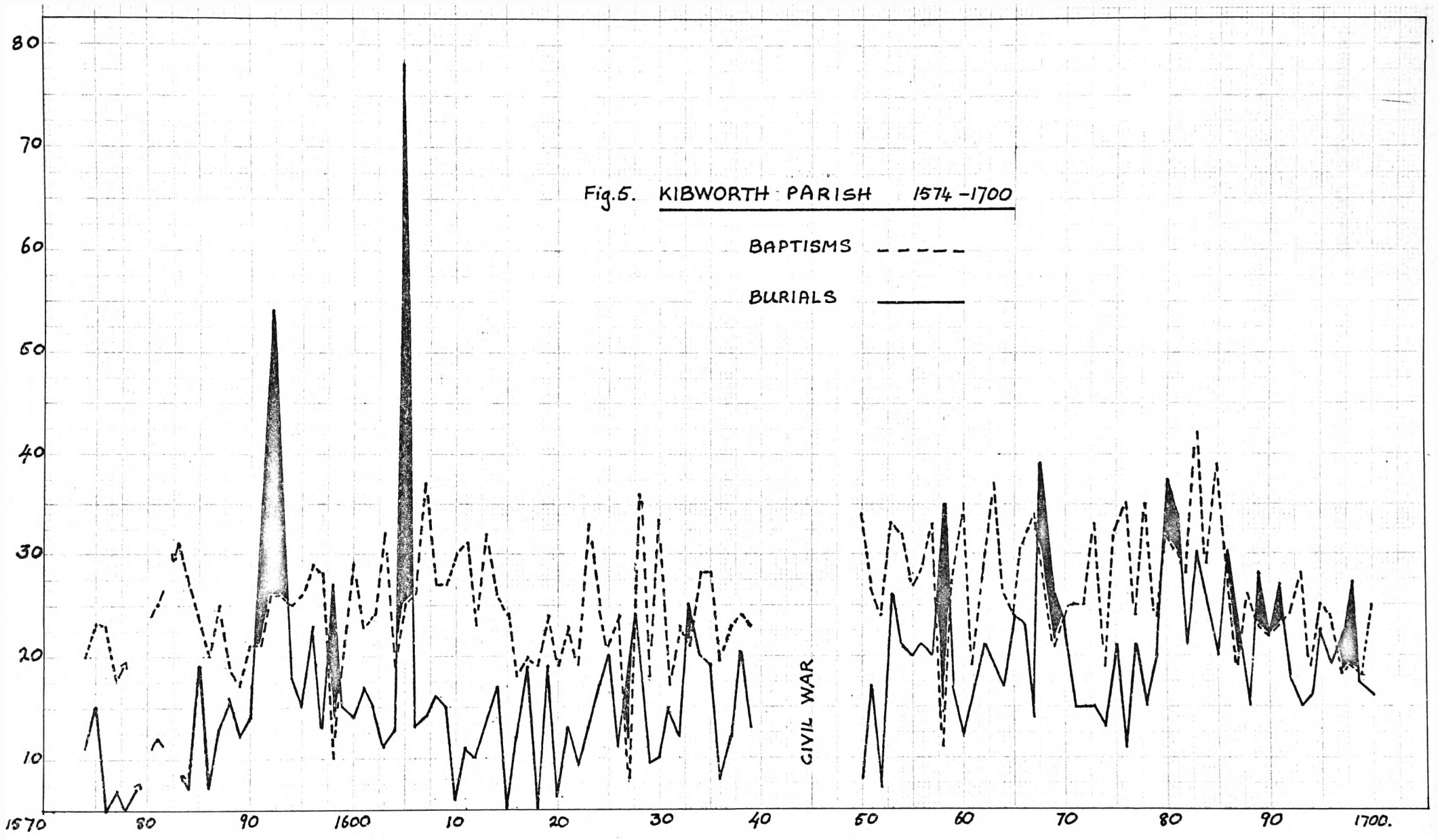
can assume with a fair degree of confidence that the mortality rate in thirteenth century England was high, though not high enough effectively to reduce the size of households.[1]

The plagues of the late fourteenth century, however, broke this particular equipoise; the total number of adults was substantially reduced which made possible a return to larger holdings. Moreover, the size of households was reduced as celibate members were able to gain a livelihood elsewhere and to marry. Low agricultural prices and the constant shift of tenants from one village to another betokens a continuing low population level throughout the fifteenth century. Households remained small, tenements remained relatively large, the standard of living improved. It is generally accepted that the level of population began to rise again towards the end of the fifteenth century and Kibworth does not appear to have been an exception to the general trend. At the same time agricultural prices improved, so that,although households might be larger,so too were profits on the larger, post-plague tenements which produced a marketable surplus, and there was,therefore, no decline in nutritional standards. However, the large holdings were not subdivided to provide for more households and the landless and celibate adult, dependent upon a brother's holding, became once again a common feature of rural society.

The earliest surviving register for the ecclesiastical parish of Kibworth Beauchamp begins in 1574, and from that date onwards the figures for baptisms can be plotted against those for burials to provide a more accurate picture of

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1 E. A. Wrigley Population and History (London 1969) p.77-78. Also C.T. Smith V.C.H. Leics. III p.132.


Fig.5. KIBWORTH PARISH 1574-1700
BAPTISMS
BURIALS
CIVIL WAR
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
1570
80
90
1600
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
1700.

demographic trends. The results can be seen on the graph, Figure 5, which shows an excess of baptisms over burials of 869 for the period 1574-1640 but little overall growth. The number of births and burials each year are of the same order of magnitude in 1640 as they had been in 1574. After the Civil War the number of births per annum rose from 24 to 27 and the average number of burials rose from 16 to 21. This would imply a small increase in the number of families resident in the parish. Possibly new households were being set up in Beauchamp or in Smeeton Westerby through sub-division of holdings or through immigration but there is no sign of an increase in the number of holdings in Kibworth Harcourt.

The erratic nature of the mortality rate in the late sixteenth century will be noted. Apart from the mortality of 1668 which struck hardest at women and children, the recorded burials in crisis years relate almost exclusively to adults of both sexes. The years of exceptional mortality were plague or epidemic years. That of 1591-93 was due to plague which raged also in Leicester; that of 1605 broke out during a lull in the Leicester epidemic of 1603, 1607 and 1609. In 1625 there was plague in London which reached Leicester by 1626 and took its toll in Kibworth in 1627. The sweating sickness affected Kibworth and most parts of the country in 1658, the great plague of 1665 took some victims in Smeeton but did not spread to the rest of the parish. In 1668 there was plague in Kibworth and Wigston Magna. The epidemics which haunted the 1680's and 1690's likewise made their presence felt in Wigston.[1]

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1 N. Griffin, 'Epidemics in Loughborough 1539-1640' T.L.A.S. XLIII (1967-68), p.24-34.
J.E.O. Wilshere, 'Plague in Leicester 1558-1665' T.L.A.S. XLIV (1968-69), p.45-71.
A.B. Appleby, 'Disease or Famine? Mortality in Cumberland and Westmoreland 1580-1640' Ec.H.R. 2nd series XXVI (1973), 403-431.
W.G. Hoskins, Provincial England (London 1965), p.185-200.

In a village which depended on coal for its heating, cold winters can be expected to have taken their toll of the poor and the infirm, but there is little reason to believe that grain shortages brought men to death through starvation in the sixteenth century; at least not in a village like Kibworth where landholders, practising a mixed economy on relatively large holdings, had sufficient savings to tide them over hard times, and where there were no families without a claim of some sort to support from the land. It is true that apart from 1670, the birth rate rose sharply in the year or so immediately following a year of exceptional mortality, but there is no reason to believe that this increase was due to an increased number of marriages following postponement during years of poor harvest, it more probably reflects the baptism of infants kept away from public places during the epidemic, and the replacement of children carried off by the plague. If one wished to see the correlation between harvest and mortality, it would be possible to compare the price-series for barley and peas in Leicestershire, taken from the inventories, against the evidence of mortality in parish registers. The selected price-series given in Chapter Five do not unfortunately provide long enough runs to prove anything conclusively.

Yet in spite of periodic outbursts of plague or epidemic, baptisms exceeded burials throughout the seventeenth century. The total number of households did not increase significantly. Therefore one must assume a high emigration rate. Whither they went and what proportion of the village wealth they took with them is an important question. Did they move towards the nearest large estate or centre of industry with a few pence

in their pockets, or did they move to the centres of the professions and of commerce with a good education behind them, or an apprenticeship, and with several pounds in their pockets? As far as Kibworth Harcourt was concerned, the majority probably belonged to the latter group. The records of whither they went are not to be found at Kibworth but in the towns to which migrants were moving in this period, and so fall outside the scope of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

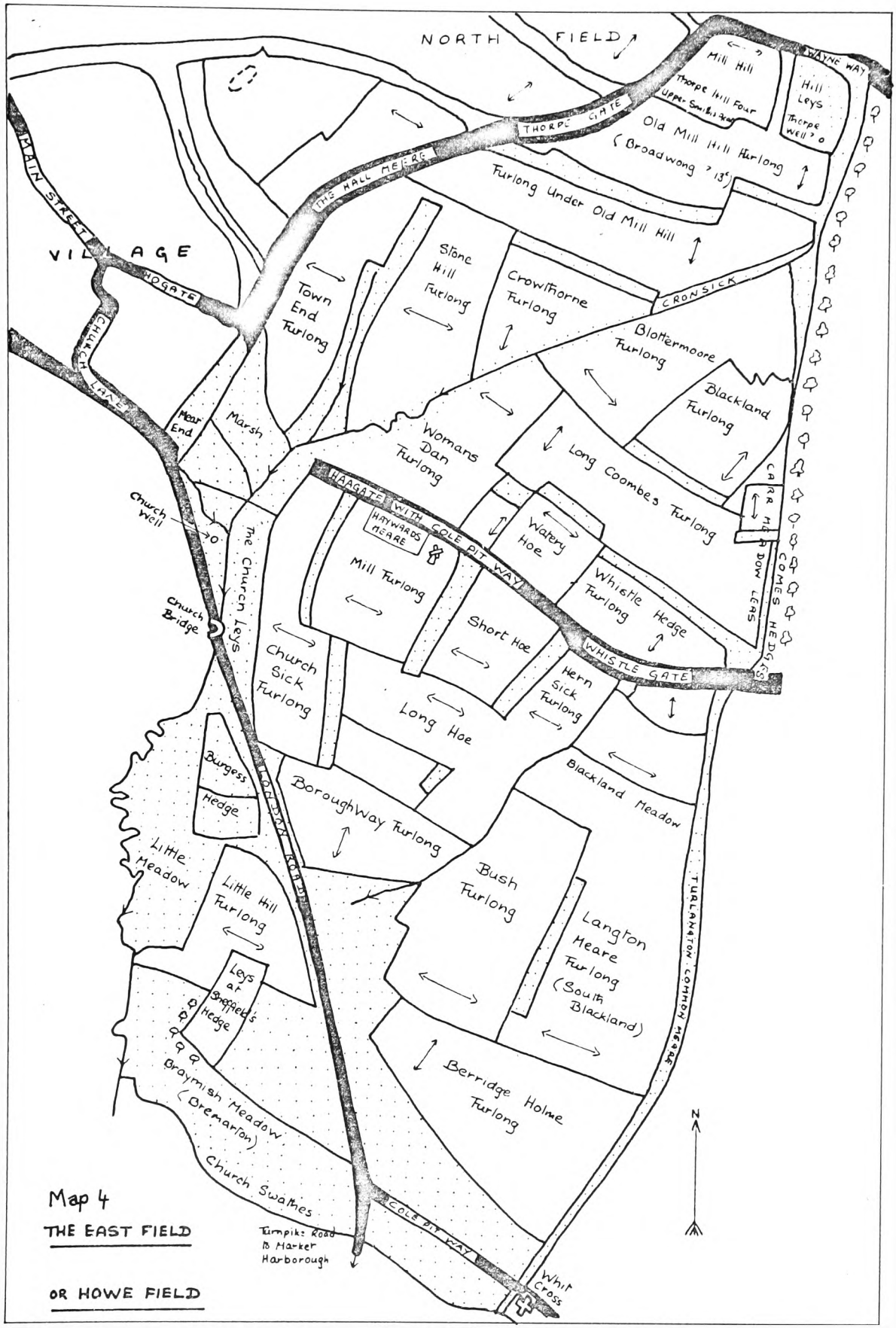
THE OPEN FIELDS OF KIBWORTH HARCOURT

Three pre-enclosure maps survive for the manor of Kibworth Harcourt. One, made in 1609, gives details of the messuages in the village and the manor boundaries. The second, made in 1635, fills in to some extent the boundaries of the three open fields and names the Ways, the Cowcommon and other internal features, while the third, made in about 1780, gives all the furlongs and the strips within the furlongs. After enclosure, the greater part of the land went down to pasture, so that the old ridge and furrow remains plainly visible in most furlongs. Comparison of the 1780 map with aerial photographs made in 1947 shows that the ridges on the ground and the tenurial strips marked on the map coincide.[1] We therefore, have an almost complete picture of the open fields as they existed in 1780. What is lacking is the name of the owner of each strip, but this lacuna can to some extent be filled in by deduction.

There were three fields; the East, the North, and the West field. The East field alias Howe field (map 4) is halved by the Colepit Way, made up of Haagate and Whistle gate. These run through the centre of the field following the valley floor in an east-west direction and lead into the lordship of Turlangton. South of the Colepit Way lie 243 acres which can in turn be subdivided into an arable area of high land rising steeply to

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1 M. Beresford, 'Ridge and Furrow in the Open Fields' Ec.H.R. 2nd series I (1948), p.34-45 and Antiquity 24 (Sept. 1950) p.34-55. Also 'What is Ridge and Furrow?' Country Life CV. (March 4 1949).
E. Kerridge, 'Ridge and Furrow in Agrarian History' Ec.H.R. 2nd series Vol. IV (1959) p.14-35.
W. R. Mead, 'Ridge and Furrow in Buckinghamshire' Geogrl. Jnl. CXX (1954) p.34-42.



Map 4

THE EAST FIELD

OR HOWE FIELD

400 ft around the sixteenth century windmill and falling away southwards to a low lying pastoral area abutting on the small stream which forms the boundary between Kibworth Harcourt and Kibworth Beauchamp. In the fifteenth century this stream was liable to flood its banks and needed constant attention, the whole village being responsible for the job. When Market Harborough was founded between 1160-1170 a new track was easily formed across the common pasture of Kibworth and called Harberg gate.[1] In 1726 this became a Turnpike Road and in the days of the mail coach became the London Road. In 1300 it crossed the stream at Church ford but by 1443 we know from the court rolls that there was a bridge.[2] Branching east from this road runs another branch of the Colepit Way to West Langton and at the point where this track reached the boundary there stood in 1609 a cross called Whitcross. From this point north to Whistle Gate stretched Langton Meare Furlong sometimes known as South Blackland. Berridge Holme Furlong is not referred to before the seventeenth century and its name suggests low lying pasture land. West of the Langton Meare ran the Hern Sike abutting on Short Hoe and Long Hoe which give their name to the entire field. These two and Mill Furlong are probably among the oldest arable furlongs in this field. Church Sike is first mentioned in association with untended gutters in the fifteenth century,[3] but its high ridges could suggest earlier cultivation.

North of the Colepit Way lie 171.9.14 acres. The land

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1 W. G. Hoskins Provincial England (MacMillan 1965) p.53-67.

2 M.M. 6424.15.

3 M.M. 6407, 6408, 6418, 6438.2.

slopes steeply up to the site of the fifteenth century mill. Once again the area can be subdivided according to its natural features. A spring bordered by rough pasture runs diagonally across it from north east to south west and to the south of this the furlong names indicate relatively late cultivation: whistling valley,[1] long coomb, Blottermoor and Blackland Meadow. Moreover, the furlongs are not approached by regular herringbone pattern ways as are the older furlongs. Just north of Cronsike we find Crowthorn furlong, a triangular piece of land, probably an old spinney as its name implies. With the possible exception of Stone Hill Furlong, the remaining furlongs are among the oldest in the township. The reasons for this statement will be discussed later.[2]

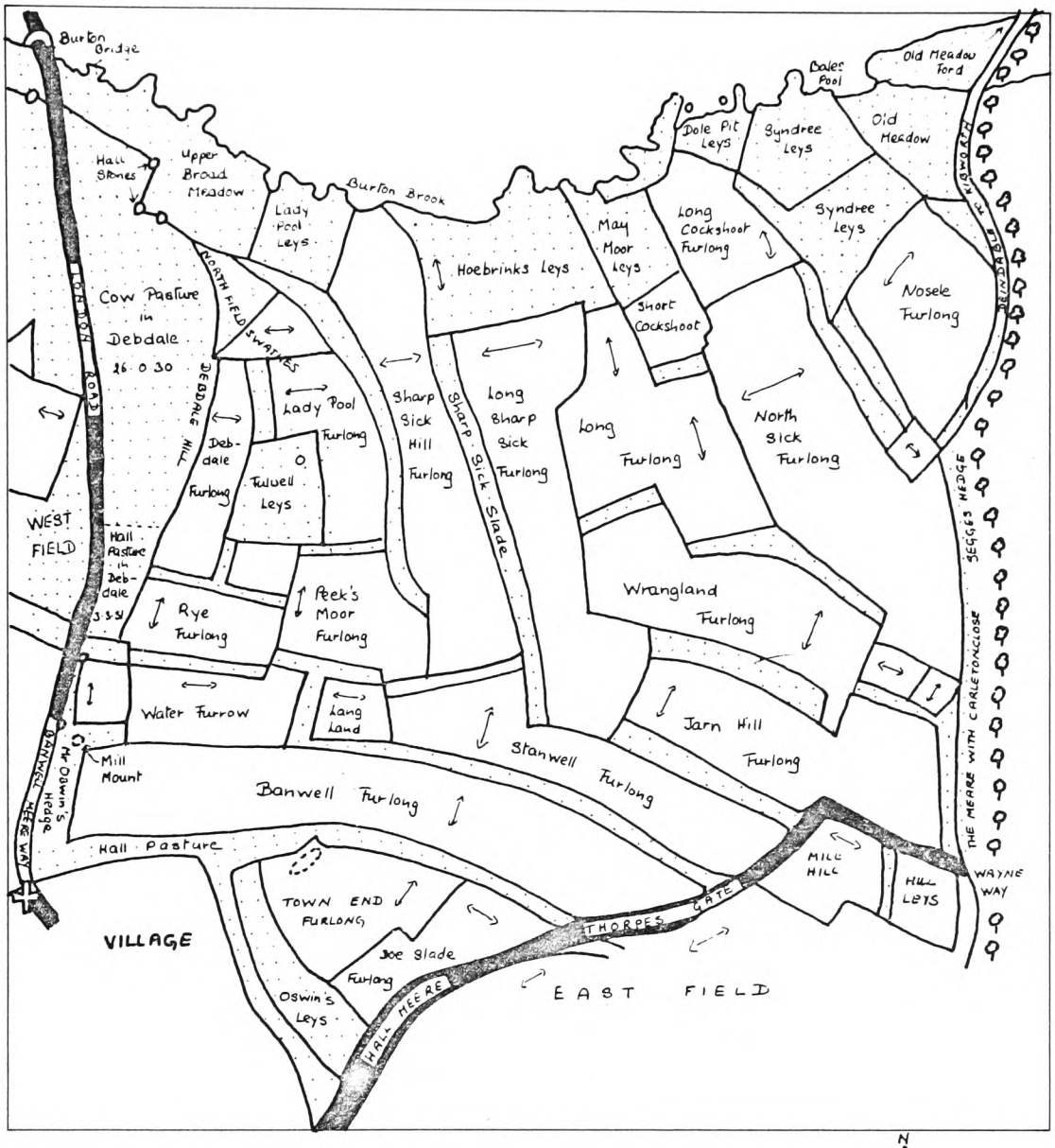
The North field (map 5) covered about 415.0.03 acres in 1635 and unlike the other two fields was not bisected by a road or way. This was because its arable was concentrated in the southern and eastern parts of the field and approached by the Thorpe Gate and its branching ways, while the western half was comprised of leys, moors and common pasture. The London road formed the western boundary of the north field. It began at the cross by the north-eastern corner of the village where the Colepit Way from Wistow entered the village, and ran northwards following the line of the valley to Burton Bridge and thence to Leicester via Glen Magna. In 1421 the village was ordered to mend the 'regiam viam versus pontem vocat Burton Brigg'[3] and the 1609 map depicts a sturdy single-arched bridge.

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1 Womans Dan Furlong. OE. Woma - a sound, noise. OE. Daenn - a valley. OE. dun - sheep pasture.

2 See p.95.

3 M.M. 6420.7.



Map 5. THE NORTH FIELD

..... Pasture. ie. permanent pasture
..... leys and headlands.

The most arresting feature of the north field is Banwell Furlong. This measures 1000 yards from East to West. The length of its furrows, which run from North to South varies from 166 yards at the west end to 113 yards at the centre and 153 at the east end. J. E. Sutton found that ridges on Oxfordshire clay lands were seldom more than 500 yards long or less than 100 yards and varied in width from 4-24 yards though most were between 7-13 yards in width.[1] E. A. Pocock found that the ridges at Clanfield in Oxfordshire were between 176-220 yards in length.[2] So by Oxfordshire standards the Banwell ridges are short, but it must be remembered that the land in the Oxfordshire villages cited is flat while the gradient at Kibworth is fairly steep. The shape of the Banwell furlong is similar to the furlongs at Clanfield, Chalgrove,[3] and Water Eaton, but more of this later. A cross-section of the ridges at the west end of Banwell furlong exposed an undisturbed layer of Roman remains under the ridges and nothing under the furrows. (See Figure 6). Therefore, we can be certain that the ridges have not wandered or been altered in direction. We can also be certain that the furlong was cleared in Roman times and as at Withington[4] in Gloucestershire there seems no reason to believe that the site went out of habitation between circa 360 when a Julian coin was

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1 J. E. G. Sutton, 'Ridge and Furrow in Berkshire and Oxfordshire.' Oxoniensia XXIX (1964) p.99-115.

2 E. A. Pocock, 'The First Fields in an Oxfordshire Parish.' Agric.H.R. XVI Pt. II (1968) p.85-100.

3 H. L. Gray, The English Field Systems (reprint London 1969) Map 11, p. 20.

4 H. P. R. Finberg, Lucerna (London 1964). p.21-65.

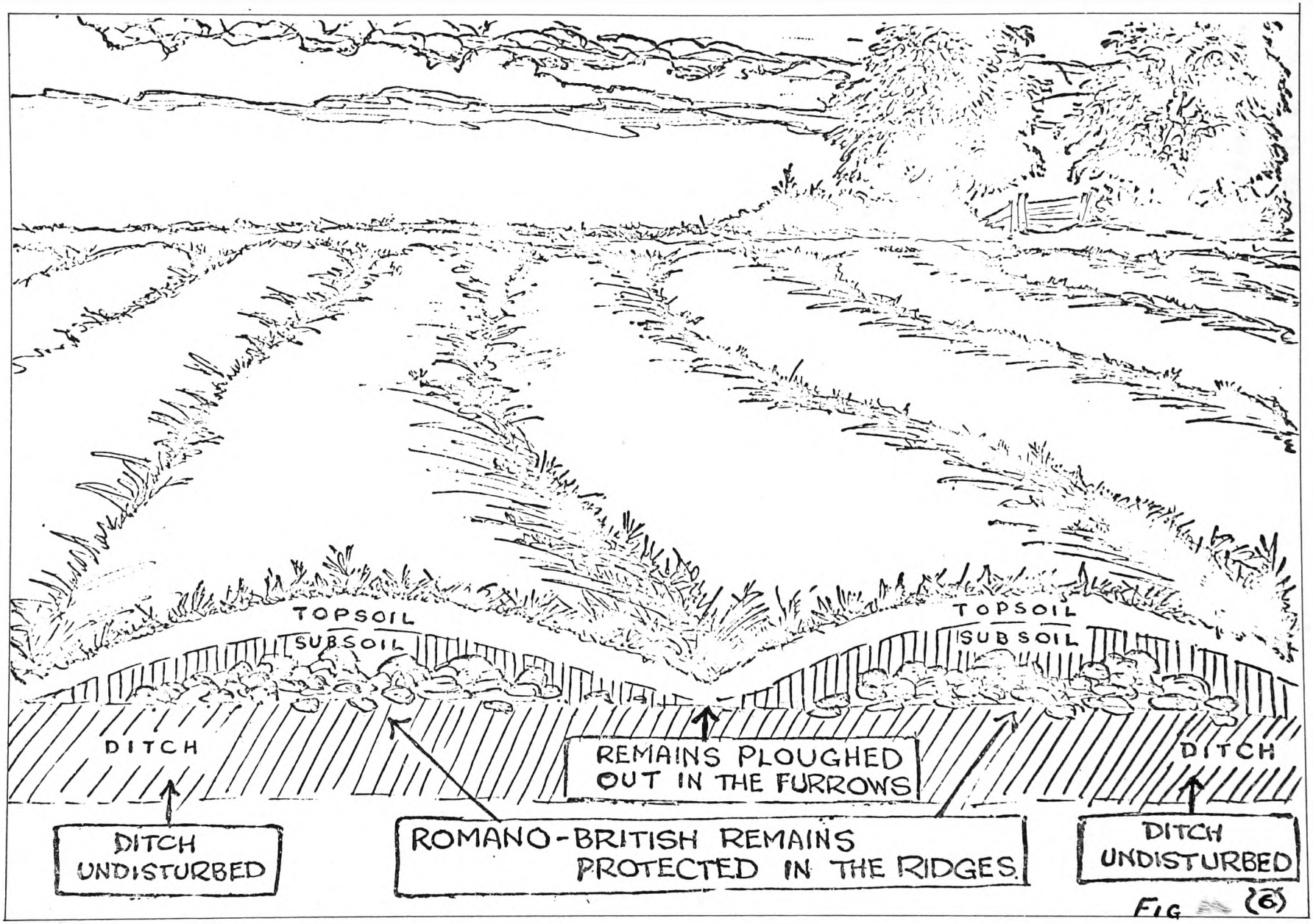

TOPSOIL
SUBSOIL
TOPSOIL
SUBSOIL
DITCH
DITCH
REMAINS PLOUGHED OUT IN THE FURROWS
DITCH UNDISTURBED
ROMANO-BRITISH REMAINS PROTECTED IN THE RIDGES
DITCH UNDISTURBED

FIG (6)

dropped in the village and the early sixth century when Saxon immigrants made their presence felt.[1] We can, therefore, take Banwell Furlong as a model of a Romano-Saxon field at Kibworth. What are its characteristics? Accessibility: it is reached by a way at both ends and provided with headlands 45 feet wide; short ridges, on average about 150 yards long and 7-8 yards wide; great length - there are 117 ridges in Banwell. These characteristics are repeated in several other furlongs in the three fields. Reference has already been made to Old Mill Hill Furlong, Furlong under Old Mill Hill and Town End Furlong in East Field. There are the Ridgeway and Cold Acre furlongs in West Field also Low Ash and Town End. And in the North Field there are Stanwell, Langland and Water Furrows which together equal Banwell in ridges. Long Furlong is not long in shape but its ridges are unusually long; Wrangland is, as its name implies, crooked; Jarn Hill or Eagle Hill was probably without its eastern extension when originally laid out. All these it should be noted are readily accessible from Thorpe Gate or from the open pasture of Debdale.

With the exception of Syndree Leys, all the remaining furlongs and meadows are mentioned in the literary sources which begin circa 1275. One may hazard the guess that Syndree Leys, which derives its name from the old English 'syndrig' meaning 'not joined to others', was assarted by a freetenant. This and other meadows bordering Burton Brook lie on an outcrop of micaceous, silty lower lias and were prized as meadow land, being divided

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1 W. G. Hoskins, 'The Anglian and Scandinavian Settlement of Leicestershire' T.L.A.S. XVIII (1934), p.110-147.

into doles or twodelrods (two-dole-rods) and were reached either by the deindabll to Kibworth or by the Sharp Sike which retained wide grassy sidelands even when under the plough, or from the Cow pasture which at no time came under the plough according to the evidence of maps and aerial photography. Alan of Portsmouth[1] held arable on Sharp Sike as early as 1300 which gives us an interesting hint of communal action by the villagers which does not reappear again until the sixteenth century. The ploughing-up of Sharp Sike and other sikes which provided access to arable furlongs as well as grazing can only have been permitted or tolerated by common consent of the landholding community.[2] The expansion of arable at the expense of pasture was widely practised in thirteenth century England and almost certainly at Kibworth where the population per square mile was relatively dense. The small furlongs lying at a distance from the roads in the north and west fields probably belong to this period rather than to the pre-Conquest epoch.

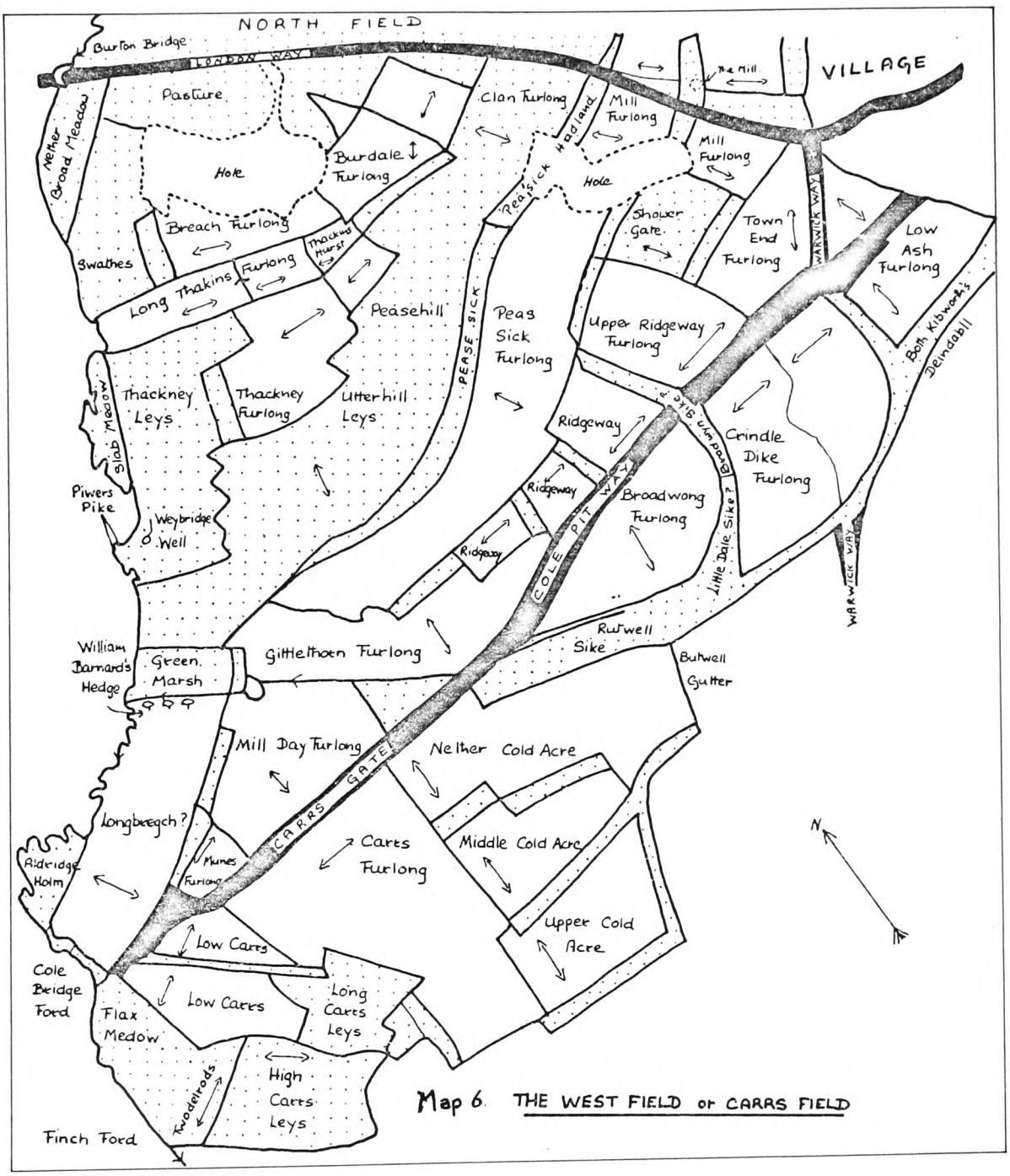
The West Field alias Carrs Field (map 6) is the largest and most varied of the three fields. The Colepit Way or Carrs Gate enters the lordship from Wistow at the Cole Bridge Ford and runs in a south-easterly direction along the valley to meet the London road and the Main Street of the village at the cross already described. To the north of it lie 294.3.06 acres and to the south 173.3.10 acres. Possibly the most interesting feature in this field is the Upper Ridgeway Furlong. As has been pointed out in an earlier chapter,[3] the Jurassic Way may

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1 M.M. 6368.1.

2 G. C. Homans, English Villagers in the Thirteenth Century. (New York 1941) p.85.

3 Chapter One, p.2-3.



Map 6. THE WEST FIELD or CARRS FIELD

and Utterhill Leys. Eastwards again lies an area known as Thackneys which perhaps bordered an old reed bed which supplied the villagers with thatching reeds. The area became broken up into small rectangular fields which, as already suggested, may have been the result of thirteenth century conversion of pasture to waste. Beyond Thackney lies pasture and Swathes. There were Swathes in each of the three fields: these were meadowlands (apart from 2 acres arable in the North Field) and were held by lease in the seventeenth century, which would imply that they had once formed part of the demesne.

This preliminary survey of the open fields can usefully be concluded by a few general observations. First, some of the road system was almost certainly older than the field system. Cultivation began at the roadsides and worked outwards. The result was a coherent system of fields abutting on the roads and separated from each other by broad headlands or ways. Beyond the early fields lay a belt of pasture which was later brought under the plough by communal agreement, resulting in long common furlongs where the terrain permitted, or in small rectangular furlongs where less suitable land was pressed into service.

Second, there seems to be no trace whatsoever of a reorientation of ridges in the fifteenth or sixteenth century such as has been envisaged by S. R. Eyre.[1] Post-enclosure cross-ploughing has resulted in a chequer pattern which shows up clearly on the aerial photographs on the few fields where this has been attempted - mostly within living memory. The

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1 S. R. Eyre, 'The Curving Ploughstrip and its Historical Implications,' Agric.H.R. III (1955), p.80-94.

cross-section on Banwell furlong already referred to showed clearly that no reorientation had been carried out of the ridges on this furlong. Nevertheless its headland describes a reversed S sweep. The ridges on Banwell and on all the furlongs are straight, splaying out slightly at the upper end with a very slight bias leftwards but hardly enough for one to be able to say that the ridges follow the line of a reversed S. All the ridges are more or less standard in length, about 150 yards. From this it seems clear that straight ridges in combination with a reversed S headland can be associated with very early cultivation, and that there is no need to posit a drastic reorientation of ridges in the early modern period. Moreover, the Kibworth layout is not peculiar to south east Leicestershire but is to be found in Oxfordshire, and a hunt through other pre-enclosure maps would probably reveal examples in many other areas.

THE ACRE: ITS SIZE, DISTRIBUTION AND USE

In 1300, where this study begins, the majority of peasant proprietors were half virgaters, all growing the same crops, under the same conditions, each for his own home consumption. The difference in prosperity between one peasant and the next depended largely on the size of his family and the size of his holding. This chapter will, therefore, be devoted to determining the size of his holding in acres, the distribution of these acres over the three open fields of the town, and the degree of manoeuvre permitted to him within the limits of communal farming, regulated by village by-laws, in the use to which he put his land.

The standard acre is a relatively modern unit of land measurement and had not been universally adopted in Leicestershire as late as 1700. This is understandable since ridge and furrow does not readily lend itself to standardisation; each ridge or selion has its own length and its own width, it must be ploughed as a single unit, one cannot plough with an ox-team one side of a ridge or one end of it only; between each ridge runs a drainage furrow which is not cultivated. However, people of that time had a disconcerting way of talking about 'acres' when they meant a ridge or a group of ridges. Therefore, each piece of evidence needs to be sifted with care and every opportunity taken to cross-check conclusions.[1]

For this reason I have chosen to make an initial approach by comparing two sources which ignore the ridges altogether; Domesday[2] which estimates in ploughlands and the Survey made

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1 F. W. Maitland, Domesday Book and Beyond (Cambridge 1907), p.383-385.

2 V.C.H. Leics. I p.323.

in 1635 which measures in standard acres and no doubt for this reason was never a working document.[1] The manor and township of Kibworth Harcourt were coterminous so that the estimates of total area made in the two documents cover the land of both customary and free tenants and can be directly compared with each other.

Domesday provides our starting point. It runs,

> 'The same Robert (de Vesci) holds twelve carucates of land in Cliborne. In King Edward's time ten ploughs were there. In demesne there are three ploughs and three slaves; and ten villeins and six sokemen and five bordars and one frenchman have five ploughs. There are 16 acres of meadow. It was worth 40s. Od; now 60s. Od.'

Before using the information so provided a point of interpretation needs first be cleared up. There were ten ploughs in 1066, there were only eight in 1086, yet the value by that date had risen from forty to sixty shillings. In his introduction to the Domesday entries for Leicestershire, Professor Stenton noted that this discrepancy is very common in the county especially for the south and south-east. He set himself to elucidate these entries and established in the first place that the formula 'TRE there were x ploughs' did indeed mean that there were actually x ploughs there at that date; it was a more precise way of saying 'There is land for x ploughs'. Secondly, he suggests that the 'valuit' entry does not refer to the value of the manor in 1066 but to its value after it had been devastated by the Conqueror in the latter part of 1068 when he marched from Warwick to Nottingham to suppress the first

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1 M.M. 5.17.

revolt of Edwin and Morcar. The swathe of devastation extended from High Cross to the Soar at Loughborough and along the Welland valley as far as Slawston and Medbourne, as can be clearly seen when the 'Valuit' entries are plotted on a map.[1] Ten ploughs at Kibworth certainly fit the later evidence where eight ploughs do not, so I am prepared to accept Professor Stenton's conclusions and to work on the TRE figure of ten ploughs.

The total acreage in 1635, including meadow and pasture was estimated to be about 1440 acres by the surveyor, Abraham Allen. This same area was estimated to be 10 ploughlands in 1066, not all of it arable. From 1300 onwards the virgate was consistently taken as 24 acres and since the population was less rather than more in 1066 we can take the virgate of that date to be not less than 24 acres. In 1086 there were ten villeins, six sokemen and one frenchman occupying five ploughlands. At Kibworth, villeins and sokemen alike held virgate holdings but the frenchman held more, probably three. In all one can say that there were approximately 20 villein virgates occupying five ploughlands. This would give them 480 acres arable and 240 acres pasture. There were three ploughlands of demesne cultivated by serfs and a further two ploughlands which had gone out of cultivation between 1066 and 1086, possibly as a result of the devastation caused by the Conqueror in 1068. In all, then, there were five non-villein ploughlands, which were possibly divided between arable and pasture along the same lines as the villein land, that is 480 acres arable and 240 acres pasture.

By 1300 the demesne had been halved in size and the Apetoft estate had come into being. The latter was in fact 240 acres

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1 V.C.H. Leics. I.p.277-305.

arable and could conceivably have been formed out of the demesne waste. By the same date the number of villein virgates had increased from 20 to 26½, thereby reducing the 240 acres of villein pasture to 84 acres. In 1635 the cowcommons and balks were still reckoned to be about 89.2.1 acres, though by this date of course much of the arable had also been returned to impermanent pasture or leys.

However approximate such a line of deduction may be, it illustrates with a sufficiently tolerable degree of accuracy the general point that, between 1086 and 1300, the expanding population had been accommodated not only by halving villein virgates but by greatly reducing the area of pasture. With 240 acres of villein pasture, it would hardly have been necessary to graze the stubble except to manure the land and, consequently, there would have been no need for common husbandry on the open fields.[1] With only 84 acres of pasture and some 47 villein households each with one or more great beasts, pigs, geese and possibly sheep, stinting of both pasture and stubble would have become a matter of necessity, and with it, common husbandry.

It is not always easy to discover the number of acres to the virgate in a particular region and, moreover, virgates have a way of shrinking in size, especially during the period 1086-1300. Since I have just stated authoritatively that the virgate at Harcourt contained 24 acres, and will later use this figure in the more exact context of peasant budgets, it would be as well to set forth the evidence at this juncture, showing how this figure was arrived at.[2]

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1 J. Thirsk, 'The Common Fields', P & P. 29 (1964), p.3-25.

2 A. C. Chibnall, Sherington: Fiefs and Fields of a Buckinghamshire Village, (C.U.P. 1965), p.106. Chibnall found that at Sherington the Domesday virgate was reckoned at 30 acres but that arable did not amount to more than 20-25 acres including the fallow.

The 1635 schedule gives the total acreage of arable and of meadow held by each tenant in each field together with the size of each tenement in virgates. Table 7 sets out this information in tabular form and from it one can see that the largest single group of virgates was that containing 24.5 acres. The remainder were for the most part between 26-28 acres and a few were just under the standard level and contained only 22.5 acres. So 24 acres of arable and meadow in 1635 was considered to be a virgate in 1635, and with each customary virgate went a share in the common pasture known as the 'cowcommon' which included a stint of four cows and 24 sheep. The dispersal of land which had constituted 3 virgates in the early fourteenth century allows one a glimpse of the assemblage of arable strips and shares of meadow land known as twodelrods which made up a virgate at this earlier date. The terriers of these virgates are set out in Appendix I and II. From these we learn that a virgate consisted of some 20 acres arable with additional meadow and rights to common pasture. We do not know how many two-dol-rods there were to an acre but there could be as many as ten to the virgate and Adam de Kibworth held 5½ acres pasture with his half virgate, so one can assume that with each virgate went about four acres meadow.

However, one cannot be content with these fourteenth century land measurements unless one has some way of demonstrating that the acres referred to in the terriers are standard acres and not field acres. Fortunately, it is possible to do this. The physical lay-out of the open fields and the furlongs in them has already been described and the point made that the ridges on the ground, which can be seen and counted without difficulty on the 1945 aerial photographs, correspond with the tenurial

Table 7 : The number of acres per yardland of arable and meadow in 1635

Copyholders	Yardlands	Total acreage arable and meadow	Acreage per yardland
Mr. Raye	7	171.25	24.46
W. Watts	3	73.5	24.5
W. Burgess	3	82.5	27.5
T. Coalman	3½	89.5	29.5
J. Bryan	2½	62.5	25
H. Allwood	1	28.5	28.5
R. Standon	3	68	22.6
T. Carter	2½	56.25	22.5
N. Oswin	1½	40.25	26.8
R. Burdett	½	17.75 (less 4.25 for the swathes = 27 acres)	(35.5)
W. Goode	½	18	(36)
R. Bryan	½	12.25	24.5
H. Bryan	½	12.25	24.5
R. Chapman	½	11.25	22.5
R. West	½	12.5	25
W. Carter	½	13.75	27.5
N. Lount	½	11.75	23.5
Freeholders			
W. Parker	3¼	87.75	27
W. Graunt	1	24	24
Mr. Buswell	3¾	99.5	26.5
Mr. Sacheverall	4	118.75	29.68
G. Fox	2¼	57	25.3
N. Kinde	1	26.5	26.5
Widow Foxton	¼	5.25	(21)
R. Carter	½	12.25	24.5
J. Smith	½	10.75	21.5
Widow Hames	½	5.5	(11)
Glebe	-	7.5	-

Thus, 7 yardlands contained 22.5 acres each.
12.5 " " 24.5 " "
3.75 " " 25.0 " "
6.25 " " 26.5 " "
11.75 " " 27-28 " "
1.75 yardlands are anomalous and are bracketted

strips marked in by the surveyor on the 1780 map. Further, it has already been noted that the length of the furrows on Banwell Furlong is roughly the standard length for all the early furlongs. To measure the length of the Banwell ridges was not an impossible undertaking.

Banwell furlong measures 31 standard acres and contains 117 strips, the last seventeen of which on the eastern end are less than full length on the ground. Interference is caused at the centre of the furlong by a rectangular pit on its southern boundary (possibly the original 'Ban-well'?) which causes the furrows in this area to be some 120 feet short of the norm. If we leave these shortened furrows out of our calculations, we are left with an average furrow length of 480 feet. The ridges are 24 feet wide which gives us an aerial measurement of 24 x 480 feet or 11,520 square feet. The Banwell ridge measured just over a quarter of an acre.[1] This is very convenient, since we can take one ridge to equal one rood.

It is reassuring to note that the fourteenth century terriers for Kibworth Harcourt record an awareness of the difference between acres and roods which the writers of seventeenth century inventories frequently overlook. (For a discussion of the confusion between acres and roods in the latter century see Appendix IV). Merton College made a measured survey of the demesne at Cuxham in Oxfordshire shortly after 1318, based on the statute acre,[2] and it is possible that a similar one was made for Kibworth at the same time, as part of the considerable reorganisation being carried out in Kibworth during this period.

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1 I am glad of the opportunity offered here to record my gratitude to Mr. Aggas of Kibworth Beauchamp who measured these furlongs for me on a cold January day.

2 P. D. H. Harvey op. cit. p.42.

Only one of the terriers is not measured in acres and roods, and that is the one for Alan de Portsmouth's 1½ virgates which are recorded as 109 selions (i.e. ridges), 3 roods, 2 culturas and two bovates.[1]

On these grounds, I have taken the standard virgate to contain 24 acres throughout the period 1300-1700. In comparison with many other areas, 24 acres is rather small for a virgate, so it is worth noting that the virgate in 1066 may have been nearer 36 acres; if 1440 acres was considered to be 10 ploughlands in 1066, then there were 144 acres to the ploughland, and if there were four virgates to the ploughland, then there were 36 acres to the virgate. Ploughlands are generally taken to mean cultivated lands and therefore, would not have extended over the whole 1440 acres, but they give us the necessary clue to the number of shares, and with equal shares in arable went, unless it can be shown to the contrary, equal shares in the pasture. The reduction of virgate shares from 36 to 24 acres provides food for thought, since many of the virgates on the Gloucestershire estates of St. Peter's Abbey, Gloucester, were likewise reduced by twelve acres during the interval between 1066 and 1300.[2]

The distribution of strips in the open fields

Three types of evidence all yield the same conclusion, namely, that each tenant held strips in each of the three fields.

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1 M.M. 6368.1.

2 See Chapter Eight.

The first is a terrier drawn up in about 1300 for Alan de Portsmouth's land.[1] Alan had received from his uncle, William de Merton, a share in the manor of Kibworth Harcourt which amounted to five virgates. Of these one and a half were without a customary tenant and a terrier was drawn up to describe the strips involved. This provides us with a clear picture of three great open fields each made up of several furlongs and a few cultures. The term cultura seems here to mean a small piece of land held in severalty, what is more usually called a toft in Leicestershire.[2] In the East field, Alan held a cultura at Thorpes Well, and in the West field 'super Seladewong tota cultura' - this may refer to Slab Meadow. It would appear that his selions in the furlongs lay grouped together since if they lie in more than one part of the furlong the scribe is at pains to say so, thus 'in Debdale unum selionem in uno loco et in alio loco unum selionem'. In the North field he held three parts of four selions in Darlicrest and three parts in Norshul, and half a selion next to Maymoor, but otherwise he held complete selions. The vocabulary of selions and cultures is peculiar to this terrier; other contemporary terriers use the terms acres and roods, and would have described the above as three out of the four roods in Darlicrest ... and half a rood next to Maymoor. His land was fairly evenly distributed; 37 selions, 3 roods and 1 cultura in the East field whose total acreage was 414.4.34; 42 selions

1 MM. 6368.1.

2 The Latin word cultura was commonly used to translate the term "furlong" by scribes from all parts of England. It is probably used in this sense in MM. 6421.3a (Dec. 1422) quoted on p.117. However, it is highly improbable that Alan de Portsmouth or any other man in Kibworth Harcourt circa 1300 held a complete furlong in severalty. In this case it seems reasonable to suppose that the scribe was referring to a small, enclosed piece of ground held in severalty. By this date a toft in Leicestershire had come to mean "a piece of ground generally, more especially in the sense of a clearing on high ground." (L.F. Hoskins "The Fields of Wigston Magna" TLAS 19 (1935-37) p 195. The difference between a very small furlong and a large toft can, in the last analysis, only be a matter of personal judgement.

in the North field out of the 415 acres in that field and 30 selions, 1 cultura in the West field with a total acreage of 467.6.16 acres.

Thus for circa 1300 we have an unequivocal example of strips evenly divided between the three great fields. More than three hundred years later we are provided with a more comprehensive terrier, the Survey of the whole manor made in 1635.[1] This sets out clearly the acreage of land in each field belonging to the 15 copyholders and from this we learn that their land was evenly distributed over the three fields. For the remaining customary and free tenants the Survey simply gives the total arable 'in the fields'. The reason for this abrupt change on the part of the surveyor is not known, but we are fortunate in being able to put beside it a terrier of School Land drawn up in 1675 which mentions the neighbours to each strip of school land.[2] Among these neighbours are many whose lands were lumped together by the 1635 surveyor as being simply 'in the fields'. The School Terrier shows that their land was also distributed across three fields, and moreover was not consolidated within those fields but lay in scattered strips. Evidently, enclosure such as had been achieved, had not seriously undermined the open field system with its communal grazing rights even by 1675.

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1 M.M. 5.17.

2 Leics. Museum, Archives Dept. 46'28/98.

Table 8 : Number of strips mentioned in 1675 School Terrier

	East Field	North Field	West Field
Ray	5	6	6
Watts	2	3	2
Burgess	1	2	1
Sheffield (Coalman)	2	0	3
*Carter	6	2	8
West	0	1	0
*Lount	3	2	2
*Parker	15	13	13
*Graunt	3	0	2
*Fox	2	1	3
*Smith	0	1	1
Cave	2	1	2
Guy (Allwood)	3	6	4
Cox	4	4	8
Parsons	0	2	3
Clarke	0	1	3

* Those asterisked are those for whom no details of distribution are given in the 1635 schedule.

The third approach is the more general one that the probate inventories for village after village in Leicestershire show that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries farmers were planting exactly equal acreages of peas and spring barley. If communal grazing was still practised, and judging from the constant alteration to by-laws it was, then these farmers must have had an equal number of acres in each of the three fields. Unfortunately, the Kibworth appraisors adopted the custom of giving a value for the whole crop rather than the acreage and so do not confirm what we already know to have been the case, namely that land was evenly distributed

over the three fields. However, it does strengthen the argument from the terriers to know that Kibworth was no exception to common Leicestershire practice.

Land use

The staple crops at Kibworth throughout the period were peas and spring barley. Occasionally, a few acres of barley land were allocated to wheat and rye, and by Cole Bridge Ford flax was presumably grown in Flax Meadow. It is frequently argued that peas followed barley in the rotation but common sense and the few scraps of evidence that there are would suggest the reverse. Barley does not like too rich a soil and barley ground needs to be well ploughed, up to five times before sowing, says Fussell.[1] For both reasons it should follow peas as is indeed the modern practice. At Kibworth it was the practice to dole out the fallow field for sheep walks and a by-law for 1611 runs, 'No inhabitant shall keep his sheep on the separate doles until six days after the grain called whitcorne has been carried away'. J. Blagrave alters Fitzherbert's term 'whitcorne' to 'wheatcorn',[2] but the use of the term in the Leicestershire inventories suggests that it could equally well be used to describe barley. Either way, since wheat and barley occupied the same field, the by-law would suggest that fallow followed a straw crop not peas. As to how many successive years a field remained under the same crop we have no means of telling.

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1 R. Hilton, VCH Leics II, p.159-161 and G. E. Fussell, 'Four Centuries of Leicestershire Farming,' T.L.A.S. 24 (1949), p.162.

2 J. Blagrave, The Epitome of the Whole Art of Husbandry, (London 1669) in which he transcribes a passage from Fitzherbert's The Boke of Husbandry (London 1534), p.21a.

The heavy clay soil and the equally heavy plough used in these parts of Leicestershire made necessary a plough team of up to eight beasts, including a high proportion of milch kine and brood mares.[1] In addition, small holders could keep a few sheep, more or less according to domestic requirements and the condition of the wool market. A common bull was provided by the lord, though by the seventeenth century some tenants kept their own bulls and stallions.[2] A common fold was also in use, one which constantly needed repair, but during the winter months the wet clay of the fields made it impossible to fold the flocks on them overnight, and manuring had to be carted and spread by hand.

There are three main sources for information concerning land use. First, the by-laws which begin to be written down in the fifteenth century and become steadily more detailed until by the seventeenth century we are in a position to reconstruct the farming calendar with considerable precision. They do not add anything new to what the Orwins[3] and Professor Ault[4] have already made familiar to social historians, but there are a few points such as the dates of ploughing and sowing for which it is useful to have exact knowledge for Leicestershire. I have therefore, set them out here for much the same reason as I have set out some of the inventories in Chapter Five, to remind myself and the reader that the peasant himself was

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1 L.R.O. Inventories for probate. Kibworth Harcourt.

2 M.M. Bailiff's Accounts passim. Also L.R.O., DE 242. The Enclosure Award 1781.

3 C. S. and C. S. Orwin, The Open Fields, (O.U.P. 1967).

4 W. O. Ault, Open Field Farming in Medieval England, (London 1972).

more immediately aware of the limits imposed by traditional practices and of the security offered by well understood community rights and duties than he was of the unbending forces of supply and demand; that the rationale behind his actions was seldom a purely economic one.

I have followed the cycle made familier to us by the Orwins and have inserted Kibworth dates and figures for Kibworth peculiarities where indicated.[1] The Orwins begin the cycle at the end of the harvest when the grain had been carried off the fields and the gleaners had worked over them again. Then the horses and cattle were allowed on the stubble and six days later the sheep (1679). In 1686 the sheep were not allowed onto the barley field until two days after the grain had been carried nor onto the peas field until twelve days after the peas had been carried. Only those who owned land could drive their stock onto the stubble. On 11 November the stock were driven off that portion of the barley field which was to be sown with wheat so that it could be ploughed - an indication that the ground had previously been under peas not grass - and by 30 November 'the wheat shall be laid' i.e. sown. Then each landholder had to fence his share of the field or furlong and the jurors made their round to check mere stones, the hinging of gates across paths and to take note of encroachments.[2] All the ways and ditches had to be cleared by 30 November (1611), and the clods of earth left up on the headlands by the turning ploughs had to be shovelled back onto the ridges between September and Christmas. Only sheep could be grazed on the

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1 Appendix III provides a list of references to the by-laws, 1430-1686.

2 M.M. 2784. A list of encroachments dated 16 May 1609.

fallow field during winter and summer, the stint being twenty-four to the yardland, but a memo made in 1609 noted that 4 cows and 30 sheep per stint was 'unreasonable'.[3] In 1679 some of the fallow field was added to the cowpasture which was 'doled out' but cattle were not allowed on these separate doles until six days after the 'whitcorne' had been carried. This suggests the permanent grassing over of arable land and an increase in the cattle stint for those who had so converted their arable. Horses and kine could be tethered on the headlands among the sown furlongs until 24 June or 1 August, but they had to be led not driven to the tying ground (1434, 1545). Pigs had to be ringed and accompanied by a swineherd and had to be off the fields by 9 October. Geese had to be off the fields by 1 February. Stray beasts were impounded and became the charge of the frankpledge men;[1] there were not many strays: a horse, a cow and a couple of sheep per year. The peas field was driven 'when the first hopper (seedlip) doth go to the field to sow peas'. According to Professor Hoskins this was often as early as January or early February in Leicestershire.[2] The barley field had been ploughed in October and again in late February or March when it was sown and fenced. By the end of April the new grass would be appearing and on 1 May the common herd of cattle (belonging to those with rights to cowcommon) were allowed upon the common until 8 May but not the plough beasts or mares with foals. Having been grazed once, the meadows were fenced off

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1 M.M. court rolls passim. Strays are noted at most sessions of the court and the name of the man holding the animal is given. Careful comparison shows him to have been invariably one of the frankpledgemen.

2 W. G. Hoskins, Provincial England (MacMillan 1965), p.153.

3 M.M. 2784.

for hay and mown at the end of June or early July. A man could only gather hay off his own share of the meadows, or swathes as they were called, and the hay had to be carted by 1 August when the 'aftermath' or 'lammas' was broken for common grazing until 1 November, but stinted to one cow and her calf per yardland. Since little wheat was grown, and that on the barley field which probably followed peas in the rotation there was no need to summer plough the fallow field, a point of no small significance as will later be seen. Towards the end of August the wheat was ready to be cut, followed by barley in early September and peas later in the month. Not as many by-laws centre round the harvest as one might have expected; the most frequent is the injunction that mares drawing the harvest wains and later wagons should not be accompanied by their offspring who were by this time old enough to wreak havoc amidst the standing grain and stooks.[1] Gleaners were not allowed to enter a furlong whilst there were still stooks waiting to be carried (1679) and in 1686 it was ordained that 'he that hath two cows (i.e. half a virgate) shall gather no clots (dung) nor gleane, nor rake any corne or beans or straw upon other men's lands', which is interesting because it makes gleaning the right of the economically poor rather than of the physically weak, which suggests a group of sturdy poor in the area. Winter, reckoned to begin in October, saw the threshing of grain, mending of hurdles, carting of dung and preparation for the following year.

The court rolls for the fifteenth century provide a second, albeit not very satisfactory source of information. In 1421 a considerable amount of land lay in the lord's hand at Kibworth

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1 Ault op. cit. p.27-46. Also A.E. Bland, A.A. Brown and R.H. Tawney English Economic History: Select Documents (London 1914) Section IV.4.

and the reeve, Robert Polle, leased certain acres annually at the standard rate of 7d for peas land and 14d for barley land.[1] This is interesting in the light of the seventeenth-century evidence which tells us that in that century also barley ground was exactly double the value of peas ground. Furthermore, these entries give us an insight into the practice of sub-letting just one or two acres which was probably quite common.[2] In fact, it is not improbable that these odd acres had been sublet by their late owners before Merton took over the management of the land. Also, it may not be entirely coincidence that the lessees were vigorous speculators in land at this period; Russell, Brown, Carter, Polle and the miller.

Table 9 : The value of peas and barley land in 1421, also the subletting of the odd acre

Late owner	Tene-ment	Lessee	Acre-age	Pence per acre	Crop
N.Atte Cross	1v.	J. Chapman	5	7d	peas
W. Dawe	1v.	J. Brown	2	7d	peas
J. Man	1v.	J. Brown	2	7d	peas
W. Parker	1v.	S. Carter	4	7d	peas
P. Barr	¼v.	R. Milner	1	7d	peas
S. Carter	1v.	J. Brown	2	14d	barley
J. Couper	½v.	J. Russell	1	14d	barley

In December 1422 John Burbage abandoned a messuage and half virgate worth 10s. 0d in rent and a half virgate of demesne worth 12s. 0d to the lord.[3] This was such a common

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1 M.M. 6420.8.

2 T.A.M. Bishop. 'Assarting and the Growth of the Open Fields.' Ec.H.R. vi (1935), 13-29.

3 M.M. 6421.3a.

occurrence at this period that a body of Supervisors had been set up to assess the damages suffered by the property during the late owner's occupancy. In this case they assessed the damage at half a mark and went on to report that five acres had yet to be ploughed and another seven needed a second ploughing, the cost of which, at 8d an acre would come to 8s. 0d. From this it would seem that they did not think that the five acres would need a second ploughing so it must have been destined for a peas crop, whereas the seven acres were destined for barley. The sum of 8d per acre for a single ploughing is interesting; is it equivalent to the wages of two men and a boy and provender for the beasts?

At the same December court William of Leycester surrendered a quarter of a virgate on account of old age. The assessors found that the land had been once ploughed and his pledgers undertook to give it a second ploughing before 1 February. Later it was found that 3½ roods had not yet received a first ploughing and 7 roods needed a second ploughing. At 3d a rood '<u>per quale cultura</u>' the cost would be 2s. 8d. William Norman also surrendered a quarter of a virgate of demesne which had been once ploughed and his pledgers undertook to give it a second ploughing before 1 February. Evidently ploughing was expected to be finished by the end of January when the peas were sown. Adam Polle's land was found to lie in good condition in two 'cultures'. Entries such as these provide little conclusive evidence when taken in isolation, but taken together they substantiate the topographical evidence for three open fields, for only spring crops, for 'cultura' meaning a toft or isolated group of ridges held perhaps in severalty.

Our third source, the probate inventories, throw abundant light on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[1] They show the increasing independence of farming practice within the open field system and at the same time they show how closely this independence was tied to the size of a man's holding which offers a retrospective clue to the secret of the stability of the older economy based on the virgate for so many centuries and points once again to the importance of inheritance customs.

No great change took place in the cropping of arable during the early modern period. Some of the more substantial farmers grew a little wheat for home consumption and beans tended to replace peas towards the end of the seventeenth century, but the staple crops remained barley and peas. Where the change came was in the conversion of arable to pasture within the framework of the medieval open field system. In this respect Kibworth Harcourt may stand as a type for the villages to the north of Market Harborough which built up a reputation for producing some of the best grazing in the land, while remaining 'unenclosed'.

For the purposes of this enquiry, I have taken as the standard pattern of land use, the form for which the common

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1 The inventories for the Archdeaconry of Leicester have been indexed by H. Hartopp, 'Leicestershire Wills and Administrations 1495-1649 (Brit. Rec. Soc. XXVII) and 1660-1750 (Brit. Rec. Soc. LI). The inventories themselves have been mounted and bound into files according to the date of the granting of probate. Some files contain the inventories for one year only, others contain a group of years. The original methods of indexing have been retained and these vary over the years as clerks replaced one another; in some, the inventories are numbered, in others they are arranged alphabetically by author, in others there is no index at all. However, given the name of the testator, his village and the date of probate, it is possible, with patience, to find the inventory. Therefore, I have not given references to individual inventories cited in the pages which follow, but have been careful to give the date.

field system was ideally suited, the tenement of Thomas Deykyn. Deykyn died in 1544 leaving 6 acres under barley, 3¼ under wheat, and 8½ under peas. If we allow for a further 8 acres fallow we arrive at a total of 25 acres or one yardland. He also left 9 cows, and two bullocks; he was, in fact, entitled to a stint of 4 cows and 24 sheep, and this together with his fallow and pasture would be sufficient for his eleven 'great beasts'. So we learn that Deykyn had been cultivating the maximum acreage of land and kept only enough livestock to work his plough and supply his dairy. He kept no sheep. In 1568, John Iliffe with 88 acres was similarly making the maximum use of arable, also William Marshall in 1607 with 15 acres, Samuel Clarke in 1692 with 12 acres and William Carter in 1709 with 38 acres.

At one remove from this norm were those who divided their lands equally between arable and pasture, notably the Carter family with their 60 acres and 2½ stints supporting 10 cows and 60 sheep. When he died in November 1603, William Carter's 17 cows, 2 colts, 69 old sheep and 24 lambs required some 25 acres in addition to the stint. His crops in store were worth £46. Barley in the latter part of 1603 was worth 15s. 0d a quarter, and peas 13s. 0d in Leicestershire and if he had planted the conventional 20 acres barley and 20 acres peas his yields would have been of the order of 40.8 qtrs. barley and 23.6 acres peas worth £46.[1] Since he had 30-40 acres available for arable the strong probability is that the crops in store were

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1 See Chapter Five.

in fact the produce of his land. In other words, some 25 acres were devoted to pasture and 35 to arable. The inventory for Thomas Carter in October 1641 tells the same story of 25 acres pasture and 35 arable as does the inventory for William Carter in 1670, but there is the note that an £150 mortgage had been raised on the land. By 1709 the holding had been reduced to 30 acres and 2½ cowcommons and William Carter had given up his horses and mares, cut down the number of cows and sheep to the number his cowcommons alone could support, and concentrated upon cultivating 25 acres of arable.

At two removes from the norm were Thomas Raye in 1559 and Robert Standley in 1639 who cultivated little more than a third of their arable and kept the remainder under grass. Raye held 206 acres leasehold of old demesne and no cowcommon. His 2 bulls, 14 cows, 6 heifers, 11 yearling calves, 1 stud, 7 geldings, 4 mares, 2 foals and 180 hoggerels required 137 acres. His wheat in store in October was worth £6 13s. 4d which would be about 15 qtrs. at current prices and would represent the produce of 8 acres. His barley was worth £18, that is 40 qtrs. or the produce of 20 acres. His peas were worth £13 6s. 8d, that is 33 qtrs. or the produce of 33 acres or less. Thus there was a fairly even distribution between peas field and cornfield. This gives an approximate total of 60 acres and he had two ploughs. This approximation fits comfortably into the 69 acres of land Raye did not need for his livestock. It is reasonable to conclude that of his 206 acres, 137 or more were under grass and 60 under crop. There is no way of telling whether <u>all</u> his pasture came under the plough at regular intervals, but one can claim that, if he so wished, he was in a position to practise up and down husbandry.

Robert Standley's main holding was near Loughborough but he had 73 acres leasehold in Kibworth Harcourt including cowcommon. Of this, he was ploughing about 20 acres and kept 9 cows and 4 horses on his stint and fallow. Of the remaining 40-50 acres nothing is stated in the inventory save that George Fox, Robert Bryan and the village shepherd, Christopher Hubbard, owed him £13 12s. 8d. In the light of the following paragraph, it would seem that this money was the rent due from pasture leased to these three men, pasture which amounted to two thirds of his land in Kibworth.

In 1605 Robert Bryan and in 1672 George Fox, were concentrating on sheep and dairy farming. According to the 1635 survey George Fox held 52.2.6 acres of tillage, 4.1.39 acres of meadow, 1.3.35 acres of meres and 2 cowcommons, a total of 59 acres. In February 1672 when his inventory was drawn up, his livestock occupied 47 acres over and above the stint. He had only twelve quarters of wheat, barley and peas in store and he had no plough. If he had land under the plough, then he must have been leasing additional grazing either from somebody like Robert Standley or from his relatives in Fleckney where the Kibworth branch of the Fox family had enjoyed the use of a virgate in the sixteenth century. Concentration upon sheep farming alone cannot have been lucrative, even if we allow him 3 lb of wool per sheep at 20s. Od a tod, his annual wool revenue would not have exceeded £15. The description of his house and furniture supports this impression of a relatively modest income, which must have been supplemented from the proceeds of an inn, since strangers occasionally died at Fox's

house.[1] What is of particular significance about Fox's inventory is that it shows us that the 52 acres described as tillage in the 1635 survey were in fact pasture. The 1675 terrier of school land also describes most of Fox's strips as leys, headlands or doles.[2] In 1605 Robert Bryan had more sheep than his 36 acres could support. He needed 81 acres pasture and he had some crops in the ground. He too must have been leasing pasture either from Standley, with whom his name is associated, or from other members of his family who held another 2½ yardlands of copyhold in Kibworth Harcourt and half a yardland in Smeeton Westerby. His annual revenue from 180 sheep cannot have amounted to more than £19 from wool sales, and if his 15 cows yielded a gallon of milk a day which the contemporary writer Gervase Markham, reckons was 'good', then they would have been bringing in about £37 a year.[3] Like Fox he enjoyed other sources of income, he was a butcher and he ran an inn, the Rose and Crown. In this case also, the Bryan land in 1635 is described as predominantly arable, whereas in practice it was pasture.

There remains a fifth category, those who sublet their cophyolds. Robert Oswyn was subletting 30 acres in 1573, which practice was still continued by his descendant, William Oswyn in 1674. By 1673 Robert Watts was subletting the 88 acres John Iliffe had been farming in 1568. Thomasine Coalman lived in Great Bowden and sublet 96 acres in Harcourt to William Smyth

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1 Kibworth Parish Register 1574-1725 f.46b (1658).

2 Leics. Museum 46'28/98.

3 Gervase Markham, Countrey Contentments or the English Huswife (London 1623), p.175.

in 1646.[1] In 1635 Nicholas Lount had only 4 cows on a cowpasture and 11 acres arable so may have been subletting. After 1618 Raye was licensed to sublet his leasehold lands,[2] and by 1679 William Burgis was licensed to sublet 91 acres, Joanna Woolman to sublet one eighth of a yardland reserving to herself 1 cowpasture, and Edward Avery to sublet the western half of that messuage which had once belonged to John Bryan.[3] Correspondingly, lessees were taking up these leases, mostly outsiders. Mr. George Buswell, gent., of Cadeby held 105 acres and many small tenements in the village. He also bought some 30 acres of land in Wigston Magna in 1623 where he is described by Professor Hoskins as 'an outsider who was buying other small properties in the village'.[4] Another such was Mr. Sacheverall who in 1635 held the 129 acres once farmed by the Polle family.

Several observations may be made upon these findings. In the first place the distinction between arable and pasture which is made by the 1635 survey is theoretical rather than descriptive. 'Tillage' meant more than land which could be ploughed, it meant land which was subject to common grazing in winter and when fallow. So whether it was actually ploughed or not it remained subject to communal by-laws, and its possession entitled the owner to grazing rights in the cowpasture and fallow and a share in the meadow commensurate with the acreage of his arable. Secondly, men with under 30 acres tended to

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1 L.R.O. DE/526/126 Humphrey Papers. Indenture between Thomasine Coleman and William Sheffield, dated 16 May 1646.

2 M.M. Book of Leases p.282a.

3 M.M. 6448.

4 W. G. Hoskins, The Midland Peasant (MacMillan 1957), p.203.

exploit their arable to the full or to sublet it. Men with over 30 acres often altered the traditional proportions between arable and pasture in favour of pasture, putting down 50-70% to grass.

With barley and peas prices doing so well and wool prices more or less static the question arises, why did the larger farmers prefer to extend their pasture? The answer may lie in some quite simple factor such as rising meat prices or the desire to reduce labour costs. But it may lie in more sophisticated considerations. If, as Dr. Kerridge suggests, the up and down system was fairly widely known and appreciated by the seventeenth century, then the expansion of pasture may reflect the adoption of up and down husbandry and a consequent increase in the crop yield per acre.

Dr. Kerridge sets out the case for up and down husbandry as follows.[1] The open field system could accommodate two forms of pasturing. There was land over which the township had the right to pasture the common flocks and herd when it was fallow, but which could be hedged around or fenced off for meadow before Lammas: this was known as tenantry land. Then there was land, usually demesne land, over which the township enjoyed no such rights, and this was known as severalty land. Thomas Raye's land at Kibworth is a good example of the latter type, it did not look like enclosed land since it lay in scattered strips among the open fields with one or two compact blocks, but he enjoyed no rights of pasture on tenantry land nor the villagers on his.

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1 E. Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution, (London 1967).

If the holder of tenantry land wished to decrease his arable and keep more livestock, he could grass over some of his arable strips but he could not withdraw them from the use of the common herd when the field lay fallow or under stubble. Instead he was in many villages allowed to keep more beasts in the herd, usually two sheep per acre put down to grass. The village could reach a common decision to increase the pasture at the expense of the arable, in which case every landholder was required to grass over a number of strips in the same furlong which then became part of the cowpasture. Individuals could not then plough up these strips without common consent.

According to Kerridge, one of the underlying principles of open field husbandry was that land was either permanently arable or permanently pasture and the rotation was one which did not allow a quick conversion from arable to pasture. This was because wheat generally came first in the rotation and the ground for wheat was prepared by four or five ploughings in summer which thoroughly exposed and destroyed the grass roots as it was intended it should. This meant that when the land was returned to fallow it did not readily sward over but produced a crop of weeds, and then came under the plough again.

Certainly at Kibworth the permanent pasture was never ploughed, but Kerridge's point about the difficulty of swarding over did not apply. This was because the area under winter corn was negligible and the ploughing for the spring crops was done from November to February. Moreover, if as has been suggested, peas preceded barley in the rotation then the usual five ploughings for barley would not have been necessary.

The grass roots therefore, stood a good chance of surviving the period of cultivation and the land would sward over quickly when left to rest.

Up and down husbandry did away not only with the system of permanent pasture and permanent arable, but it also reduced the arable to about a quarter of the total acreage of the holding. However, the reduced acreage produced a higher yield per acre so there was no great loss in grain output while there was a gain in revenue from livestock, since the system improved the soil structure and its fertility while the increased number of livestock carried on the land made available more manure. Production costs were lowered, since fewer ploughs, ploughbeasts and ploughmen were required. It was generally accepted that all grassland whatsoever needed to be ploughed up at least once in twenty years, so graziers were prepared to set aside a portion of their pasture for arable each year, which they either cultivated themselves or leased to nearby corngrowers or to local smallholders in return for their grazing. At Kibworth, George Fox, as we have seen, concentrated on livestock husbandry and kept no ploughs. Standley on the other hand cultivated only his arable and let his grassland to graziers. Raye cultivated only a third of his land, unfortunately we do not know what the other three large farmers in mid seventeenth century Kibworth were doing, namely Parker, Buswell and Sacheverall, but like Raye they were gentry and may well have been as sophisticated in their use of land.

The introduction of up and down husbandry stimulated developments in the area of livestock husbandry. Speaking of

an area within a ten mile radius north of Market Harborough, the management of pasture had become a fine art by the nineteenth century; how often to plough it, which crops would improve it, how to get a better sward, what proportion of animals to put upon it in a given month under prevailing weather conditions. As has already been said, barley was put at the end of the rotation in order to preserve the grass, the land was also heavily manured- not so much for the sake of the crop as for the betterment of the turf coming up underneath it. Lime was brought in from Neville Holt and in later years grass seed was selected and sown two parts perennial rye grass to one part wild white or red clover. As soon as the sown grass could bear it, that is, after a year or eighteen months, cattle were put on it, but not sheep until the third year. This was considered the best year of the ley. After midsummer the pastures were scythed of weeds and broken grass and pricked of thistles. The rate of stocking was usually one beast and two sheep on two acres of temporary ley as against four acres of permanent grass. Graziers kept a permanent stock of riding and cart horses and a few milk cows; over winter their pastures carried sheep fattening for sale in spring and early summer, while in late spring they carried beef stores for summer sale. The number bought depended on the state of the grass which was not allowed to grow too high or be cropped too short. 'The skill of grazing resided in meticulous grassland management, in acute judgement of stock, and in watching the market'.[1]

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1 R. M. Auty op. cit. p.254-7 and Kerridge op. cit. p.110.

The improvement in pasture did not lead to an improvement in cattle weights during the seventeenth century, due to the Leicestershire farmer's habit of weaning calves as young as possible,[1] but it did lead to the introduction of a new breed of sheep; a heavier, polled, long woolled beast which throve on rich pasture. Ultimately these Lustre Longwools usurped the position of the short woolled fallow sheep in the county and swung the Leicestershire wool trade away from the cloth markets of the west midlands to the worsted centres of the north and east, and also made its mark on the London meat market.[2]

The Kibworth inventories record very few beef stores, the emphasis was on dairy cattle, horse rearing and sheep fattening. Livestock prices soared during the period 1550-1630. In 1550 a good cow fetched 20s. 0d, in 1600 40s. 0d, and by 1630 50s. 0d after which prices levelled off to a steady plateau at 50s. 0d. The price of mares rose even more dramatically; in 1550 the average price stood at 15s. 0d, by 1600 it had risen to just over 30s. 0d and by 1630 a good mare fetched 70s. 0d. This sudden increase in the value of saddle horses as well as of carriage horses calls for some explanation; Defoe comments on their numbers in the area and their fine quality but offers no explanation for the shift in market values.[3] The evidence of dairying is less impressive; every household had its cheese press but there are seldom examples of cheeses stored for sale in the cheese chambers of yeomen farmers.

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2. P. Bowden. The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England. (MacMillan 1968)

1. Fussell op. cit. p.160.

3 D. Defoe, A Tour through England and Wales II (Everyman, 1928), p.89-90.

By May 1779 the village lands supported 960 sheep, 96 horses and 48 cows. The control of so much livestock on open fields could present certain problems but these were evidently not insuperable since no movement was made to abolish the open field system at Kibworth or in the surrounding villages. Presumably, preference was given to cows and mares because they could be tethered whereas steers are more difficult to control. Sheepwalks were set aside for the sheep flocks and usually the fallow was reserved for them.[1] When enclosure came to Kibworth, it was not at the instigation of the bailiff or any influential man in the village, but followed on the suggestion of the agent employed by the college to supervise the enclosure of its other Leicestershire manor, at Barkby.[2] He remarked that it would be a good moment to enclose Kibworth as well, and so it was done, causing the minimum of stir either at Kibworth or at Merton. Map 13 shows that most of the other parishes in Gartree Hundred which became famous for their pasture were not enclosed until the late eighteenth century and some not until the nineteenth.

If some farmers were prepared to adopt innovations such as up and down husbandry it comes as no surprise to find permanent quick-set hedges marked on the 1635 map. This was a practice very much in vogue in the sixteenth century not only in the interests of good husbandry but also as a means of providing timber. Among the seventeenth century court rolls for Kibworth survive lists of persons who are to plant specified numbers of

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1 M.M. 6452

2 M.M. 5.17. Correspondence filed in the 1635 Survey Book.

trees, usually in the form of a hedge. One such hedge was planted along the boundary with Turlangton from Whistlegate to Burton Brooke. Others bear the names of seventeenth century landholders; Sheffield, Oswyn, Burgis, and William Barnard. Only Burgis's hedge completely surrounds a small field, all the others run along one side only, separating permanent pasture from arable. None of them imply permanent enclosure, they were simply planted along permanent boundaries between common pasture and common arable.

When we bring together these aspects of land utilisation illuminated by the probate inventories, what emerges for the seventeenth century is an open field village with three great fields each containing an area of permanent pasture in addition to the arable. The arable was ridged up into lands which were coterminous with tenurial strips and were subject to communal rules controlling grazing rights over pasture and arable. A man's strips were more or less equally distributed over the three fields, were not grouped together within one or two furlongs but lay intermingled with the strips of other villagers over many furlongs. The system had been evolved to meet the needs of small holders each desirous to make the maximum use of his arable, while at the same time supporting a sufficient number of plough beasts and, when conditions were favourable, such as in the fifteenth century, some sheep as well. By the seventeenth century the small holders were in the minority and their interests no longer governed the management of the fields. Nevertheless, the old system was continued because it lent itself to adaptation. Large farmers, with a

surplus of land over and above what was needed for subsistence, could exploit this surplus land in accordance with market trends. Some concentrated on livestock, others on arable, others leased it piecemeal to graziers. Meanwhile, the common lands continued to support the livestock of the cottagers, many of whom had lost their land but held on to the grazing rights appurtenant to these lands. Enclosure, when it came, tidied up appearances, but did not fundamentally alter the direction of specialisation, this had already been set towards grassland husbandry as early as the fifteenth century.

CHAPTER FOUR

VILLAGE MORPHOLOGY AND BUILDINGS

The village of Kibworth Harcourt is of peculiar interest in that the morphology of the village can be fairly reliably dated and the majority of the present house sites together with their owners can be traced back to 1484 and some to 1440. The construction of most of the houses standing today, post-war buildings excepted, is of eighteenth-century brick, but, in many cases, behind the brick can still be found the stone footings and cruck framework of the late medieval houses described in the fifteenth-century repair bills. From the sixteenth century onwards the wills and inventories of occupiers tell us something of the interior furnishings of some of these houses. Unlike many villages, the site of this village has not been changed since 1086, nor have messuage sites altered much, and the axis of houses has altered not at all.[1] Yet in spite of this fundamental continuity, the appearance of the village altered considerably between 1086 and 1484.

Investigation into the morphology of the village necessarily begins with the modern maps and works backwards to the maps of 1780, 1635 and 1609. Using the written evidence of court rolls, rentals and wills the process of map making can be carried back

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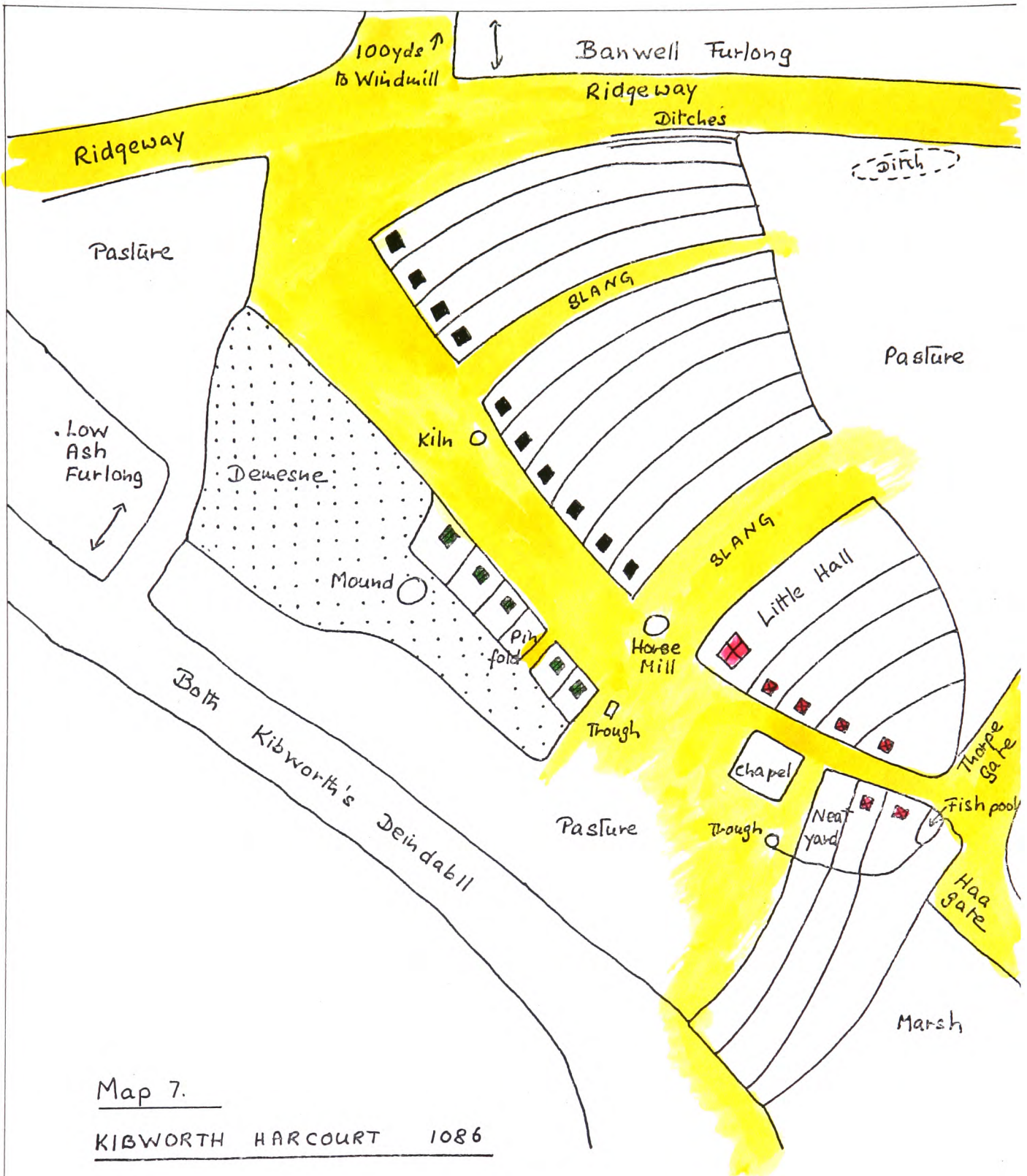
1 D. G. Hurst and J. G. Hurst, 'Excavations of the Medieval Village of Wythemail, Northamptonshire,' Med. Arch. xiii (1969), p.167-203 and the series of reports on Wharram Percy in Med. Arch. i-xv (1957-71). Dr. P. Wade-Martins is currently carrying out a survey of the Norfolk villages.

with confidence to 1484. Beyond this date we enter into an area of speculation. We are much helped at this point by a rental of 1527 which describes many of the village messuages as being 'assart', in other words built on waste land. When these assart lands are plotted on a map and compared with the map of freeholdings the two are seen to coincide. For freeholds in 1527 one can, therefore, substitute wide grass verges, droveways and pasture before 1484. Seen against such a background the manorial buildings and customary tenements stand out clearly, both the older group of customary holdings and the younger group of sokemen's holdings. The infilling of the droveways and central pasture and the encroachment onto the main street had already taken place at the time the 1340 rental was drawn up. It had not taken place when the Domesday description of the manor was made. Map 7 shows a conjectural plan of the village with the 'slangs' or droveways still open, the village street still spacious and grass verged as is typical of the surrounding villages to this day, and enough messuages to accommodate the ten customary tenants, five bordarii, and six sokemen, together with one larger tenement for the Francigenus. Map 8 shows the process by which these same customary tenants found room for their expanding families. Holdings in the open fields were halved, and housing found for the owners of the second half by building, not on the orchards and curtilages of the old messuages, but upon the public ways and the pasture next to the Beauchamp boundary. Map 9 illustrates the process by which this sub-division was reversed. Half virgates once more became full virgates and the houses on the waste became superfluous. Many of them were demolished, but

1. M.M. 6375

the land they had occupied was not returned to public use, it remained in the hands of the families who had utilised it and became free pasture closes. The seventeenth-century maps 10 and 11 show how, as the population slowly expanded again, the process of subdivision was not repeated. Arable holdings remained large, and indeed continued to grow, so that extra-familial labour was required to cultivate them. Their owners, therefore, systematically acquired the freehold sites on the old waste land and erected labourers' cottages on these. This gave rise to a shortage of cottages for old people and for artisans, and so we find in the eighteenth century (map 12) a return to the practice of building cottages on public ways for the 'poor' who were, according to the Poor Law definition, people with claims on the village, i.e. people related to village families. Formerly, they would have been accommodated in the cottages now occupied by farm servants.

The somewhat bold and generalised claims of the last few paragraphs require a fairly detailed exposition of the evidence which lies behind them. At the risk of tedium, I have, therefore, set out the evidence for each of the fifty-five tenements, which, read in conjunction with the maps, should read as clearly as is possible given the variety of documents used. References are not given to the maps of 1609, 1635 and 1780, nor to the rentals unless this is not clear from the text, or to the Parish Register for dates of marriage and death. Not every reference to the court rolls is given, but only the first in order to indicate that the references following are drawn from the court rolls under the date quoted.

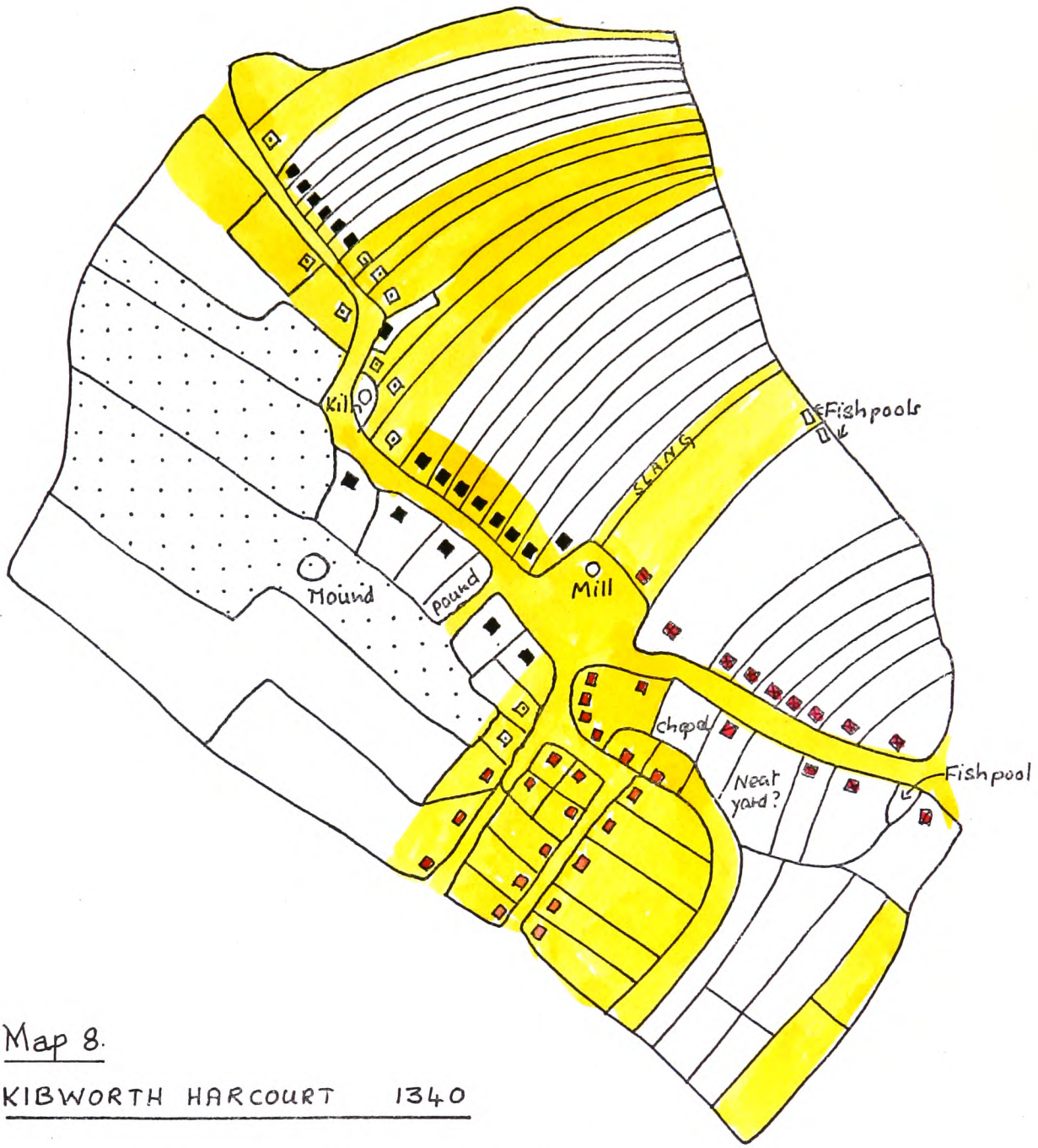


Map 7.

KIBWORTH HARCOURT 1086

■	10	Customary Tenements (villani)	11 virgates	20 virgates
▥	5	Cottage Tenements (Either customary or estate) (bordarii)		
▩	6	Soke Tenements (?)	9 virgates	
▩	1	Francigenus Tenement.		

∴ Demesne land.



Map 8.

KIBWORTH HARCOURT 1340

■ Customary houses on divided customary land

⊡ " " " encroachment on public land

⊠ Sokemen/Apetoft houses on divided Apetoft land

⊠ " " " " encroachment on public land

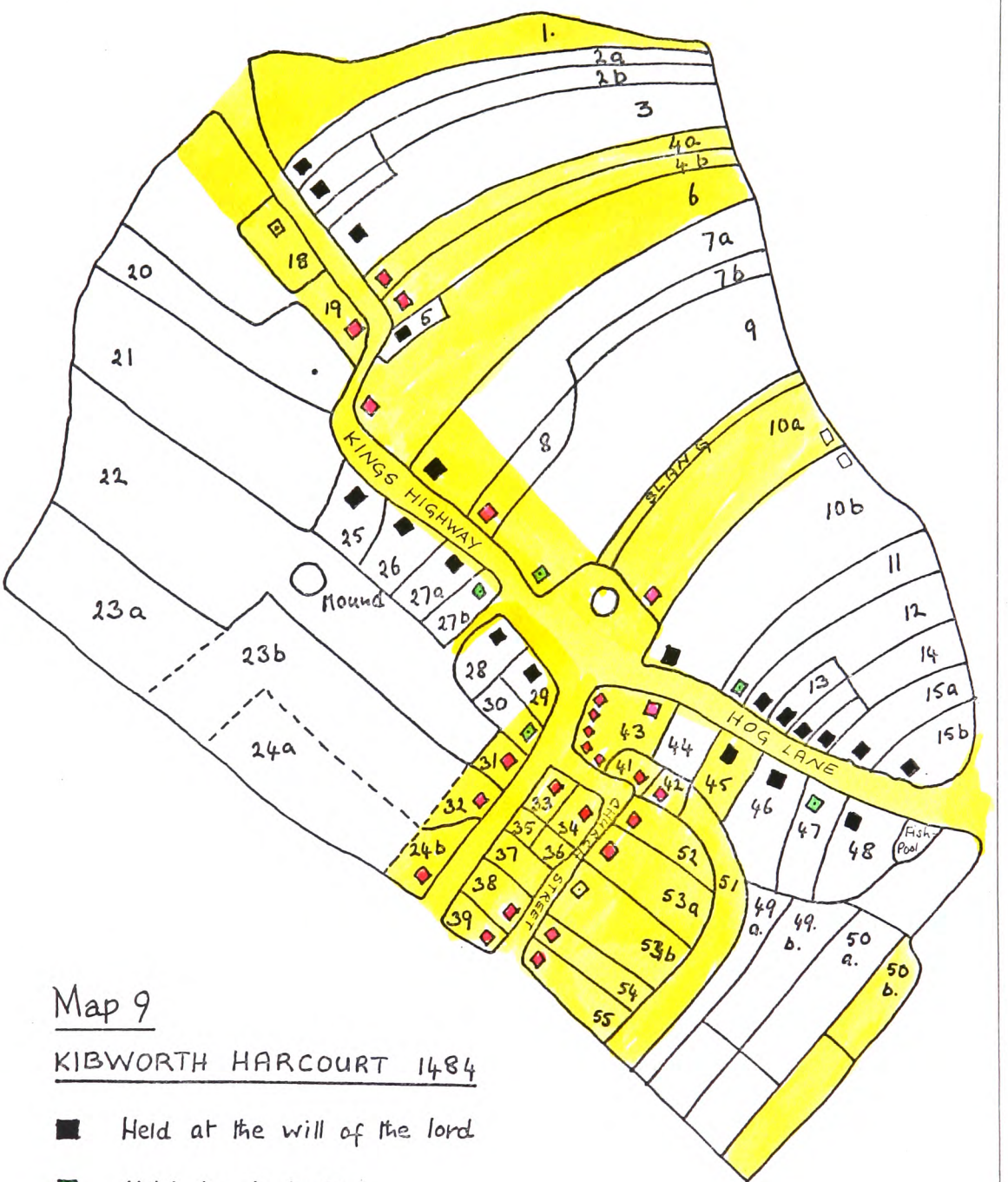
▦ Little hall yard

▦ " " " encroachment on public land

∴ Demesne

Public land encroached upon for building

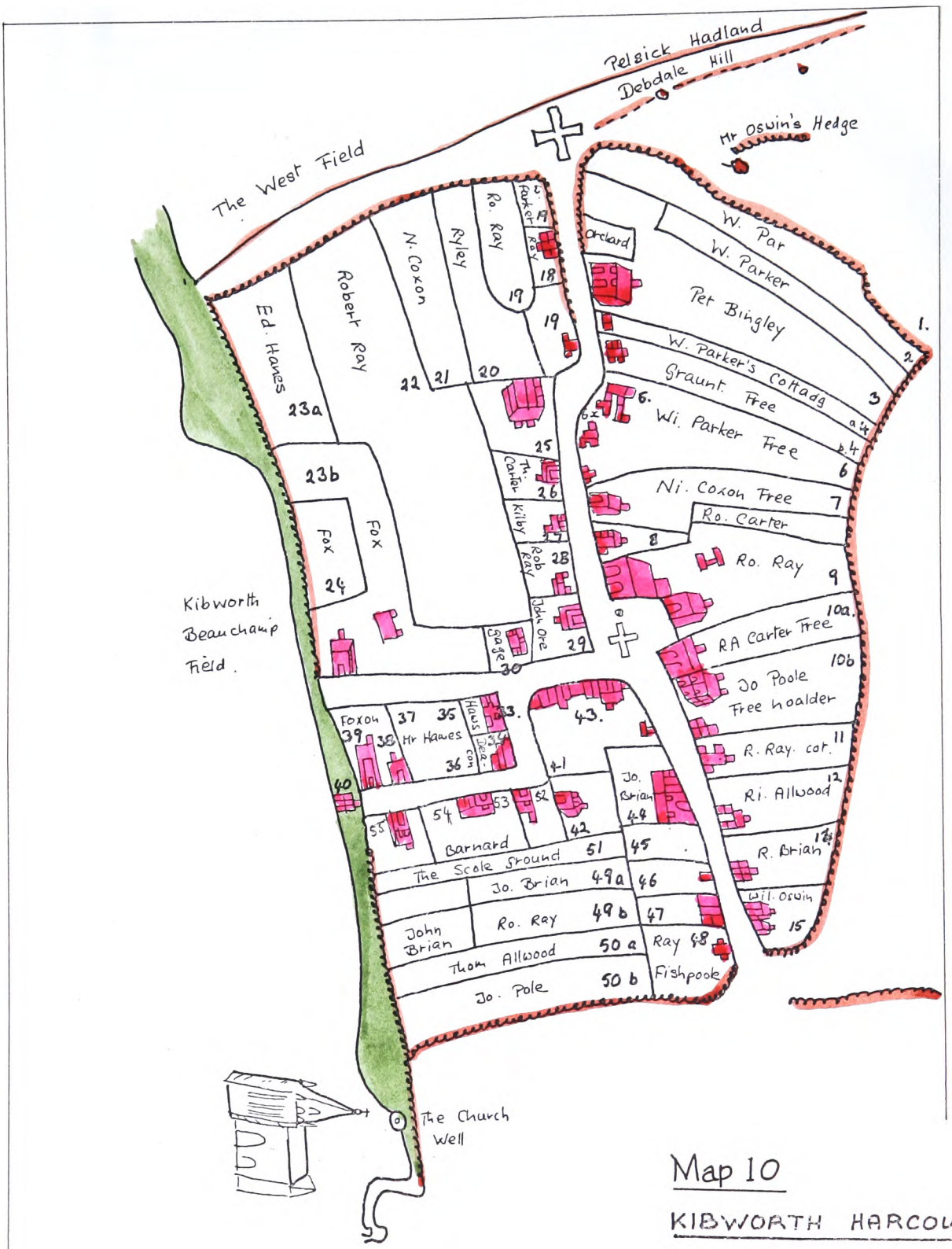
■ Free houses built on public land



Map 9

KIBWORTH HARCOURT 1484

- Held at the will of the lord
- Held by Indenture
- Held freely

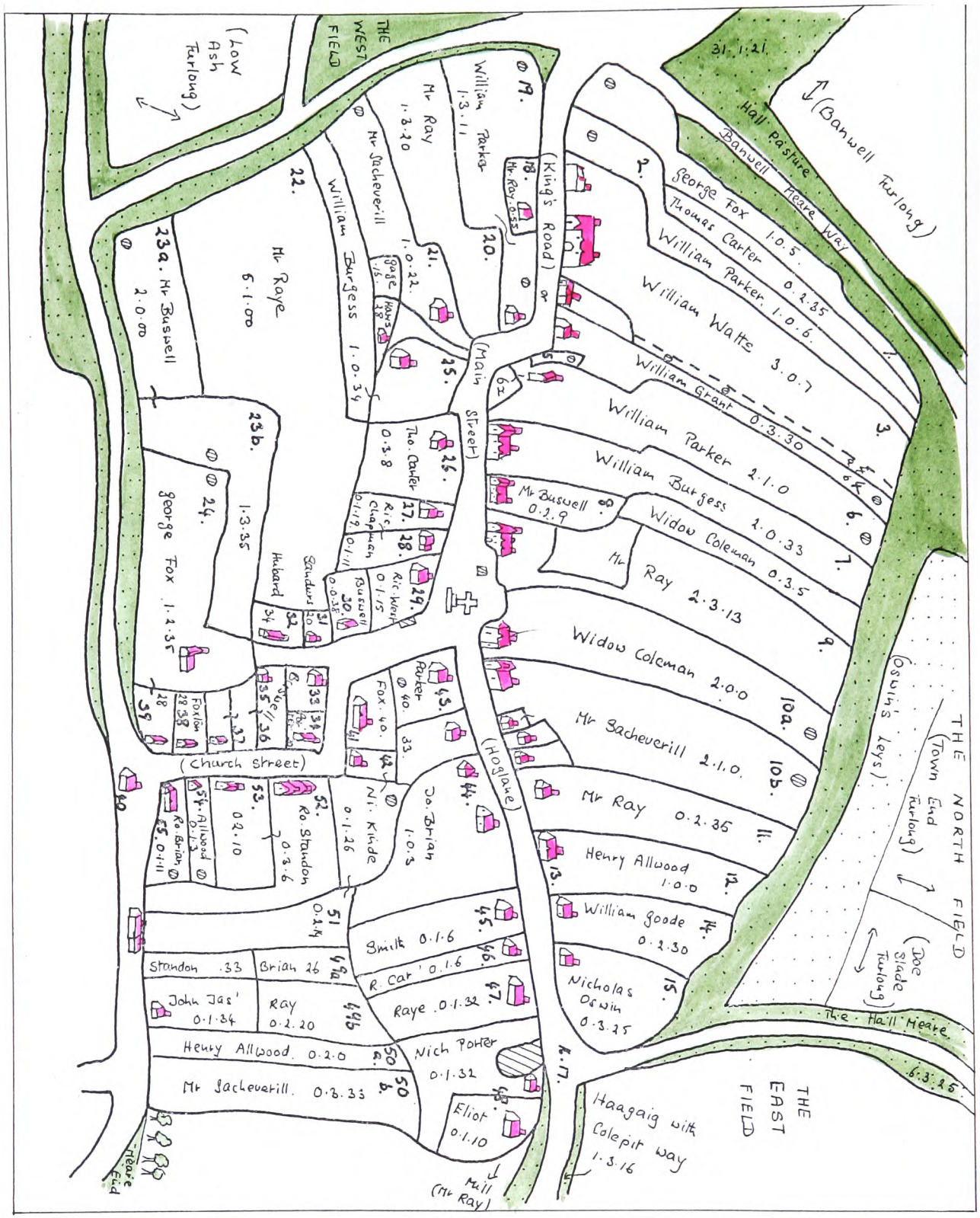


Map 10

KIBWORTH HARCOURT

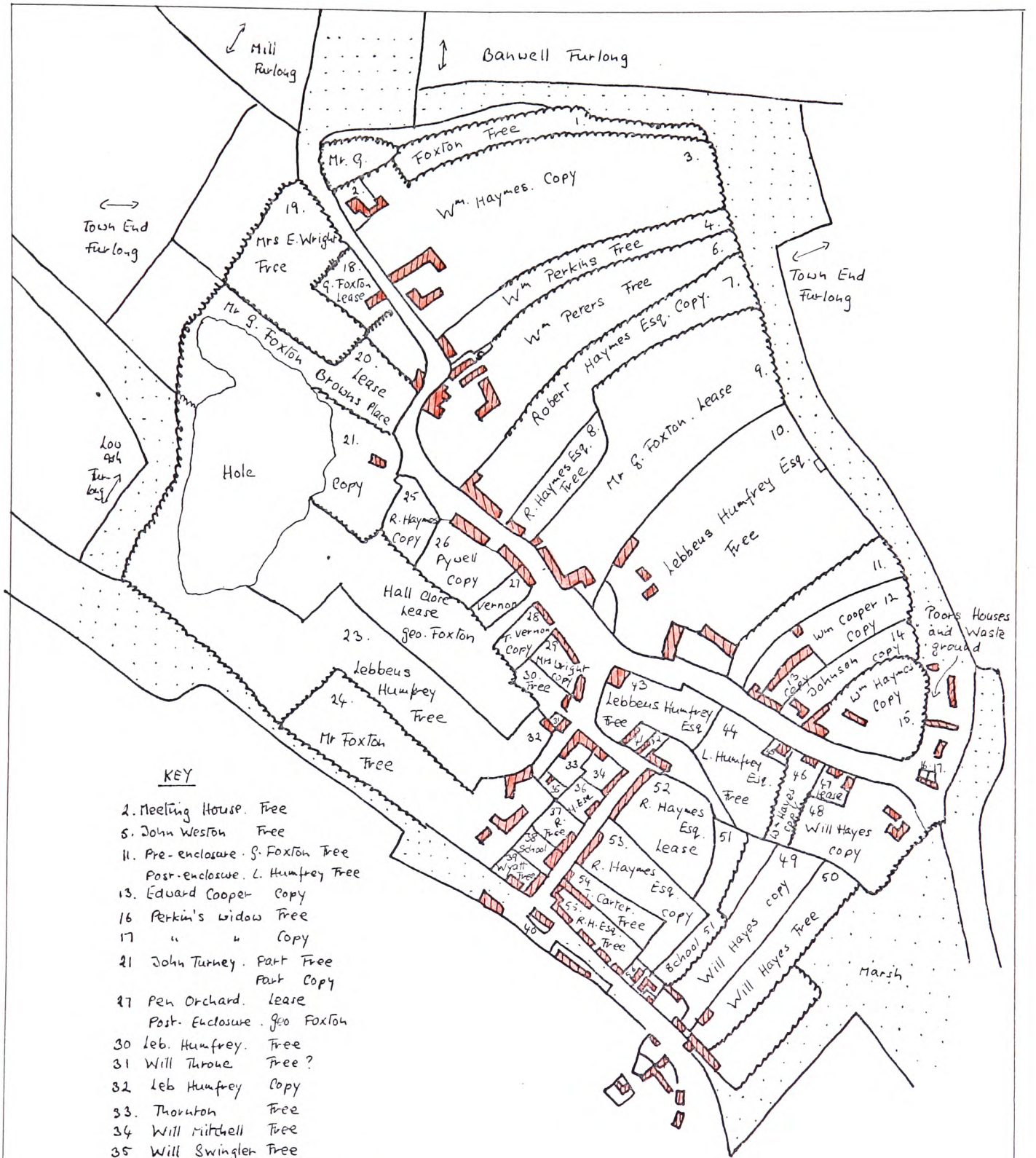
From the 1609 Map.

Numbering of tenements 1–56 inserted to correspond with the 1780 map.



Map 11. Allen's Map of Kibworth Harcourt 1635

Insertions
1. Numbering of tenements from 1–56 to correspond with 1780 Map
2. Names of streets (bracketted)
3. Names of furlongs (bracketted)



KEY

2. Meeting House. Free
5. John Weston Free
11. Pre-enclosure. G. Foxton Free
Post-enclosure. L. Humfrey Free
13. Eduard Cooper Copy
16 Perkin's widow Free
17 " " Copy
21 John Turney. Part Free
Part Copy
27 Pen Orchard. Lease
Post. Enclosure. Geo Foxton
30 Leb. Humfrey. Free
31 Will Throne Free?
32 Leb Humfrey Copy
33. Thornton Free
34 Will Mitchell Free
35 Will Swingler Free
36 Rob Haymes Free
38 Post-enclosure R. Haymes } by exchange
40 " " " } with School
41 Gabriel King Free
42 John Garrett Free
45 Francis Fletcher Free
47 Geo. Foxton. Bruchyard.
51. } Post-enclosure. Rob Haymes
52 } by exchange with School
53 } Free
56. Will. Haymes. allotment.

Map 12.

KIBWORTH HARCOURT

1780

The Customary Tenements North of the King's Road

Ten. 1 known as Townsend Close is described as 'assart' on the 1527 rental and so does not form part of the customary land. The northern end of it is traversed longitudinally by an unexplained series of mounds and ditches. There has been no building on the site since the sixteenth century. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was held as one among many tenements by the Fox and later the Foxton families about whom more will be said later.

Ten. 2 consists of two messuages thrown together to form one tenement held by the Parker family from the fifteenth century until 1743. With these two messuages went two virgates in the open fields. In 1768 the most westerly of the two house-sites was separated from its garden and close and became the site of the Methodist chapel which can still be seen today.[1]

Ten. 3 consists of four half-virgate messuages which were thrown together in the fifteenth century to form a single holding known today as Paddocks Farm. The process of amalgamation can can be traced in the court rolls thus:

1 mes. + ½ v. @ 8s. 4d
John Milner surrendered to Ric. Wynluf 1411-12 @ 10s.1d[2]

1 mes. + ½ v. @ 8s. 4d
Margaret Saunder surrendered ad opus to Ric. Wynluf 1415 @ 10s.0d[3]

1 mes. + ½ v. @ 9s. 6d
William Leycester surrendered to John Caunden (Pledge Ric. Wynluf) 1427 @ 9s.6d[4]

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1 L.R.O. QS/44/2,'43.

2 M.M. 6418, 6419.

3 M.M. 6420.3.

4 M.M. 6421.8.

1 mes. + ½ v. @ 8s. 10½d
John Smith surrendered to Richard Wynluf
1428 @ 8s. 10½d[1]

By 1439 Richard Wynluf held 2 virgates and 4 'cottages' for 32s. 2½d a year.[2] He did not need all the houses and by 1432 the one which had belonged to Nicholas and Margaret Saunder was reported to be in a ruinous condition.[3]

By 1484 Richard de Gretham held the tenement and in 1491 it passed into the family of John Iliffe, of Gumley, and remained with them until 1599.[4] Henry Beaumont then took it for one year only and passed it to Peter Bingley, also from Gumley.[5] By 1635 William Watts held it, possibly in the name of his wife, Margaret Ray, since it passed to his daughter Dorothy rather than to his two sons, Henry and William. Dorothy married Robert Lount of Kibworth Harcourt[6] and their daughter Anne, married William Haymes.[7] By 1780 the various branches of the Haymes family held more than 523 acres and had enlarged Ten. 3 to include Ten. 2 and Ten. 4a.[8] The Stops family from Slawston have farmed it for the last two generations and it is still leasehold.

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1 M.M. 6423.

2 M.M. 6425

3 M.M. 6421.17

4 M.M. 6436, 6447.1.

5 M.M. 6447.5, 6447.7.

6 c. 1662.

7 c. 1694.

8 Bodleian. Ms Top Northants b.1 f.34.

Ten. 4a is characterised by three wells and by the spring at its northern end which supplies the small stream which runs along the northern boundary ditch of the village, through the two fishponds on Tenement 10, to lose itself in the fishpool and marsh at the eastern end of the village. The tenement was held freely by the Parkers from 1428-1743 and had passed to William Haymes by 1780. It was probably in origin part of a drove road to the pasture between Banwell Furlong and the village upon which a cottage was built in the twelfth or thirteenth century to accommodate the owner of a sub-divided virgate, the other half virgate remaining with the older house.

Ten. 4b likewise was held freely by the Parker family. No land was attached to it and it too was probably part of an old drove road enclosed in the twelfth century. The Parkers made a habit of sub-letting it, to the Grants in the seventeenth century and to the Perkins in the eighteenth. The Perkins held grazing rights on the Segges at the boundary with Turlangton.

Ten. 5 was called the Westyard,[1] presumably because it lay immediately to the west of the main Parker holding, tenement 6. The Parkers held it by copyhold from 1484-1743 and on it were three cottages sublet to the Grant and West families in the seventeenth century.[2] After enclosure it became freehold, and three modernised cottages occupy the site today.

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1 M.M. 6375, the 1527 rental under freeholders.

2 Leics. Museum 3036/23 Abstract of the Parker titles 1674-1743.

Ten. 6, like Tenement 4b enjoyed no arable in the open fields, it consists simply of a two acre freehold close. It would seem that it was part of the same droveway as Tenements 4a and 4b and that houses were built on it in the twelfth century to accommodate the extra households which had resulted from the division of a whole virgate holding in the open fields. The Parkers held it from 1484-1743.[1]

Ten. 6x. Some explanation is needed for the abrupt southward swing of the road opposite Tenement 6. It seems that in the T-junction where the droveway entered the main street stood the common kiln where grain could be dried off and barley malted. The kiln belonged to the manor and was leased out, together with eight acres for 3d a year.[1] The Parkers held it from 1484-1743. By 1600 a malt kiln was a common feature in Leicestershire villages; according to the inventories there was at least one in each village, run by a wealthy yeoman. Gervase Markham regarded them as too common to be worth describing and limited his observations to the more unusual type of kiln such as the new French kiln and the traditional Celtic kiln.[2] A common kiln would not only economise in labour but also in that more rare commodity, fuel. The site today is occupied by a recently restored early eighteenth-century house known as The White House. Until they moved to the Old House in 1678 this was the mansion house of the Parker family.

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1 M.M. 6375, the 1527 rental under freeholders. M.M. Book of Leases p. 141b refers to the lease of the wind mill and a malt mill. Also Leics. Museum 3D36/23 Abstract of the Parker titles 1674-1743.

2 Gervase Markham, Farewell to Husbandry (1620) p.199-202. Also Leicester Borough Records III ed. H. Stocks (C.U.P. 1923) p.364.

After the move it became the house of successive bailiffs who were also sons-in-law; for example, John Lamplugh, Captain Corrance and George Ayre. By 1737 it was held by Joshua Reynolds, who had married Rebecca Parker in 1716. He ran it as an inn, to which period of its history the spacious cellars bear witness today. It was sold, together with the rest of the Parker estate to Mr. Thomas Peach, Attorney at Law in Market Harborough in 1743.[1]

Ten. 7. In the 1340's Tenement 7 was three half-virgate copyhold tenements. These were amalgamated in the course of the fifteenth century and in 1484 Robert Symson held one virgate, four half virgates, three messuages and a toft for 36s. 8d. This group included tenements 21 and 25. By 1500 Symson's land was held by William Marriott for 33s. 4d. Marriott was still holding this land in 1527 for 43s. 2d, but it passed to Humphrey Miller in 1540.[2] According to the 1609 map, Nicholas Coxon held Tenement 7, which is described as 3½ virgates, a messuage, a toft (Ten. 25) and a close (Ten. 21) for 43s. 2d. William Burgess held it in the seventeenth century and Robert Haymes in the eighteenth in conjunction with The Paddocks.[3] Tenements 3 and 7 are still leased jointly from Merton today.

Ten. 8. Priory Farm would appear to be the southern end of a customary tenement whose orchard and curtilage have been

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1 Leics. Museum. Parker Deeds 46'28/177-188 and 3D36/21-23. Also L.R.O. Humfrey Papers DE 526/126.

2 M.M. 6442.3.

3 Leics. Museum DE 560/10. William Burgess of Harborough and of Turlangton also held land at Smeeton and Stamford 1653-1674.

incorporated into Tenement 9. On it stands a well built timber-frame house on a stone base. The earliest reference to its ownership is not earlier than 1609 for which year the map tells us that a certain Hawes held it. This was Tobias Hawes of Stoke Albany, Northamptonshire, who also held Tenement 23, a corner of 21, and 33, 35, 36, and 37. The earliest reference to Tobias Hawes is in 1588,[1] and in 1596 Robert Hawes married Cicely Gage, a connection presumably of the Mr. Gage who married into the Ray family and acted as Bailiff of the manor. By 1635 all these holdings had passed to Mr. Buswell who held 110 acres in the open fields together with 17 odd acres. There is no indication of either the Hawes or the Buswells having lived in the village - no baptisms or burials are recorded for either family - so one must presume that they put in a bailiff who occupied Tenement 8, while their employees occupied the four cottages, 33, 35, 36 and 37. By 1780 the whole group of tenements had come into the hands of the Haymes family, and is today held in conjunction with Tenement 24, number 8 being the house of the shepherd to Mr. Briggs, owner of the Spinneys.

Ten. 9 is an H-shaped, timber-frame building called the Manor House. The north wing, with its deep stone footing, stone fireplace and massive roof timbers is exactly aligned with Tenement 8, Priory Farm, and both buildings may have at one time stood flush with the road. In which case, the cross wing and south range stand on what had once been the road. The cross wing is timber framed with unusually heavy tie-beams.

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1 Leics. Museum 42 D 31/168.

The diagonal 'dragon' beam of the westernmost room of the south range indicates a timber framed upper storey, jettied on two sides. This, together with the cruck construction of this wing, indicates an earlier date than the 1702 set in the chequered brick face of the south wall.[1] Therefore, the encroachment onto the road must have taken place not later than the late medieval period; it is called 'assart' in 1527. Further enclosure of the square took place in 1886 when the then bailiff, John Phillip extended the garden eastwards as far as the slang and southwards to the line of the south wall of the house, thus enclosing a not inconsiderable area of common land and creating much resentment in the village.[2]

The association of Tenement 9 with the bailiff began in 1439 when William Peek is noted as holding the Hallclose, three messuages, and three half-virgates for 42s. 6d. In 1477, the next bailiff, John Clerke, took out a 30 year indenture on the Hall-land, 4 messuages, 3 virgates and Brown's Place at 54s. 4d.[3] From 1507-75 the Polle family held the indentured tenement together with the office of bailiff.[4] The Rays held it from 1575-1706[5] when the last of that family, Thomas Ray Dand, whose initial T.R.D. appears as a plaque on the outer wall of the south wing, sold to the Foxtons who held it until 1797.

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1 The initials J.S. which accompany this date are those of Joseph Sacheverell who inherited the land from his father Thomas Sacheverell in 1627. Farnham. Leics. Notes V quoting P.R.O. I.P.M. Series 11, 443/31.

2 L.R.O. DE.526 letter 13 April 1864.
Bodleian Top Ms 6 Northants 1.f.21.
F. P. Woodford, History of Kibworth and Personal Reminiscences (London 1868).

3 M.M. 6340, 3355.

4 M.M. 3323, P.R.O. Cal. Pat. 895, 16 July, 1555.

5 M.M. Book of Leases, fos. 132, 141, 281-2.

When the last of that family died the office and property passed to the son-in-law, The Reverend Thomas Thomas of East Farndon, Northamptonshire.[1]

Apart from this association with the Merton bailiffs, there is no strong reason to believe that Tenement 9 was the site of the medieval manor house. It is more probable that the tenement was created out of three half-virgate customary messuages in 1439 for which tenants could not be found. No visible sign remains today of the medieval manor house but one would expect to find it on Hall Close. The fourteenth and fifteenth-century court rolls sometimes refer to an aula held by Matilda Parsons (at other times referred to as a parva placea) and to a demesne garden and dovecote.[2] The demesne services; the pound or common fold, the horse mill, the kiln, all lay immediately to the north of the Hallclose.

Ten. 10a: a two acre close lying 'between the Great Halleyard and the horse mill with a garden and close called Lytilhalleyard',[3] was bounded on the north by one of a pair of fishponds and on the south by the horse mill which was enclosed within a mud wall and roofed over with thatch.[4] The presence of the horse mill prevented further encooachment upon the road, hence the sudden widening of the road at this point. A 'slang' or cart-way still runs along its western boundary, crosses the town ditch and opens out onto the pasture south of Banwell Furlong. No arable was attached to this close and although it is labelled

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1 Bodleian. Ms Top Northants b.1, fos. 58, 112, 124.

2 M.M. 6367, 6368.liv, and see Map 12.

3 M.M. 2946, 2958.

4 M.M. 6421.1 (1423).

copyhold on the 1635 map it was usually referred to as freehold. Its free status and lack of arable suggests that the slang once included Tenement 10a but was encroached upon from the Lytilhalleyard to the east. Such a broad slang would have also acted as a boundary between the old settlement to the west and the later settlement to the east called the Apetoft sub-manor.

By 1527 Cristopher Carter held one messuage and close 'Iuxta Hallplace' together with 3½ virgates for 42s. Od. The Carters continued to hold this land throughout the sixteenth century but in 1611 Robert Carter surrendered the whole group of tenements to William Coleman for the remainder of the twenty-one year lease.[1] In 1628 William Coleman renewed the lease[2] and in 1646 his widow, Thomasine, sold it to William Sheffield of Great Bowden who obtained a licence to sub-let it.[3] In 1764 William and Nathaniel Sheffield sold the lease to Lebbeus Humfrey who united it to Tenement 10b.[4] On the 1780 map the united holding is labelled 'freehold'. Humfrey, who also owned the Old House and the Spinneys and used the former as a hunting lodge, built stabling for fifteen or so horses on Tenement 10, and the foundations of these can still be seen as humps in the grass of the present paddock.

Ten. 10b was known as the Lytilhalleyard. This could be understood to mean that it was simply the smaller of two hall yards,

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1 M.M. 6447.2ii.

2 L.R.O. DE 526/126 Humfrey Papers. Deed dated 13 Sept. 9 James I.

3 1672-1759, William Sheffield's house (Ten. 10a) was the licensed meeting house for Presbyterian worship. V.C.H. Leics. V, p.182.
L.R.O. DE 526/126. Indenture dated 1646.

4 L.R.O. ibid. Indenture dated 1764.

but it could also have been the name given to the curial buildings of the small sub-manor known as the Apetoft estate. To it were attached two virgates of land in the open fields. In 1432 Thomas FitzEustace (a name not otherwise connected with Kibworth) granted to John Russell of Kibworth Harcourt, the son of Simon Russell, 'a house in Kibworth between the great halleyard and the horse mill, with the garden and close adjoining called "Lytilhalleyard" to himself and his heirs freely and for ever.' The Russells were a leading villein family in Kibworth Beauchamp in the mid-fourteenth century; in 1351 Richard Russell held one messuage and one virgate there freely for 9s. 9d, Simon paid poll tax there in 1377 and representatives of the family were still there in the sixteenth century.[1] In the 1480's John Polle purchased one messuage and two virgates at 2s. Od rent annually from John Russell.[2] This was Tenement 10b only, 10a was taken by the bailiff, Thomas Clerke and was subsequently held by the Carter family as has been described. The Polles still held Lytilhalleyard in 1609[3] but by 1635 Mr. Henry Sacheverell of Ratcliffe upon Soar held it together with the lease of the Swathes and some 133 acres freehold. A row of small houses can be seen along the southern boundary of this tenement on the seventeenth-century maps, but these had been replaced by a fine barn and stables by 1780, by which time the property had come into the hands of Lebbeus Humfrey.

Ten. 11 consisted of a leasehold close of 2 roods and 35 perches

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1 P.R.O. SC 2 183.76, 77; SC Hen. VII. 1808 Bailiff's account.

2 M.M. 6425, 1373.

3 P.R.O. Series II 683/199 I.P.M. for Christopher Polle (D.1597) taken in 1616.

and with it went one virgate in the open fields. Little is known of its early history but evidently no tenant could be found for it in the 1430's, since it became part of the bailiff's land held by lease or indenture. The Rays held it throughout the seventeenth century and it passed with the rest of the Ray lands to the Fox and then to the Foxton families. In 1772 Lebbeus Humfrey bought it for £140 and added it to Tenement 10b.[1]

Ten. 12 consisted of a copyhold close of one acre and one virgate of arable in the open fields. The Saunders family held it from 1358 or earlier until 1500, by which date they held two messuages, two tofts and a virgate for 22s. 4½d reduced to 15s. 8½d. By 1527 Christopher Woode (the earlier form of the Alwood surname) held one messuage, two tofts and one and a half virgates for 22s. 4½d reduced to 15s. 8½d. The Alwoods continued to hold the tenement until 1670 when the heiress, Margaret, married John Cave.[2] At some point in the eighteenth century the Cave lands passed to the Coopers, a family which had been leasing land in the village since 1617.[3] At the time of enclosure William Cooper was allotted 10 acres 16 perches copyhold and William and Mary Cooper received 10 acres 19 perches copyhold lying next to each other in the North and East fields.[4] Today four small cottages occupy the road frontage of Tenements 12 and 13.

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1 L.R.O. DE 526/126. Humfrey Papers. Deed dated 1772.

2 M.M. 6448.

3 M.M. 6362.13.

4 L.R.O. DE 242. The Enclosure Award.

Ten. 13 does not appear as a tenement separate from 12 until 1780 when it is noted on the pre-enclosure map as held by Edward Cooper while the land behind it still belonged to Tenement 12.

Ten. 14 consists of a messuage of 2 roods 30 perches copyhold to which two half virgates in the open fields were attached. In 1371 Dom John Godwyn and Nicholas le Tayllour held half a virgate each on what was probably this tenement. By 1400 Richard Godwyn held both half virgates.[1] The Godwyn family died out and the land was held by John Caunden from 1427-1439.[2] By 1484 this tenement was definitely held by John Moore while the two houses were held by Edmund Tayllour. In 1500 William Parsons held both houses and one half-virgate, the other half-virgate was held by John Gude. By 1527 Richard Gude held both the land and the houses. Hugh Rowerth, 'shoomaker', held one of the houses in 1594 and Robert Bryan butcher held it in 1599.[3] The other half-virgate was still in the hands of the Gude family in 1635 but by 1700 it had passed to the Carters. In 1716 Elizabeth Carter married a bricklayer, Nathaniel Johnson, and the tenement was still in the hands of the Johnson descendants in 1780. In that year the lease was sold by Mr. John Moore Johnson to Mr. Woodeforde for eleven years. The property, which went for £15 15s. Od, then comprised one virgate, a barn, an orchard with home close

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1 M.M. 6412.

2 M.M. 6421.8, 6425.

3 M.M. 6446, 6447.1.

adjoining, and nine acres two roods of 'oddland', which had lately been in the occupation of Richard Carter.[1] Today a small farm occupies the site, with a paddock behind. The incorporation of the previous owner's name into the Johnson surname casts an interesting light on the strength of family association with land. Another such instance occurs in the Haymes family. In 1894 Robert Bryan Haymes sold the land which his family had inherited through the Lount connection from the Bryans in the seventeenth century.

Ten. 15 is a triangular messuage of 3 roods 25 perches copyhold, bounded along the north-east by the village ditch. To it were attached two half-virgates in the open fields. In the early fifteenth century one half-virgate was held by the Saunders family for a short time, while the other was held by Richard Fleckney who had received it ad opus from William Norman in 1421.[2] In 1433 he passed his half to William Aunger who by 1484 had acquired the other half and reduced the building to a toft. He held a messuage, a toft and one virgate for 13s. 0d. This tenement was held by Nicholas Mugyr in 1527 but passed afterwards to Robert Oswin. The Oswins were still holding it in 1679 and the arable just north of the tenement is still called Oswin's Leys,[3] but by 1780 William Haymes held it as part of his two virgates copyhold. Three modern houses occupy the road frontage today.

Tens. 16 and 17 provide a straightforward example of the Harcourt practice of building small landless cottages on

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1 Leics. Museum 3D 42/23/1.

2 M.M. 6420.8.

3 M.M. 6448; heiress Mary Oswin married William Clerke.

pieces of waste ground.[1] These two and the Poor's Houses to the north are eighteenth-century examples, Tenement 40 belongs to the seventeenth, Tenements 30-42 and 52-56 belong to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Tenements 16 and 17 stand on the triangle of waste between the road to Carlton, the road to Turlangton and the Town End Furlong. One was copyhold, the other freehold; both belonged to the Perkins family who also held half a virgate in the open fields, i.e. Tenement 4. One was used as a dower cottage in 1780 by widow Perkins. North of this pair of cottages stood a huddle of dwellings on the Hall Meare just outside the town ditch. These are labelled Poor's Houses on the 1780 map but were locally known as the City. One is a relatively large and attractive house, another is of cruck construction and until recently the last of the mud cottages stood in this area.[2] The remainder are small, nondescript labourers' cottages.

Ten. 18 consisted of 55 perches of leasehold ground surrounded by freehold. It formed part of the bailiff's collection of leasehold sites in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and by 1780 was known as a Poor's house. Its leasehold tenure indicates that it once belonged to the demesne. Possibly a curial building stood here, jutting out into the roadway and encouraging the northward encroachment of other tenements on either side of it.

Ten. 19 occupied just over two acres of free pasture surrounding Tenement 18 on three sides. It represents a strip of ground taken from the roadway along the northern boundary of the demesne

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1 M.M. 6407.18. John Sandurs built a cottage in viam regiam, 136

2 V.C.H. Leics. V. p.178 and plate facing p.320.

and corresponds to the southward encroachments made by Tenements 6-9. The Parkers probably came into possession of it in 1484 or earlier. They certainly held it in the seventeenth century and sold it in 1743 to Mrs. Wright who also held 12½ acres copyhold and 5½ acres freehold. It was sometimes called Townsend Close and is therefore easily confused with Tenement 1.[1]

The Demesne and Freehold Closes to the South-West of the Village

Ten. 20 was an L-shaped leasehold close of just under an acre. It was held by the Bailiff from 1484-1780 as part of a group of tenements which included Brown's Place. Brown's Place itself, however, was Tenement 53b, not Tenement 20 as shown on the 1780 map.

Ten. 21 was another rectangular close of just over an acre but held by copyhold. A small building stood on its western boundary with a frontage on the main road. This was held successively by Mr. Coxon and Mr. Sacheverell in the seventeenth century, and by John Turner in the eighteenth. Two small pieces of freehold were carved out of the southern part of this tenement in the seventeenth century; one of 16 perches was held by Mr. Gage, the other, of 28 perches by Mr. Hawes. These had belonged to Mr. Riley who sold them to Thomas Dent, woollen draper of Hallaton in 1588. The Riley tenement consisted of a messuage, a croft, 9 acres of arable and one selion for 10s. 0d. a year in rent.[2]

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1 Leics. Museum 46'28/177. Parker Deeds.

2 Leics. Museum. 3D 36/19 & 20. 42D 31/168; 73/30/11.

Ten. 22 known as the Hall close consisted of 5¼ acres of land including the Mound and has always been administered by the bailiff until its sale by the college in 1973. If there was ever a manor house, it must have stood somewhere on this site. Since the Harcourts never sub-infeudated Kibworth Harcourt, no man of rank would have inhabited the manorial buildings and indeed the only reference we have to its early occupants is the bundle of four documents in which Adam Sybill of Kibworth Harcourt and Richard Sibill, Rector of South Kenelingworthe, released to Merton College their interest in one ninth of the chief messuage called the Halleyard in Kibworth, the ninth presentation to the chapel, a ninth share in the windmill, the right to free bull and free boar and to common pasture and to land in the common fields together with court baron, view of frankpledge, and the right to strays, hommage, wards, reliefs, escheats, heriots, scutage, and the services due from his tenants save suit at court. They reserved to themselves the southern part of the Halleyard and the demesne touching it.[1] The Sibill connection with the village went back to the thirteenth century and they are found attesting grants, acting as jurors, and leasing small amounts of land; they also held customary land and acted as reeves from time to time. There was certainly no great gulf between them and other men of the village. Adam's son, John, inherited as a minor and Merton appointed the reeve as the boy's ward.[2] The goods he was responsible for comprised a chair, two tables, a cart, some planks, a hayfork, three wooden buckets, a plough

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1 M.M. 2924, 2926, 2923, 2925, 2943.

2 M.M. 2983, 2985.

share and plough beam, an iron shovel, a salting trough and one or two unidentified objects.[1] John's son, William, inherited in 1361 and alienated the holding without licence to William Polle in 1368. For this action the tenement was forfeited to the college and was found to be in poor condition.

Meanwhile, the Halleyard was being leased out for its pasture and garden. William Heyne was leasing the pasture in 1358,[2] Richard Chapman from 1368-89,[3] William Peeke from 1389-94.[4] When next mentioned, in 1438, a William Peeke was still holding it. It passed to John Clerke in 1477 who took out a thirty-year indenture in that year for the Halleyard and certain other tenements.[5] It had probably become part of the reeve's land while in Peek's tenure. Subsequently it was held by the manor bailiff until 1973 when it was sold by the college.

Thus the early village lay-out would appear to have been a group of customary holdings to the north of the main east-west roadway, a group of manorial buildings to the south, and the various utility buildings such as the horse mill and fold lying between the two.

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1 M.M. 6407.2.

2 M.M. 6407.1.

3 M.M. 6407.16, 6408.7. In 1282 Radulf prepositus, Radulf Carter, Robert ad Fontem, Robert Parsons, Hugh Godwine and Robert son of Robert Churt were granted the custody of the domus de manerio (M.M. 6376) and they renewed the lease in 1286 (M.M. 6377), in which year the Dovecote was taken by John de Chenesby (M.M. 6379) in whose name it was still held in 1397 (M.M. 6408.16). In 1334 the bailiff was amerced pro aula discoperta et aliis dampnis (M.M. 6401).

4 M.M. 6408.7.

5 M.M. 3355.

Ten. 23a consisted of a rectangular freehold close containing two acres which formed the south-west corner of the village. There were never buildings on this land and since it was freehold its records are scanty. However, it was held by Tobias Hawes in 1609, and passed together with his other freehold properties, 35, 36 and 37, to Mr. Buswell by 1635 and was held by Lebbeus Humfrey in 1780.

Ten. 23b consisted of an L-shaped freehold close containing just under two acres. It was held by Fox in 1609 but by 1635 had been transferred to the Buswell estate and in 1780 belonged to Lebbeus Humfrey. Today it forms part of the grounds of the Spinneys, the home of Mr. Briggs.

Ten. 24 consisted of another L-shaped freehold close of 1¾ acres. By 1609 a house had been built at its western end across the 'venella' which used to divide this land from the island of freehold sites in the centre of the present village.[1] This house, known as the Spinneys is owned today by Mr. Briggs and is interesting for its many wings and eighteenth-century additions.

The Customary Cottage Tenements with Quarter-Virgate Holdings in the Open Fields

A row of cottage tenements standing in quarter-acre messuages line the south side of the via regis. With the exception of the pinfold, they commanded quarter-virgate holdings in the open fields and were held by copyhold tenure. On the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century rentals they form a separate category by themselves; they follow immediately after the customary tenements under the heading cottagia, and are held

1 M.M. 2784.

separate also from the demesne cottages.[1] It is tempting to see these five cottage tenements, each with 5-6 acres arable, as the five bordarius holdings mentioned in the Domesday entry. If this was in fact the case, then presumably their holders did not hold by hereditary title but at the pleasure of the lord; they were estate tenants. However, by the thirteenth century they, as also the soke tenants, were holding by hereditary right and were classed as copyhold by the sixteenth century. In this they were fortunate.

Ten. 25 often held in conjunction with the pasture close, 21, was held by John Pyfford in 1484. The Marriotts held it in the 1530's and Humfrey Miller in 1540, together with Tenement 7.[2] By 1609 Nicholas Coxon held it and by 1635 it had passed together with the rest of the Coxon properties to William Burgess. Robert Haymes held it in 1780.

Ten. 26 occupies two messuages making a total of three roods eight perches. The Carters held it throughout the seventeenth century. It was bought by Randolf Lea from William Clerke in the early eighteenth century and sold to Thomas Varnham in 1733.[3] Neither the Leas nor the Varnhams lived in the village - Varnham was a blacksmith from Foxton - and the house was sub-let first to the Perkins, later to John Heaps and to Pywell in the eighteenth century.

Ten. 27 occupied 1 rood 19 perches leasehold and is described

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1 See Chapter Two p.35 for the occupations of these cottagers.

2 M.M. 6442.3.

3 L.R.O. DE 442. Deeds dated 1733, 1750, 1766, 1768.

in the transcript of the 1780 Survey as Pen Orchard. It seems there was a house on the pynfold from an early date. In 1369 John Joye held a placea vocat le hallepynfold for 4d rent.[1] John Skolas rebuilt the house on it in 1370.[2] John Cooper sub-let it to Adam Brown from 1393-1402. When he died in 1402 the rent was raised to 2s. Od. The Pynfold is not specifically mentioned again until 1511 when the villagers were ordered to 'construct' the pynfold.[3] Again in 1540 John Kynde and the smith, William Clerke,were amerced for not mending their share of the 'pynfoldgate'.[4] The pynfold was probably not a pound for stray beasts since there was apparently no official pinder. Strays were definitely kept by the bailiffs or the frankpledgemen in their own yards, so that there was no need for a pound. However, there was a need for a common sheepfold since the clay soil was too wet to allow sheep on the open fields in winter.[5] Consequently, manure had to be collected in the fold and to be carted out to the fields. There is in fact one reference to a ewe-yard.[6] The 1609 map gives Tenement 27 as held by Kilby and Tenement 28 as held by Ray. The mapmaker has almost certainly got the names the wrong way round, since the Ray land was leasehold, and 27 was leasehold in 1780 not 28. Richard Chapman held

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1 M.M. 6640.2i, 6372.

2 M.M. 6407.19.

3 M.M. 6440.

4 M.M. 6442.3.

5 M.M. 6421.2. The whole village was amerced for not mending the common fold. 1423.
M.M. 6424.8. Common fold called the Pynfold.

6 M.M. 6375

the pynfold in 1635 together with 28. By the eighteenth century the Varnhams were leasing it. John Varnham of Kibworth Harcourt, blacksmith, sold the lease to John Foxton in 1752 who gave it to the Reverend Thomas Ray Dand of Sheepy.[1] It is today the site of the Three Horseshoes public house.

Ten. 28 occupies 1 rood 17 perches of copyhold together with half a virgate in the open fields. It is separated from the pynfold by an access lane to the Hallclose. In 1527 William Kilby held it, but, since there were six half-virgate holdings for 7s. 4d in 1500 and 1484, it is not possible to deduce which of the six was Tenement 28 in the late fifteenth century. The Kilbys continued to hold the land until 1610 when Francis Kilby died leaving a messuage, a toft and half a virgate to his wife Margery and son Robert. By 1635 the land had passed to Richard Chapman and by the late seventeenth century to John and Judith Brigstock. In 1686 a jury of 18 villagers swore that the spring in the Brigstock's backyard had always supplied the manor house by a channel which ran across the street from the Brigstock's spring to the well of the manor house.[2] This well was filled in in the 1960's. By 1780 Thomas Varnham held the land.[3]

Ten. 29 occupies 1 rood 15 perches copyhold to which was attached half a virgate in the open fields. Its sixteenth-century tenants cannot be traced, but by 1609 John Ore held it, and there had been Ortons in the village throughout the previous

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1 Bodleian. Ms Top Northants b.1. fo.54.

2 M.M. 6451.

3 M.M. pre-enclosure map c. 1780.

century. By 1635 it was held by Richard West and it later passed to the Smith family. Mathew Fox purchased the lease 'two several' times from William Smith, and in his will, dated 1721, he left the tenement with its half virgate to his two grandsons, Thomas Wright and George Foxton. The two were to give 5s. Od each to the poor annually out of the rent from this tenement.[1] According to the 1780 map Mrs. Wright held the property, she being presumably the widow of Thomas Wright. A small Georgian house stands on the site today with a stable yard on the eastern side.

The Freehold Cottages without Land in the Open Fields

As we move southwards the character of the village alters abruptly. We enter an area of free holdings typified by very small yards and the absence of land in the open fields and the accompanying farm buildings. As freehold properties of little value, they were poorly documented, and were it not for the seventeenth-century maps we would have had to guess at their existence from the surplus of known families over known tenements in the seventeenth century. Although the definite evidence for their existence does not date back beyond the 1609 map, it is probable that these freeholds first made their appearance in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when population pressure in the village was at its greatest.[2] It is unlikely that outsiders were allowed to settle in the village and these encroachments on the village pasture were probably an agreed arrangement whereby the over-spill from

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1 L.R.O. Will dated 7 Sept. 1723.

2 See Chapter Two p. 86.

the households of customary tenements was accommodated. The expedient of sacrificing grass verges to house space was adopted again in the seventeenth century, to which Tenements 40, 56, 49 and George Fox's house on Tenement 24 stand witness, and in the eighteenth century when the Poor's Houses on the Carlton road and the houses on both sides of the Beauchamp road were erected.

The island of properties in the centre of Church Street was thus the 'City' of the pre-plague era. During the fifteenth century many of the cottages may have been abandoned, since even cottages with land attached in Hoglane were left empty.[1] In the seventeenth century they were bought up by members of the new class of large landholders as cottages for their farm labourers. Thus Tobias Hawes held a close and four cottages in 1609. We do not know how much arable he held but his successor, Mr. John Buswell held 110 acres.[2] Buswell held Tenement 8, probably for his bailiff, the same four cottages, 33, 35, 36 and 37, and a close, Tenement 23. The close may have been acquired to provide pasture for his men's cattle since they would not have enjoyed pasture rights in the common fields. By 1780 the Buswell lands had been taken over by Robert Hames who kept 36 and 37 and rented 38 and 40 from the feoffees of the village school. He farmed 384½ acres in 1780 and in addition to his own house and the Rose and Crown Inn, held eight cottages in all (8, 25, 36, 37, 38, 40, 52, 53) and a close, 51.[3]

This was the area of estate cottages then, the only exceptions being the manor cottages, 30-32, and 34 which was

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1 M.M. 6407.1

2 M.M. 5.17.

3 L.R.O. DE 242. Enclosure Award.

possibly the old bakehouse.

Ten. 30, known as Le Pale was college land leased at 4d a year to farmers in need of cottages for their labourers.[1] It occupied 38 perches but had been much reduced by 1780 when its yard had been incorporated into Lebbeus Humfrey's freehold 23.

Ten. 31 was another such, possibly the tenement constantly referred to in the leases and accounts as 'le Muro'.[2] It too was leased for a nominal sum by large farmers presumably for their labourers.

Ten. 32 was copyhold and occupied in the seventeenth century by the town shepherd, traditionally members of the Hubbert family.[3] Their house faced onto the Hallclose rather than on to the street.[4]

Ten. 34. In addition to their cottage the Hubberts also held a 'domus pistor; Anglie a bakehouse' and a piece of ground called a meere held by copy of court roll, in the late seventeenth century.[5] This could have been on Tenement 32, or it could have been on Tenement 34 which was certainly the bakehouse in the nineteenth century.[6] Tenement 34 was freehold and

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1 M.M. 6362.8. Also Bodleian. Ms Top Northants b.1. fo.1.

2 Ibid.

3 M.M. 6447.2ii.

4 1661. William Hubbert's will. John Hubbert was to live in the bay next to the Hall Close and Isabel was to have the two nether bays.

5 M.M. 6448.

6 Woodeford. op. cit. p.68.

was held by Deacon in the early seventeenth century, by Parsons in 1635,[1] and by William Mitchell in 1780. Little else is known of it, but a bakehouse, wherever it was, was essential to the village since fuel was so costly and scarce. A fine bakehouse was demolished in Smeeton Westerby in 1972.

Tenements 52-55 and 41-43 are likewise examples of pre-plague encroachment onto public land. Tenements 52-55 originally formed an island on the waste bounded to west and to south by a road leading to the church (at one end lay the parish church of Kibworth Beauchamp, at the other the chapel of Kibworth Harcourt) and to the north and east by a branch of the same road linking the two churches. When the eastern road was blocked by Tenements 41 and 42 its southern half became a long strip of pasture known as the school land in the seventeenth century and called Tenement 51 on the 1780 map.[2] Tenements 52-55 ceased to be a visible island but they remained landless, freehold properties, all except Brown's Place, which was either 52 or 53, and which survived a more complicated history.

In 1386 Richard Chapman granted to Adam Brown, draper, a tenement which had formerly belonged to Dominus William Polle and which stood between the tenements of Hugh Man and Nicholas Harcourt.[3] This was Tenement 53. In 1438 Adam Brown, cappellanus, grandson of the aforementioned Adam Brown, granted the land to John Arundell, the rector of Kibworth Beauchamp.[4] According to Emden, this John Arundell later became Bishop of

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1 L.R.O. DG 24/72.

2 1501. Richard Carter's messuage lay 'in le chyrche Lane'. M.M. 6439.1i. Also M.M. 6439.1i.

3 M.M. 2941.

4 M.M. 2934, 2930.

Chichester and chaplain and physician to Henry Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick. He died, a large scale pluralist, in 1477.[1] It seems that John Arundell gave Brown's land to Merton College, for in 1448 some £26 was spent by the college on building a new hall and chamber together with stables at Brown's Place.[2] When in 1477 the various parcels of college land still untenanted were united with three virgates of vacant customary land to form a single holding by indenture, Brown's Place was included.[3] This explains how a humble freehold became a substantial college leasehold property with three virgates of arable land. Little is heard of it during the sixteenth century but from 1583-1616 it was held by William Barnard, who in 1600 renewed the lease for a rent of 21s. 0d and 6 bushels of wheat and 10 bushels of barley malt.[4] Cooper held Brown's Place from 1617-20,[5] Brian from 1621-27,[6] Standon from 1628-42,[7] and Guy from 1642-79.[8] Thornton held it after Guy, then Hames took it in 1679-1755[9] but seems to have lost it later, for in 1758 another Robert Haymes bought the lease off John Rogers of Costock for £370.[10] The Haymes still held it in 1780 by which time it had been divided into three labourer's cottages.

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1 A. B. Emden, Biographical Register of the University of Oxford. I. (Oxford 1957), p.49.

2 M.M. 6465, 6324.

3 M.M. 3355.

4 M.M. Book of Leases p.66b.

5 M.M. 6362.13 - 6362.16.

6 M.M. 6362.17-23.

7 M.M. 6362.24-35. Also L.R.O. 1639. Standon's will: house, parlour, little parlour, chamber over house, chamber over parlour, one chimney.

8 M.M. 6362.36ff and 6448.

9 M.M. 5.17.

10 L.R.O. DE 886. Bond.1748.

Ten. 54 to the south of Brown's Place, occupied a quarter of an acre, and was held by the Alwoods in the second half of the seventeenth century. The Alwoods also held a half-acre close nearby, Tenement 50a, and a virgate in the open fields attached to Tenement 12. By 1780 this little group of holdings had been broken up and the house and part of the yard of 54 was held by Thomas Carter, the eastern end of the yard having been lost to Robert Haymes.

Ten. 55 was, and still is, called The Rose and Crown Inn. It was held by the Bryan family in the seventeenth century as one of their many properties and by the Haymes family in the eighteenth and nineteenth. It was sold by Mr. Robert Bryan Haymes in 1894.[1] Next to it, Tenement 56 was held by a cadet branch of the Haymes family. A group of seventeenth century wills and deeds referring to the Cross Building in which the Bryan, Freeman and Hodge families had an interest may be referring to the present Rose and Crown building.[2]

The Old House, the Chapel and the Copyhold Messuages South of Hoglane

If we retrace our steps to the junction of Church Street with the King's Road and Hoglane we find on the corner of Church Street and Hoglane a fine brick building with stone dressings dating from 1678. This is the Old House, standing on Tenement 43. The house is remarkable for its period, both because the use of brick is early for this district, and as an example of the fully developed Renaissance house.[3] A scrolled

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1 Papers in the possession of Mrs. Leslie-Miller, Crossbank House, Kibworth Beauchamp.

2 Leics. Museum 46'28/169-170, and Bodleian. Ms Top Northants b.1. fo.91.

3 V.C.H. Leics. V p.178.

pediment on the front of the house bears the date 1678 and the arms of William Parker, who moved to this house from the White House (Ten. 6) at about this time. The site was already held freely by Parker in 1635 together with a second cottage to the east, but in 1609 the site was occupied by a row of small cottages facing west and a small house facing onto Hoglane. Tenement 41 to the south was likewise occupied by a row of cottages which had disappeared by 1635 and been replaced by a single large house belonging to Fox. A memorandum made in 1609 provides the clue, it runs, 'William Parker hath a house built on Foxunes Green which is thought to belonge of right to the colledge because built on waste'.[1] Foxune's Green was Tenement 41 and on it, in 1599, when Thomas Fox died, there were 5 cottages. He also held Tenements 24 and 39 both freehold. Evidently a row of cottages built on common land had been bought up by Parker and Fox in the early seventeenth century and demolished. They divided the land equally, each took one rood. Parker built his fine new house on his share, and Lebbeus Humfrey, when he acquired it, continued the policy of creating a gentleman's country seat at the expense of village tenements. He absorbed the Fox share and bought up Tenements 44 and 45 to provide the house with the garden which such a house deserved, and acquired the tenements opposite, 10a, 10b and 11 for the stables. The site of the horse mill in the square was incorporated into Tenement 10a, the town cross was removed from the square and an attempt was made to remove the trough also, but this the Warden refused to allow.[2]

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1 M.M. 2784.

2 Bodleian. Ms Top Northants b.1. fo.103, and L.R.O. DE 526/126. Humfrey Papers 1864.

From the square the ground slopes away eastwards towards the marsh. A road, known today as Albert Street but in earlier times as Hoglane or Howgate (the gate to How Hill) provided access to the East Field and to Turlangton beyond. Its southern side was bounded by a row of copyhold tenements each standing in a quarter acre curtilage and bounded to the south by a ditch which drains into the pond on Tenement 48 known as the Fishpool.

Ten. 44 is the most westerly of the copyhold tenements on Hoglane, and covers a full acre of ground. The Bryans held it in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but nothing is definitely known of its earlier history. Two theories can be put forward, first, that it is the site of the four cottages in Hoglane for which no tenants could be found in the late fourteenth century, hence its present size;[1] four roods, and the two virgates attached to it in the open fields. Against this must be set the absence of any reference to this new holding in the rentals of 1439, 1484, 1500 and 1527. The second theory is that it is the site of the free chapel of Kibworth Harcourt for which so many documents survive for the early period but which disappears without trace in the sixteenth century.[2] The site of Tenement 44 was one well suited for a church or chapel. It stood at the end of the village street, between manor and village, dominating all that went on but not obstructing the movement of carts and cattle around the kiln, the mill and the drinking troughs. The site is similar to that of Slawston church and indeed of many others all England over. The chapel

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1 M.M. 6407.1.

2 M.M. 2956, 2953, 2945, 2960, 2932, 2957, 2970, 2986, 2931, 2942 2987, 3012, 3011, 3089. G.C. Brodrick Memorials of Merton College (Oxf. Hist. Soc. 1885) p.vii, 224, 160, 243, 247.

seems to have been served by a chantry priest. Thus in 1296 Robert son of Reginald was amerced quia non contruxit capellam sicut perceptum fuit ei per capitulum, (M.M. 6391), and in the late fourteenth century reference was made to Dominus John Godwyn[1] and Dominus William Polle.[2] In 1446 William Polle acted as proxy for the warden in receiving the chapel,[3] in 1484 John Chapman was chantor[4] and was succeeded in that office by a member of the Smith family,[5] who also held one virgate for 5s. Od a year freely. (By 1651 it was the 'school land' which was held for 5s. Od a year.) In the early sixteenth century Dom. William Polle fulfilled the duties of a curate[6] but there is no further mention of either chapel or priest after the Reformation. Thereafter the village was served by St. Wilfred's church which stands half way between Harcourt and Beauchamp and was reported to be in a ruinous condition in 1526.[7] The Bryan family moved into Kibworth Harcourt from Smeeton in 1541 and took a messuage and two virgates freely next to Parker's land.[8] The virgates were not true virgates but were made up of the Hall grounds and Balkes, and later rentals regarded both messuage and arable as leasehold.[9] The coincidence of the dating cannot be ignored. We know there was a chapel,

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1 M.M. 6372, 6405.

2 M.M. 6405, 6407.13.

3 M.M. 3009.

4 M.M. 1373.

5 M.M. 6447.2.

6 L.R.O. Katherine Polle's will, 1516.

7 M. Bowker, The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln 1495-1520, (London 1968), p.132.

8 M.M. 6442.4.

9 M.M. 6373.3. The rector of the Church land held 1½ virgates for 32s. Od p.a. in 1300.

which disappeared completely in the late 1530's. The Bryans took up a newly created tenement in 1541 on a site which would have suited a church very well. If the priest's house had been attached to the chapel, as was a common practice,[1] when the chapel was suppressed it could have been converted into a domestic building with very little trouble, and when the building was demolished in the eighteenth century even the memory of its exact site was lost. By the eighteenth century Woodeforde was speculating as to where the chapel may have stood,[2] and the village bristles with theories today.

Ten. 45 was regarded as freehold in 1780. Topographically it forms a prolongation of Tenement 51 and it may indeed have been a public way running behind the chapel.[3] No house stood upon it in 1609 but by 1635 the quarter-acre messuage boasted a house and was occupied by the Smith family. The Smiths had held land in Harcourt since the thirteenth century at least. They continued to hold land throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but in the early eighteenth century they were in difficulties. When William Smith died in 1716 aged 65, he held only a quarter of a virgate which he instructed his executors to sell, dividing the proceeds among his four children.[4] Francis Fletcher purchased the quarter virgate and added to it half a virgate which Mary his wife had inherited from William and Alice Clerke.[5] In 1757 William Fletcher sold the

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1 For example, the Chapel of St. John in Jerusalem at East Hendred, Berks.

2 Woodford op. cit. p.22.

3 M.M. 2945. 1336 Elias Taylour paid Adam Sibill 2d for a cottage 'in the kyrheland'.

4 Bodleian. Ms Top Northants b.1. fo. 7.

5 M.M. 6456

close to Theophilus Henshaw of Loughborough who conveyed it to John Fox for £43.[1] In 1772 the grandson of Francis Fletcher sold the same close to Lebbeus Humfrey for £43.[2] Possibly the first sale was a form of mortgage subsequently redeemed. The close 'now in Mr. Humfrey's bottom garden' is described as bounded on the south and east by William Haye's close, on the west by Lebbeus Humfrey's and on the north by the yard and dwelling house of Francis Fletcher. Today even the dwelling house has been absorbed into the grounds of the Old House.

Ten. 46 was a one rood messuage of copyhold land with one virgate in the open fields. Its history is very similar to that of Tenement 45. From the fourteenth to the early eighteenth century it was held by the Carter family, but they too fell into financial difficulties and sold the lease to William Hayes. Today, it has disappeared beneath the orchard of the Old House.

Ten. 47 occupied one rood 32 perches of leasehold without arable in the open fields. It formed part of the indentured lands held by the bailiff and is called the Bruchyard on the 1780 map. The meaning of this word and of the names of the other yards held by indenture is not clear. They appear on a variety of documents and on none of them are they legible or intelligible and one suspects that successive scribes simply copied the hieroglyphics without themselves knowing what they meant. The clearest is the entry on the 1527 rental which describes John Polle's lands as including the 'Bathyard,

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1 Bodleian op. cit. fos. 19, 20.

2 L.R.O. DE 526/126. Humfrey Papers. Conveyance dated 1772, but see also deeds dated 1635, 1639, and a will dated 1768.

Goalyard, yowe and kylne yard'. If the yoweyard was the pynfold and the kylneyard Tenement 6x, Tenement 47 could have been a brute or neat yard and Tenement 30 the foalyard. Alternatively, 'Bathyard' could be understood as referring to the 'Bakeyard' (Tenement 30) in which case the 'foalyard' would have been Tenement 47. Tradition lingers in the village today that there was a pound near the Fishpool off Hoglane.

Ten. 48 occupied nearly an acre of copyhold in 1635. In 1316 the warden of Merton granted Roger Caumpe, Rector of the Church of Kibworth, one close called the Fyspolyard with a vivarium for life at an annual rent of 6s. 8d.[1] According to the account rolls the rent from the pasture and fishpond had dropped to 12d by 1360.[2] John Alot held it from the 1360's to 1391.[3] In 1430 the 'fossat procedans a stagno ad finem villae' was repaired and the tenants were permitted to water their beasts in the 'Stagno ad finem villae' otherwise known as Pynder's Pit.[4] In 1434 and in 1443 all the villagers were called upon to repair the fossat vocat' ffyshepulende.[5] The Saunders took the Alot land in 1432 and were still holding it in 1500. By 1599 William Gage held Fishpondclose for 5s. Od a year and it was still in the bailiff's hands in 1609.[6] However, by 1635 it had been divided into two. Nicholas Porter held the western

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1 M.M. 2916.

2 M.M. 6407.1.

3 M.M. 6408.9 (1390).

4 M.M. 6420.3, 6421.10-12. NB. Fossa is consistently 'fossat' throughout the rolls

5 M.M. 6424.2

6 M.M. 6447.1.

portion for 2s. 6d and Eliot held the eastern half. With these two portions went, similarly divided, Hayward's Meare, the gravel pits, Church Hadland, Coombes Meare and Howgate, amounting to 9 acres one rood and 15 perches.[1] After 1693 no more is heard of the eastern share which had passed to the Goodmans,[2] and it is possible that the two halves were reunited in the eighteenth century. Between 1700-1711 Fishpool Close was held successively by Geoffrey Parker, Thomas Perkins and Randal Lea.[3] In 1748 Thomas Fletcher bequeathed Fishpooldike to his niece, Mary Holyock, wife of William Holyock of Beauchamp, labourer, while Tenement 45 passed to his nephew, William Fletcher.[4] By 1780 William Hayes held the Fishpoolyard in addition to the two closes, 49 and 50, and to 56.9 acres arable.

The Small Copyhold Closes in the South-East

The south-eastern corner of the village was occupied by one to three rood closes of copyhold land attached to the tenements in the western end of the village. For example, in 1609 John Polle held Tenement 10b north of Hoglane and Tenement 50b to the south of the lane; Richard Allwood held Tenement 12 to the north and Thomas Allwood held the close 50a; Robert Bryan held Tenement 14 to the north and the close 49a together with Tenement 44. Unlike the larger closes on the western side of the village, these eastern closes tended to be regular in shape and to be sub-divided both lengthwise and across and to be reunited again according to family convenience.

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1 M.M. 6447.1, 6448.

2 M.M. 6455.

3&4 L.R.O. DE 526/126. Humfrey Papers. Abstracts of L. Humfrey's estate papers. Leics. Museum 3D 36/23 and 3D 46'28/177.

Encroachment began in the eighteenth century when a number of cottages were erected along the southern boundary facing the road to Kibworth Beauchamp. In the 1950's the remainder of the closes were built over by a private housing estate.

Closes and Buildings

Up to this point we have been considering tenements simply as ground space within the village. It is possible to be a little more precise.

A customary tenement or messuage consisted of a house, garden, orchard and close. If we take as typical the messuages to the north of the king's road a clear distinction can be seen between the house and garden area and the close behind. The closes have been ridged up, but it is not possible to say at what date.[1] Either the closes represent a furlong which, during the re-organisation of the fifteenth century was enclosed and turned into separate closes attached to the messuages north of the King's Road, or, they were ploughed up after the amalgamation of holdings had thrown together groups of closes large enough to be ploughed. I am inclined to favour the latter explanation since beyond the town ditch lies an area of permanent pasture and a triangle of land which only came under cultivation relatively late, probably in the thirteenth century. It is unlikely that an area of permanent pasture would have lain sandwiched between two arable furlongs. Closes are mentioned in the court rolls from 1380 onwards[2] usually in connection with the repair of party fences and of ditches, and it would seem strange if, in the early days when the village

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1 Aerial photograph. Dept. of the Environment. CEP/UK/1925. 16 Jan. 1947. 4023RS.

2 M.M. 6408.4, 6424.8, 6427, 6436, 6425.2.

was first laid out, houses were not each provided with a generous private close where young or sick animals could be cared for and an orchard planted, in addition to a vegetable plot or 'garden'. It must remain, however, an open question.

The messuages were divided from one another by sepes or hedges, these were presumably dead fences or mud walls since the court order that all householders should repair their fences was a routine one in the fifteenth century, and many offenders were amerced.[1] Brushwood was prized and even more so trees. The felling of elm[2] and ash[3] trees are noted in the court rolls and the offenders fined except in those cases where the college had failed to provide timber for the construction or repair of a cottage and the aggrieved tenant had taken matters into his own hands. Occasionally the bailiff was authorised to fell a tree for building purposes.[4] By the seventeenth century, college tenants were expected to plant a certain quota of trees on their lands,[5] and the whole village had been surrounded by a live hedge.[6]

The buildings on these messuages were characteristically placed on the boundary of the site, facing directly onto the street, with the yard and close behind, aptly called the 'backside'. Throughout the period the dwelling houses were built on the long house plan, one room deep, though whether or

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1 M.M. 6426.3iii, 6430, 6434, 6435.2, 6438.1, 6447.6.

2 M.M. 6421.2ii; 6423, 6447.1, 6447.5.

3 M.M. 6421.3iii, 6421.2, 6421.7, 11, 13, 15, 17. 6423.

4 M.M. 6408.11, 6407.11, 6407.21.

5 M.M. 6451.

6 M.M. 1609 Map of Kibworth Harcourt.

not one 'room' was a byre or barn it is impossible to say. A series of building accounts for the fifteenth century throws considerable light on the type of construction and cost of labour and materials in this period.[1]

The normal model was that of the cruck frame on a stone base with mud walls, timber ridge-pole and wall-plates, and a straw-thatched roof. The standard bay was sixteen feet by sixteen and the recorded houses are all of three or more bays. One pair of cottages insemel iacentis[2] made up eight bays. Granges or barns were built to the same specifications. The last of the mud cottages built on these principles was demolished in the 1960's. By the sixteenth century chimneys were considered desirable and by the eighteenth century brick was replacing mud. In some cases the mud walls were taken down, an extra few courses of stone were added to the base, in order to raise the height of the crucks to allow for a second storey, and the walls rebuilt in brick. In other cases a brick face was simply built up against the mud face. A good example of the latter method can be seen in Mrs. Swannock's cottage in Turlangton where the gap between the brick and the plaster is wide enough to allow a camera to be inserted and a photograph taken of the old outer face of the original mud wall. Tile-capped mud walls are still common in the region as party walls between backyards although the art of puddling mud for this purpose is, today, a dying one.

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1 M.M. 6405 31 Ed III; 6421.18, 6424.1, 11, 13, 6465, 6341, 6323-27, 3126, 2819.

2 M.M. 6420.15

From the inventories we learn that the addition of a second storey was already common by the sixteenth century. A typical house, such as Robert Standley's on site 52, in 1639 comprised four ground floor rooms; the house, parlour, little parlour and kitchen, and two first floor rooms; one over the house the other over the parlour.[1] Less typical were the Manor House and the Paddocks. Completely untypical was the Old House which falls outside the scope of this present study. A series of building accounts for a hall, chamber and stables survives.[2] They refer to a building erected in 1448 and called Brown's Place. The present building on Brown's Place, Tenement 53, bears no resemblance to the 1448 building, but there is a certain similarity between the building described in the accounts and the present Manor House which in 1448 belonged to the same group of indentured holdings as Brown's Place. At any rate the Manor House serves as a visual expression of the 1448 accounts. These depict a timber framed building on a deep stone base, with lime plastered walls, a slate roof and tiled floors. The north wing of the Manor House consists of a stone base several courses deep and a stone chimney on the north side. Brick work has replaced the plaster above the stone, but the tie-beams are of massive proportions. It is roofed with machine cut slate. The stone base continues round the central and south wings and the tie-beams of the central wing are as massive as those of the north wing, quite out of proportion with the size of the building and the weight of the roof. The south wing is of cruck construction, but the interior

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1 L.R.O. Inventory for Robert Standley of Knighthorpe (Loughborough), 13 May 1639.

2 M.M. 6465, 6324.

is well fitted with closely studded partitions on the ground floor. The stone for the 1448 building was carted from Medbourne, eight miles away; the great timbers came from Rotheley Temple, an estate in which the Harcourts had always had a close interest;[1] the lesser timbers and lathes were brought from Lutterworth; the spars, ridge-tiles and probably the nails came from Leicester, the lime for the plaster from Barrow, while the slate was brought from Kirby. The carriage costs were therefore very considerable, in addition to the cost of the materials themselves and of the skilled labour of carpenters, stone masons and plasterers. The grand total came to £26; by comparison, almshouses built in Stratford on Avon between 1411 and 1417 cost £5 9s. 9½d; the schoolhouse built in 1427 cost £10 5s. 6½d and a six-bay barn built in 1488 cost £22 2s. 5d½[2] It is far from clear for whom this hall and chamber was intended; by the mid-sixteenth century it had become the bailiff's house and was occupied by the Rays until they built themselves a more sophisticated dwelling in the eighteenth century. It then became the house of the Reverend Thomas Thomas who made considerable alterations and additions. It next became two labourer's cottages until rescued and restored by Mr.J.E. Bartlett of Brackley, Northants. In 1972 it was sold by the college and a new era in its long history has begun!

If the Manor House was the expression of wealth in the fifteenth century, the Paddocks and the White House typify

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1 G. T. Clarke, 'The Customary of the Manor and Soke of Rotheley in the County of Leicester,' Archaeologia xlvii, (1882) p.89-93.

2 T. H. Lloyd, 'Some Aspects of the Building Industry in Medieval Stratford-upon-Avon,' Dugdale Soc. Occ. Papers 14 (1961), p.23-4.

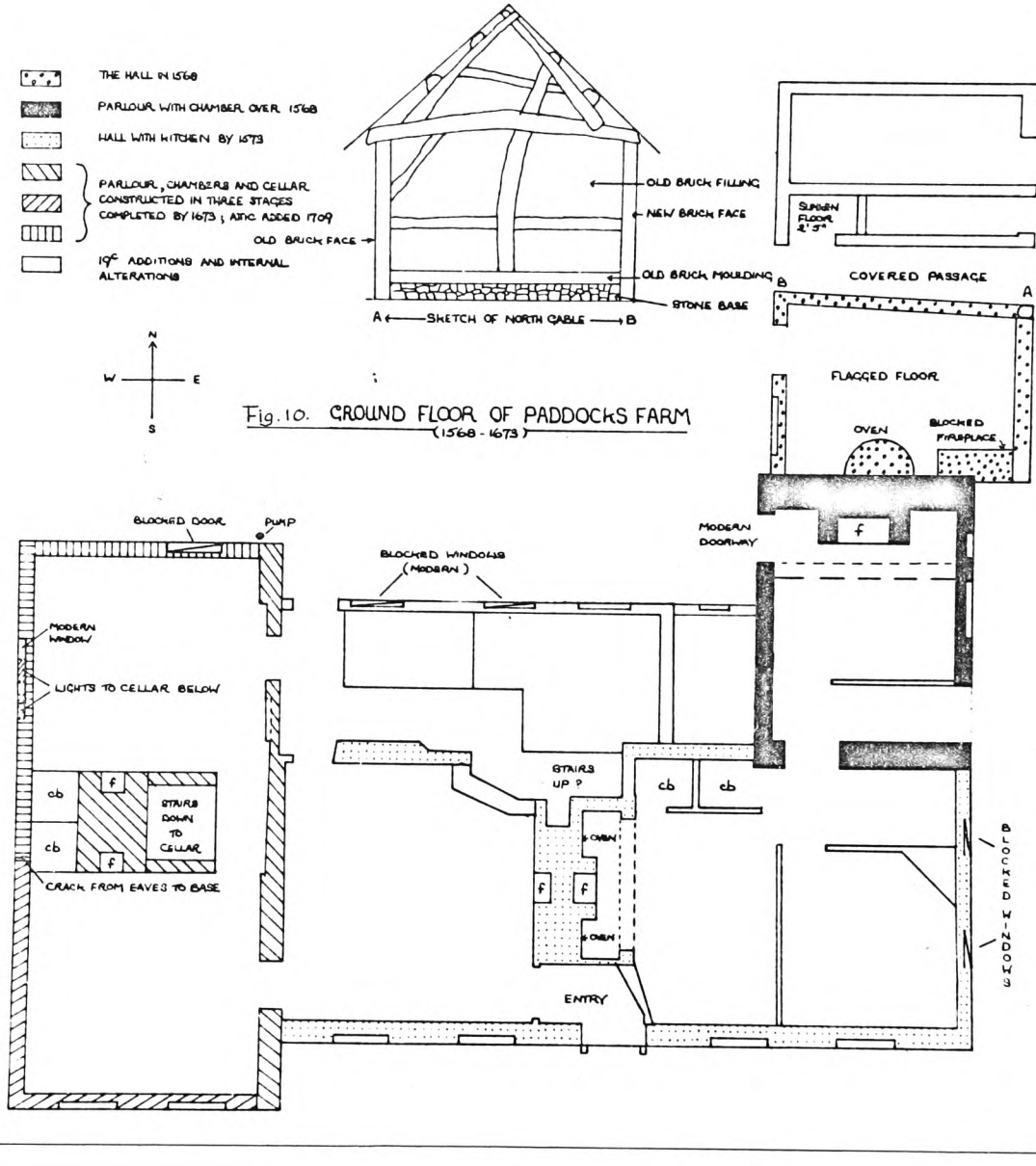


Fig. 10. GROUND FLOOR OF PADDOCKS FARM (1568 - 1673)

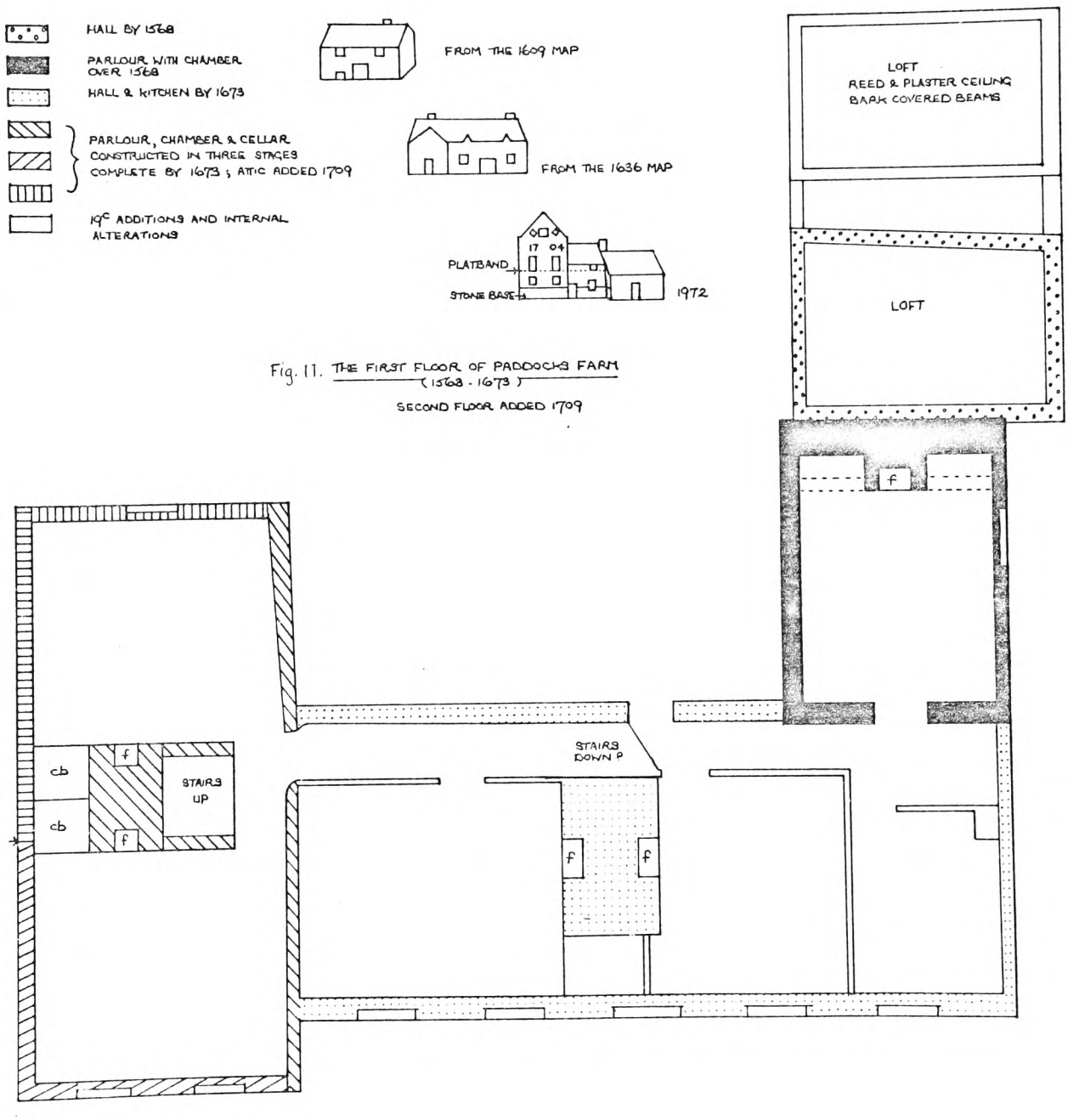


Fig. 11. THE FIRST FLOOR OF PADDOCKS FARM
(1568 - 1673)
SECOND FLOOR ADDED 1709

seventeenth-century affluence. From 1491 until 1599 the Paddocks was occupied by the Iliffe family.[1] In 1568 John Iliffe's house was described in his inventory as comprising a 'haule' in which the cooking was done, a parlour where the family slept at night, and a chamber in which eight stones of wool were stored.[2] It is possible that this could be a description of the relatively small but well constructed 'house' partially embedded in the present eighteenth-century structure; its south wall forms part of the north wall of the eighteenth-century building, but later northward extensions have caused it to look like an inner partition wall. See plans 10 and 11. By the mid-seventeenth century the property had come into the hands of the Watts family. Robert Watts, when he died in 1673, was possessed of a house consisting of a hall and parlour, a chamber with a beer cellar under it, a chamber over the parlour, another chamber, a milk cellar, a chamber over the house and another over the entry, a kitchen with a chamber over it, a malt house and a malt chamber, a coal house and a stable for three horses; in other words eight living rooms, two cellars and three outhouses in addition to the stable.[3] We know that Robert Watts occupied the Paddocks,[4] but it would seem that at this date the house, though extended to cover the present ground-plan, was of two storeys only. Bridgett Watt's inventory, made in 1683,[5] describes a similar eight roomed house with two cellars

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1 See above, p.136

2 L.R.O. Inventory dated 1568.

3 L.R.O. Inventory dated 2 March 1673 f.74.

4 M.M. Map for 1635. Kibworth Harcourt.

5 L.R.O. Inventory dated 10 Sept. 1683 fo. 94.

(probably not below ground-level at this date) and various out-houses, to which description John Hames's inventory, made in 1686 has nothing to add.[1] (How the house came to be in the possession of John Hames is not clear since his son William did not marry Anne Lount, the grand-daughter and heiress of William Watts until about 1694.) The next known land mark is 1704, by which date the height of the house had been raised to provide a third storey, and it is at this point that the present brick structure replaced the plaster walls above the level of the stone footing, for in the east gable is inserted the date, 1704, in burnt brick. The stone footing does not appear to have been disturbed and the basic measurements of the house are still the traditional sixteen feet by sixteen. At a date shortly after this a cellar was excavated below the northern half of the west wing. This operation may have caused some subsidence of the western wall and some necessary reconstruction, since the brick moulding below the eaves continues northwards as far as the crack which traverses the entire wall from top to bottom at the point where the cellar begins, and there the moulding abruptly stops.

Thus on site 3 can be traced, not only the amalgamation of four half-virgate tenements to form one large messuage, but the subsequent transformation of the house on that messuage from a humble three-roomed, cruck dwelling, to a three storied, fourteen-roomed brick building, panelled within, well proportioned without, the fit dwelling for an eighteenth-century squire.[2]

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1 L.R.O. Inventory dated 20 Jan. 1686 fo. 151.

2 See p. 135-136

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ECONOMY OF THE SMALL LANDHOLDER

'Give me neither riches nor poverty, but enough for my sustenance.'

Proverbs 30.v.8

A very common unit of landholding, the virgate, together with its poor relation the half virgate slowly died out in the period 1400-1700. The axe was laid to the root in the fifteenth century during which the number of half virgates at Kibworth Harcourt was reduced from 25 to 8. However, of the eight survivors, the last did not succumb until 1700 by which date the virgate as a unit had also disappeared. Their protracted struggle for survival provides the material for the following analysis.

It is the object of this chapter to try to recapture the economics of what had been a tenacious and stable way of life and to study the causes of its decay. The subject has been approached from two angles, one tabular, the other descriptive. I have tried to reconstruct the income and expenses of the virgater and the half virgater over a period of 330 years in order to relate and compare the four main factors in the Leicestershire smallholder's economy, namely grain prices, wool prices, wages and rents. Of course, such a task is not easily fulfilled and I have felt it necessary in the pages immediately following to explain at some length how each set of figures has been arrived at. The compilation of the tables[1] has I think been justified for two reasons. First

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1 Tables 17 and 18, infra p. 199-200.

in that it has achieved that which it was intended it should achieve; it points the direction of trends during the process of decay, and indicates the causes of these trends at different points. Second, it has reiterated the need for more regional studies; for local price series, local wage rates, local sowing rates and yields which differ widely from one county to another. It likewise throws into relief the need to differentiate between rural and urban economics, for example between grower's prices and retail prices, town and countryman's shopping lists and employment opportunities.

The inventories of the early modern period allow one to describe in some detail the amenities or lack of them normal to households of the virgate and half virgate income bracket, and to compare these with those of the more wealthy - and even with those of the less wealthy in terms of landed property, namely those servants in husbandry whose inventories were seldom taken but whose accommodation is described in the inventories of the rich and whose wages are recorded in private accounts and in official schedules.

Land use

In 1370 the most common size of holding at Kibworth Harcourt was the virgate of 21 acres arable and 3 acres pasture held for 20s. 0d rent per annum, and the half virgate of 9 acres arable and 3 acres pasture held for 10s. 0d per annum. Throughout the period the arable of the small holder was cultivated on the three course system with one field under peas, the other under barley with some wheat, and the third fallow. So on his 21 acres arable the virgator would have roughly 7 acres under peas, 7 under barley and 7 fallow. This even division can still be

seen in the inventories of countless Leicestershire husbandmen in the sixteenth and seventeenth century as well in Kibworth as elsewhere in the county.

With the virgate went a stint of 4 cows and twenty-four sheep, also 3 acres of meadow or pasture and 7 acres fallow. Today, S.E. Leicestershire carries about two sheep to the acre, but Professor Hoskins is probably correct in estimating 1½ sheep to the acre for the fifteenth century.[1] I have therefore taken 20 sheep as the size of the virgater's flock, judging it wiser to underestimate where there is room for doubt.

The Price Series

Price series based on urban retail prices introduce a wide margin of error to calculations concerning sums received by growers in small rural markets.[2] They must, therefore, be discarded in favour of more appropriate sources the best of which are the sales accounts of farmers such as Robert Loder, Henry Best[3] and ~~Lord~~ Sir Thomas Pelham.[4] Unfortunately, this type of source material does not survive in sufficient quantity to provide the base for a continuous price series, but it can be used to cross check another source, namely, the values

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1 W. G. Hoskins Provincial England (London 1965) p.151.

2 J. T. Rogers A History of Agriculture and Prices in England. Vols II and IV. (Oxford 1866, 1882). The average prices for the decades 1290-1300, 1371-80, 1411-1420 are nevertheless based on J. T. Roger's averages for want of a better source.
E. H. Phelps Brown and S. V. Hopkins 'Seven Centuries of the Prices of Consumables, compared with Builder's wage-rates' Economica. new series. XXIII (1957) p.296-314.
Findings of the Beveridge Committee Box I, Institute of Historical Research.

3 'The Farming and Account Books of Henry Best.' C. Best Robinson ed. Surtees Society xxxiii (1857). Henceforth referred to as 'Best'.

4 Pelham Accounts B. M. Add MSS. Pelham.

placed on crops and wool in the probate inventories for the archdeaconry of Leicester.[1]

As far as I can ascertain, no work has been done on the vast number of crop valuations recorded in the inventories stored in our county record offices. Therefore, I have had to advance some way into the subject myself in order to establish the reliability of these valuations. In the first place I found that inventories drawn up in widely separated villages in Leicestershire agreed with each other in the value placed on the quarter of barley malt, peas and wheat, and that a continuous graph showing the rise and fall in prices in any given year could be drawn; in other words, there was no haphazard and meaningless scatter of prices. Moreover, the pattern of the graph was repeated year after year betraying a regular seasonal tide of price levels. Therefore, the appraisors were referring to a common yardstick for their valuations. That this yardstick was the current market level is borne out by comparison with farming accounts such as those referred to above and with the weekly bulletin published by Houghton in the late seventeenth century, which reported the current price for the best wheat, barley, malt and peas in the markets at Leicester, Melton Mowbray, Oakham, and Northampton.[2] Lastly, when these local market prices are compared with urban retail prices, they are found to be lower, as one would expect, but otherwise to follow the same general trends, though in some years when prices were low in Leicestershire they were high elsewhere and vice versa reflecting the localisation of harvest

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1 Leicestershire Record Office.

2 Unpublished material gathered by Mr. Giles Harrison, The Central London Polytechnic, for whose assistance I am most grateful.

conditions.

The inventory data can therefore, be accepted as a reliable record of Leicestershire market prices. The number of surviving inventories is considerable but relatively few record grain, peas or wool in store, and when they do, they do not always give a separate value for each product, thus the number of relevant entries is in the end quite small. For the sixteenth century, it was, therefore, necessary to take a ten year period, 1551-60, in order to get a sufficiently large number of entries, and a six year period, 1570-75, later in the century. The number of surviving inventories is greater for the seventeenth century so that the time factor made it necessary to take only five year periods which yielded about the same number of entries as for the sixteenth century. Unfortunately, for the late seventeenth century the inventories tend to become perfunctory and less informative, though the levelling off of seasonal fluctuations is an interesting phenomenon and would repay further investigation.

Dating remains a problem. The archdeaconry began its year on 25 March. The accounts with which one would wish to compare the inventories began their year on 29 July. Since I was interested not only in the prices of grain stored but also in the value of crops in the field, I decided to begin the year on 1 January in order to cover the same peas and barley crop in a single year. I have accordingly adjusted the dating of the inventories to run from 1 January to 31 December.

In fact, not many entries relate to the winter months, they tend to be bunched within the period February-July. Prices tended to rise after February to reach a peak in May-June and

to fall abruptly in July, presumably because by July shortage of money and abundance of fresh food and pasture made it both necessary and possible for men and beasts to do without barley and peas.

The histograms in Appendix VI give a reasonably accurate impression of the range in prices a small farmer had to contend with over a five year period. For example, between 1601-14, which spanned a plague year in 1609-10, his peas might be worth 4s. 0d a quarter in one year and 40s. 0d a quarter in the next. As has been noted, prices were usually at their highest a couple of months before the harvest at a time when few farmers had much remaining in store to sell, if indeed they had not already sold the bulk of their crop before or just after the previous harvest in order to settle debts, wages and to buy seed corn. So it is towards the lower end of the spectrum that one must look; a small farmer can be said to have received from 4s. 0d to 13s. 4d for his peas crop, not for him such dazzling sums as 40s. 0d. I have taken the arithmetic mean as the basis for my calculations for the peasant budget but it should be borne in mind that even this figure is probably on the generous side.

It is worth noting <u>en passant</u> that peas and barley were about equal in value, and that in spite of the labour and fuel costs involved, malt was not very much dearer than barley, except in years of scarcity when its manufacture was forbidden and its value could soar to as much as 70s. 0d the quarter, but in such circumstances customers were presumably equally scarce.

Prices for the period 1290-1490 have been taken from Thorold Roger's classic work on agricultural prices. His data,

(as also that used by Lord Beveridge and D. L. Farmer,[1]) is derived from institutional sources and refers to ~~retail~~ A. grade prices for wheat and barley, and of course, yields no prices for peas.

Since peas were given much the same value as barley in the sixteenth-century Leicestershire inventories, it has been assumed that the same was the case in the earlier period. However, both peas and barley almost certainly fetched lower prices in local markets than in retail centres such as Oxford, Cambridge and Farnham. Therefore, the receipts and the cost of food given in the accompanying table are higher than was in fact the case.

Sowing Rates and the Yield per Acre

We have no firm evidence for the customary sowing rate in Leicestershire during the period 1300-1700. Fitzherbert was an advocate of thick sowing and in his native Derbyshire barley was indeed sown more thickly than elsewhere, at 4 bushels to the acre.[2] The modern practice is to sow thinly at Kibworth Harcourt at ~~5 quarters~~ 2 bushels to the acre which yields ~~80, 134~~ 6, 8.5 and ~~160~~ 10 quarters in bad, average and good years, an increase per grain of 16, ~~26.8~~ 22.5 and ~~32.3~~ 26.2. The theory behind thin sowing at Kibworth is that the land is too rich for barley and would produce an over-tall, 'rank' crop if thickly sown. Thin sowing ensures the maximum number of tillers and therefore many ears per plant, and short stems which can the better withstand wind and heavy rain.[3] The table in Appendix V shows that on

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1 D. L. Farmer. 'Some Grain Price Movements in Thirteenth Century England'. Ec. H. R. 2nd ser. x (1957-58) p.207-220.

2 J. Fitzherbert. The Boke of Husbandry (1534) Bodleian. Douce xx.3(2) fo.10.

3 Mr. M. Stops, Paddocks Farm, Kibworth Harcourt. This is the largest farm in the parish and is leased from Merton College.

clay soils the most common sowing rate at an earlier date was about 3 bushels and since the Leicestershire yields were not high I have taken 3 rather than 4 bushels as the sowing rate at Kibworth for barley and two for peas.

Yields per acre in England generally were extremely variable both from year to year and from district to district. For a small farmer with limited reserves a succession of poor harvests or of low prices could prove disastrous, so that it is important to know not only the average yield and the spectrum of yields but also the year to year sequence of good and bad harvests. Once again farmers' accounts are the best source of information concerning yields but are too few in number to provide the basis for a quantitative study. Consequently, historians have preferred to rely on contemporary estimates such as those of the Georgical Committee in 1664-5[1] and Gregory King in 1697.[2] These estimates agree well enough with the account rolls and in general terms the barley yield per acre in the period 1200-1400 was in the region of 13-23 bushels[3] increasing to up to 30 bushels by the seventeenth century. Gregory King's average of 16 bushels of barley per acre errs if anything on the generous side but is broadly correct as averages go.

A third source of information can be found in the probate inventories, which have the advantage of providing a year to year record of harvest yields. Their use involves several interpretative difficulties which are discussed in Appendix IV

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1 R. Lennard. 'English Agriculture under Charles II; the Evidence of the Royal Society's "Enquiries"' Ec. H. R. 1st ser. IV (1932-34) p.23-45.

2 Gregory King 'National and Political Observations upon the State and Conditions of England' 1697. J. Thirsk and J. Cooper (eds.) Seventeenth Century Economic Documents (Oxford 1972) p.196.

3. J. Z. Titow. Winchester Yields. (Cambridge 1972)

The following figures, based on the data supplied by the inventories, give some idea of the range of yields, their sequence, and the general impression that on the whole the yield per acre had increased somewhat in the 130 years between 1570-1700, an impression shared by M. K. Bennett who believed that yields improved steadily during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from an average wheat yield of 9 bushels per acre in 1500 to 12.75 bushels in 1650.[1] I use the word impression advisedly, having in mind the yields shown below for 1696-1700.

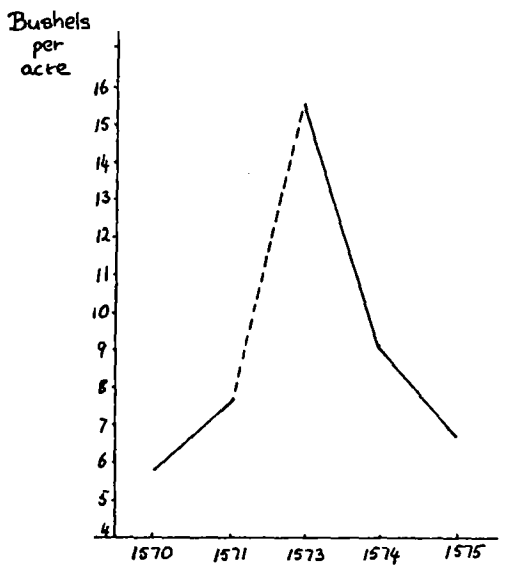


Fig. 12 Expected barley yields in June

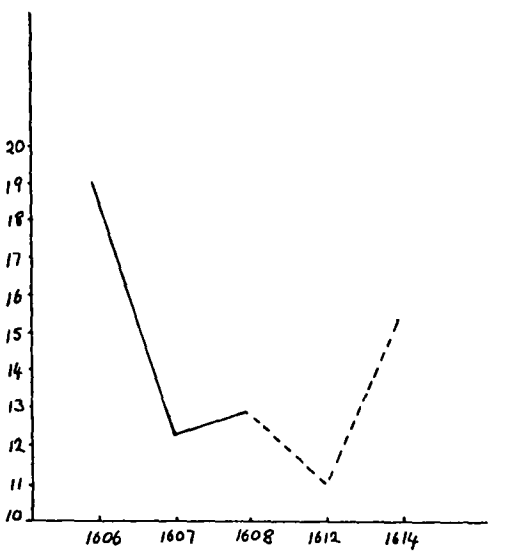


Fig. 13 Expected barley yields in June

1 M. K. Bennett 'British Wheat Yields per Acre for Seven Centuries' Ec. H. R. III (1935) p.12-29.

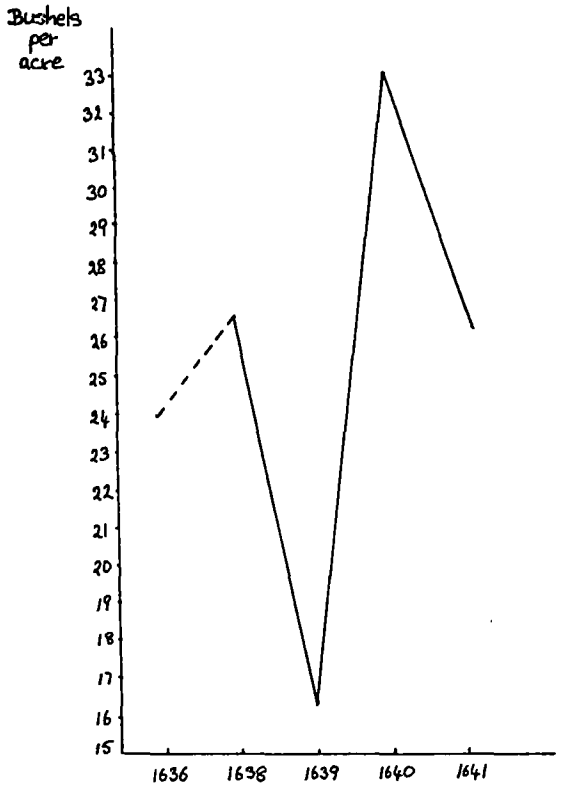


Fig. 14 Expected barley yields in June

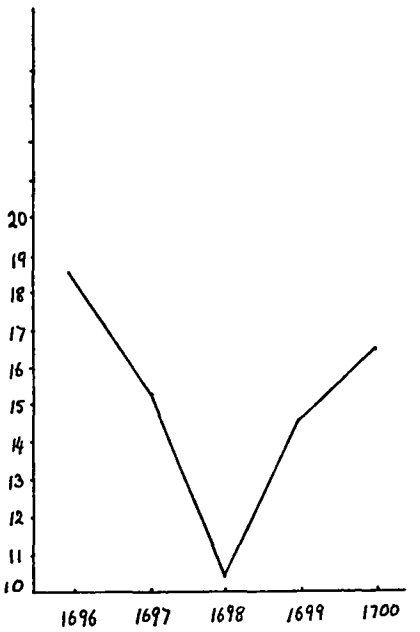


Fig. 15 Expected barley yields in June

Unfortunately, peas ground was nearly always reckoned in customary rather than in statute acres, so that it is not possible to obtain similar figures for peas yields. Had this been possible, the peasant budget could have been calculated separately for each year of the four groups of years selected, thereby throwing into high relief the crests and troughs of the smallholder's annual income. As it is, the arithmetic mean has been taken for each of the groups of years and the calculations for the table have been based on these. Thus 7 acres of barley in the period 1570-75 yielded 7 x 8.8 bushels,[1] that is 61.6 bushels or 7.7 quarters, a yield of 1.1 quarters per acre.

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1 See Appendix IV where the average yield between 1570-1700 is seen to be 1.92 quarters. Nevertheless, a steady yield of two quarters from 1290-1700 gives an unduly optimistic picture of the returns of the half-virgater while minimising those of the full virgater who could better withstand a series of poor harvests.

The modern rate of sowing for peas is higher than for barley but the yield per acre is less; thus ~~2 cwt.~~ 16 stone of peas will yield 13 cwt. in an average year, whereas ~~1¼ cwt.~~ 10 stone of barley will yield 34 cwt. The old practice was to sow peas more thinly than barley so that the yield was roughly half that of barley, as is confirmed by the appraisors who, for the same holding would put only half the value on peas land as on barley land, in spite of the fact that the value of peas per quarter was the same as for barley. Peas are more susceptible to weather conditions especially during the harvest, but on the whole good weather for barley is good weather for peas, so I have taken the peas yield in any given year as half that of barley. Thus, 7 acres of peas in the period 1570-75 would have yielded 7 x 4.4 bushels, that is, 30.8 bushels or 3.85 quarters, a yield of 0.55 quarters per acre.

Table 16 : Sowing Rates, Grain Yields and Prices at Kibworth Harcourt

Sowing rate: Barley 3 bushels per acre
Peas 2 bushels per acre

	Yield per acre		Price per quarter
Barley	1290-1500	2 quarters*	As given by J. T. Rogers
	1371-1560	2 "	As given by J. T. Rogers
	1570-1575	1.1 "	7.49 shillings
	1606-1614	1.7 "	15.06 "
	1636-1641	3.12 "	14.57 "
	1696-1700	1.75 "	23.14 "
Peas	1290-1300	1 "	As given by J. T. Rogers
	1371-1560	1 "	As given by J. T. Rogers
	1570-1575	0.55 "	8.65 shillings
	1606-1614	0.85 "	13.3 "
	1636-1641	1.56 "	16.8 "
	1696-1700	0.88 "	21.5 "

* See note p.185.

Wool Prices and Wool Yields

In the course of the sixteenth century the quality and the output of wool changed in Leicestershire. The large, long stapled 'Leicester' breed gradually replaced the medieval short stapled breed.[1] As the county produced less fine quality wool it eventually ceased to supply the western woollen industry and came instead to supply the worsted industry in the north and east.[2] Thus in both production and marketing the sixteenth century witnessed a period of transition. Nevertheless, the price of wool steadily rose until 1603, after which date prices began to fall off as competition was encountered from Spanish and Irish wool imports.[3] A Kibworth inventory for 1580 refers to 'small Sheep' which would imply the presence of other 'large' sheep in the town flock. Allowance must,therefore, be made for an increase in the weight of fleeces during the sixteenth century. The average yield per sheep in the mid-fourteenth century was 1.4 lbs, by the mid sixteenth century it had risen to 1.9 lbs and by the eighteenth century or earlier it had risen to 3.14 lbs.[4] Henry Best's better quality sheep in 1641 yielded 3 lbs and these were not the large, long stapled breed.[5] For the same period, poor quality sheep in the chalk country of Wiltshire were yielding 2½ lbs.[6] So it has seemed to me reasonable to take 3 lbs per sheep for the

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1 P. J. Bowden. The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England (MacMillan 1962) p.25-31.

2 Ibid p.58, 64, 72.

3 Ibid Table 3.

4 Ibid p.96. Also J. Thirsk (ed.) The Agrarian History of England and Wales IV 1500-1640 (C.U.P. 1967) p.666.

5 Best, op. cit. p.24.

6 E. W. J. Kerridge. 'The Agrarian Development of Wiltshire 1540-1640'. (Unpublished London Ph. D. thesis 1951) p.141.

mid-seventeenth century at Kibworth while adopting the national averages for the earlier centuries, viz., 1.4 and 1.9 lbs.

The marketing opportunities for growers in the Kibworth area were good. In 1600 Leicester city erected a 'very fit woolhall with convenient storehouses' and held a free market every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.[1] In 1618 the city was granted a Charter of Staple of Wool whither woolbroggers carried their wool for sale to 'divers northern clothiers (who) have usuallie bought their woolls in Leicester'. By the end of the seventeenth century the stockingmakers of Leicester claimed that they bought 200 tods of wool annually and employed 2,000 poor people of Leicester and the adjacent villages.[2] By this date, Kibworth Beauchamp and Smeeton Westerby both supported a relatively large framework knitting population. So the 'petty breeders' of Kibworth Harcourt could sell their wool to small clothworkers or spinsters at Kibworth Beauchamp, or could sell to the middlemen who supplied the Leicester market. Husbandmen usually sold their wool at or near shearing time for cash, undertaking either to supply a specified weight or the entire crop and accepting the price current at the time of the contract or at the time of delivery. After shearing, the fleeces, whether sorted or not, were packed in canvas bags and stored in the grower's house on wooden boards free from damp until collected by the buyer.[3]

From the point of view of the virgater or half-virgater it

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1 H. Bateson. Records of the Borough of Leicester 1509-1603. III (C.U.P. 1905) p.281, 416.

2 H. Stocks. Records of the Borough of Leicester 1603-1688. IV (C.U.P. 1923) p.178, 536.

3 Bowden. op. cit. p.13, 85-91.

was the grower's price which mattered, not that received by the middleman and the clothier, these being some 10% and 20% higher respectively.[1] The inventories give the value of the wool to the grower, and it is upon figures drawn from the Leicester Archdeaconry inventories that the decennial averages quoted in the table have been calculated. Checked against the price quoted in Houghton's Newsheet for Melton Mowbray in 1699-1700 the appraisor's figure is about 4s. 0d below Houghton's figure, but tallies exactly with the figures mentioned in the accounts for William Heyrick's estate at Beaumanor.[2] For the earlier period, 1290-1490, wool prices have been based on Thorold Roger's retail prices. Lloyd's prices were found not to differ significantly from those of Thorold Rogers, and since neither dealt with the East Midlands, there seemed little to choose between them.[3] Bowden's figures relate to grower's prices in the Durham region from 1551-1614, and, predictably, tend to be a shilling or so below Leicestershire prices as given in the inventories. According to Oxfordshire inventories, Oxfordshire wool prices dropped behind Leicestershire prices in the seventeenth century.

Family Size

Most economic historians have considered the size of the average family and the amount required to feed it per year.

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1 P. J. Bowden. 'Movements in Wool Prices 1490-1610' Yorkshire Bulletin of Econ. and Soc. Research IV.2 (1952) p.107-124.

2 Giles Harrison. Prices collected for Leics. and Northants 1640-1700, and see Appendix VI

3 T. H. Lloyd. 'The Movement of Wool Prices in Medieval England' Ec. H. Soc. Supplement 6.(1973.)

The most recent summary of their findings has been presented by Dr. J. Titow in his book 'English Rural Society 1200-1350' (London 1969). Fortunately, the abundant material for Kibworth, which is discussed in Chapter 6 allows one to use more precise figures for household size.

Diet

Fortunately for the historian, Sir Jack Drummond and A. Wilbraham have discussed the nature and food value of the peasant diet from 1400 to the present day,[1] though many sources were overlooked by them and remain to be explored.[1a] The historian is left to estimate how much the peasant ate and how much it cost him.

According to these authors, the basic diet was made up of 'brown or wholemeal bread, milk, cheese, a considerable amount of butter used largely for cooking purposes, eggs, honey, occasionally bacon or poultry, salt, pulses, onions, leeks, parsnips, garden turnips and cabbage, supplemented in season by such fruits as apples, cherries, wild berries and nuts. Except at marriages, harvest festivals and boon works, the peasant did not drink ale but rather whey, buttermilk or simply water'.[2]

In terms of food value such a diet was more wholesome than that of their social superiors and compares favourably with that of the average Englishman today. As a sample of a fifteenth century small landholder's daily diet, the authors take 1 pint milk, 1 pint whey, 2 oz cheese, 1 oz bacon,

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1 J. C. Drummond and A. Wilbraham. The Englishman's Food. Revised by D. Hollingsworth in 1958 (London 1958).

2 Ibid p.75.

1a. Subsequent research has been collected and summarised by J.-J. Hémardinquer and M. Morineau in Annales 25·4 (1970), 1745-1785. See also a note by R. H. Hilton in P&P. 23.

2 lbs brown bread, and 2 oz peas. They analyse this into its nutritive components. The result reads as follows: calorific value 3200, protein 100 grams, fat 60 grams, calcium 1.6 millegrams, phosphorous 2.8 grams, iron 17, vitamin A 1450 international units, vitamin D 9 international units, vitamin B 1.9 millegrams, Riboflavin 2.8 millegrams, Nicotinic acid 22 millegrams, vitamin C 20 millegrams.[1]

The normal calorific intake per day lies between 2000-3000 calories, in practice it is often less, especially in the Far East. So the fifteenth century peasant was remarkably well fed if in fact he received the full ration.

For evidence concerning amounts consumed, historians have had recourse to three sources: the liveries given to manorial servants, the purchase of corrodies, and maintenance agreements which occasionally accompany the surrender of holdings and are recorded in the court rolls. The allowances given to manorial survants were generous and were clearly intended as family allowances in the medieval period. Robert Loder's[2] accounts and Henry Best's[3] in the seventeenth century give the same impression of rather generous allowances given to farm servants, though in this case they are for single workers living in. So allowances are not the best source for information concerning the diet of the cottar and lesser husbandman, nor are corrodies which could only be purchased by the relatively well off. Maintenance agreements are the most reliable source and fortunately we have one such for Kibworth Harcourt.

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1 Drummond and Wilbraham op. cit. Appendix A.

2 Robert Loder's Farm Accounts 1610-1620 ed. G.E. Fussell Camden Soc. 3rd series liii, (1936) p.107.

3 Best passim.

In 1360 Nicholas Gilbert, who was not poor by local standards, agreed to supply his aged parents with 1 quarter of wheat and 1 of peas each year in addition to 2 silver pieces and the use of two bays in the west end of the house and space in the yard for the beasts.[1] It is unlikely that a 12 or 24 acre holding could be burdened with a regular annuity of more than 1 quarter of wheat or barley in addition to supporting the younger generation, hence the cash allowance. A working man would expect about 1 full quarter a year which seems a reasonable balance between the generous servant's allowance and the pensioner's half quarter. Some historians have argued that 1 quarter is too little but the onus is on them to demonstrate that the smallholder needed and could obtain more.[2]

If we accept 1 quarter as the normal allowance of flour per person we can then do a simple calculation based on the information supplied by William Harrison that 'the flour of one bushel of manchet (white bread) makes 40 cast of manchet ... of which every loaf weigheth 8 ounces into the oven and 6 ounces out'.[3] One quarter would yield 320 six-ounce loaves a year, or six such loaves a week which comes to just under 6 ounces of bread per person per day. Drummond and Wilbraham, it will be remembered, thought a man needed 2 lbs of brown bread per day. We must presume that the

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1 M.M. 6407.4 dorse.

2 E. Miller, Review article, Ec. H. R. 2nd ser., xxii (1969) p.556.

3 William Harrison's Description of England in Shakespeare's Youth ed. F. S. Furnivall. New Shakespeare Society. (1877) p.153.

deficiency was made good by peas. As late as 1801 barley bread was still more common than wheaten bread. In that year the vicar of Kegworth reported, 'the bread generally eaten in this parish is a mixture of wheat and barley, in proportions varying according to the respective means and inclinations of the several inhabitants', and the vicar of Sproxton wrote, 'more barley bread is used in this parish than any other sort....' which was echoed by the vicar of Sapcote.[1]

Dairy products, 'white meat' as they were called, formed a substantial and vital part of the peasant diet. Robert Loder expected a cow to yield about one gallon a day between Whitsun and Michaelmas and Gervase Markham agrees that 'one gallon is good, two is rare and extraordinarie'. [2] By the late eighteenth century A. Young noted that a Leicestershire Longhorn, fed on hay in winter could give 3 gallons a day or £5 worth a season.[3] A high proportion of this milk went into the production of cheeses and butter, providing as a by-product a substantial amount of whey which was consumed by the family and by the pig in the yard. Markham describes whey as 'a goode drinke for the working man'.[2] In the Wiltshire cheese country, one cow could produce 3-4 cwt. of cheese per year,[4] and every Kibworth householder had at least one

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1 Quoted by W. G. Hoskins 'The Leicestershire Crop Returns of 1801' T.L.A.S. 24 (1949) p.127-153.

2 Gervase Markham. Countrey Contentments or the English Huswife. (1623) pp. 175, 189.
M. A. Havinden notes that the expected milk yield per cow in sixteenth century Oxfordshire was ¾ gal. in November. Thesis p.214.

3 Fussell, op. cit. T.L.A.S. 24 p.164.

4 Kerridge, op. cit. thesis p.41.

cow and certainly his cheese press in the kitchen or dairy. Cheeses are recorded in the houses with cheese chambers but not in those without, which implies that in the smaller establishments cheese was made all the year round, as is possible if the cows are fed on hay during the winter. (Robert Loder's servants ate one two-pound cake of butter each per week, that is to say, 3 oz each per day, as did Henry Best's household.[1]) Both establishments accounted for large quantities of cheese.

The inventories for Kibworth Harcourt bear witness to countless 'pullen' and it was common to keep bees. Most households kept a pig. Probably the poorer families bought a young animal in spring and fattened it for slaughter in autumn.[2] However, the pig was not as ubiquitous in Leicestershire before the potato age as it was later to become.[3] The bacon was smoked, the butter unsalted, and therefore, salt was not needed in large quantities. Not every messuage still retained its orchard by 1700 but for those that did: 'no ground a man occupieth (no, not the cornfield) yieldeth more gaine to the purse, and housekeeping (not to speake of unspeakable pleasure) quantity for quantity than a good orchard'.[4]

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1 Robert Loder. p.45.

2 For a vivid description of this practice in the nineteenth century see F. Thompson's Larkrise to Candleford (Oxford 1945). The Leicestershire inventories give the price of a flitch of bacon as 5s. 0d in the early seventeenth century and 6s. 8d to 15s. 0d by 1638-41.

3 A. Everitt in 'The Agrarian History IV' op. cit. p.416.

4 Gervase Markham. A New Orchard and Garden (1623) p.8.

Drummond and Wilbraham concluded from the literary sources they had studied that ale or beer did not form part of the normal peasant diet.[1] William Harrison's calculations for the cost of brewing confirms the literary evidence. He estimates that it would cost 20s. 0d a month or £12 a year to brew beer for a household.[2] In Leicester in 1564 the Assise of Ale fixed the price at 3d-3½d the gallon and at 4d-5d in 1595.[3] A halfpenny a pint was a lot to pay, for a man whose daily wage did not exceed 5d, when he was lucky enough to find work. Markham's description of the size of a malt kiln and the capital investment involved, not to mention the hours of skilled labour, puts home-malting beyond the pale for all but the wealthiest yeoman.[4] The malt-house of the inventories, as the description of their contents confirms, was the place where the malted barley was stored, not made. At Kibworth it had probably been malted in the kiln leased by the Parkers from Merton College since the fifteenth century. Brewing also was laborious, time-consuming and expensive in terms of fuel. So one must conclude that this excellent source of nutriment was not for everyday consumption in the households of the husbandmen and cottars.

In practice then, a peasant would have considered adequate a daily ration of 6oz barley bread (Harrison), 3 oz butter (Best and Loder), 2 oz cheese (Best, Loder and Kerridge), and an

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1 Drummond and Wilbraham. op. cit. p.32.

2 William Harrison. op. cit. p.158-160.

3 Bateson. op. cit. p.110.

4 Markham. 'English Huswife' p.190-229.

estimated 6 oz peas, 1-2 pints whey, 1 oz bacon, vegetables in season, usually in the form of soup, and honey, fruit, nuts and berries. A diet deficient only in the amount of bread from the diet analysed by Drummond and Wilbraham. These authors go on to note that there is little evidence of endemic rickets or of scurvy and night blindness in the rural population of England before the eighteenth century and that the average height of men and women was about the same as it is today, diminutive suits of armour notwithstanding.[1] Evidently the peasant had enough to eat in good years. In bad years Sir Hugh Platt, esquire, advised them in 1596 to make bread from 'beanes, pease, beechmast etc., in faire water', and if even these should fail, to fall back on 'excellent bread of the rootes of Aaron called Cuckow-pit or starch roots',[2] a reminder of the wide range of roots, plants and herbs once widely considered normal diet, nettles being a well known example. Also of the beverages, cordials, and wines made from indigenous plants, such as elderberry and carrot wine and rose-hip syrup still common today in rural areas.

The role of the cow in the smallholder's economy was important if not vital. For the period 1590-1640, 91% of peasant labourers (i.e. labourers who possessed some land, and whose inventories were of less than £10 in value during the 1590's and less than £15 during the period 1610-40) in the Midland fielden areas possessed cows, usually one cow, with

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1 Drummond and Wilbraham op. cit. p.167.

2 Sir Hugh Platt Esq., 'Sundrie new and Artificial Remedies against Famine, written ... upon the occasion of this present dearth', 1596. Quoted by Drummond and Wilbraham, p.50.

sometimes a heifer or calf.[1] The price of cows, and indeed of chickens, capons and geese, rose dramatically in the second half of the sixteenth century and the acquisition and replacement of stock must have presented an increasingly serious problem. According to the Kibworth inventories, many landholders kept sheep but all kept at least one cow, and cows and their progeny, or part shares in cows figure prominently in the wills. Thus even the humblest villager could evidently afford a cow worth from £2-£3 by 1700. The magnitude of the disaster if a cow died without having replaced herself, or if rights to common pasture were lost will be appreciated. This is reflected in the increasing importance attached to cow pasture in seventeenth-century Kibworth when much of the arable was being put down to grass and so withdrawn from common grazing, and in the development of the practice of buying and selling 'cowcommons' separate from the arable to which they were appurtenant. I have not included cows in the table because the animals themselves belong to the category of fixed assets together with house and land, while for their products in terms of milk, butter and cheese we have no price series. I have, therefore, treated the cow as a constant, whose number per family did not increase, whose production did not increase, and whose products were consumed within the household and so whose value was not subject to market trends. Nevertheless, the importance of the cow must be kept in mind especially for families living on that fluctuating borderline between subsistence and pauperism.

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1 Everitt, The Agrarian History IV p.413.

Miscellaneous Household Expenses

Houses were made of mud and daub on a cruck frame and on a stone base. Timber was provided by the lord, straw, daub and labour by the tenant. Every man had a collection of plough timber, beams and planks in his yard, carefully hoarded and always noted in the inventories.[1] Rope and leather for the 'gears' were home produced. So the cost of maintenance did not go beyond blacksmith's fees and the occasional help of the wheelwright. The village paid 9s. 1d annually in 'headsilver',[2] grain had to be taken to the lord's mill where a fee was charged usually thought to be 'excessive'. The common neatherd and shepherd had also to be paid. No allowance has been made in the tables for these small maintenance costs. A tenth of the value of the arable crops and wool has been included under expenses as Tithe. No mention of tithe is made in the early records but the Enclosure Act of 1781 allotted to the rector 0.13 of the total acreage in lieu of tithes great and small, and it must be assumed that the villagers of Kibworth Harcourt, although they had at one time enjoyed a free chapel of their own, nevertheless paid tithe to the parish church of St. Wilfred.[3]

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1 A plough cost from 5s. 0d to 10s. 0d in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A cart cost 5s. 0d to 20s. 0d between the same dates. (Leics. Inventories).

2 M.M. 6407.4 dorse.

3 L.R.O. Enclosure Award. DE.242.

Table 17 : Revenue and Expenditure for one virgate

viz., 24 acres arable and pasture

Constants: Family size 5.0 persons (1280-1345); 3.96 (1371-1490); 3.34 (1550-1700)

Food 1 quarter barley per person per year

7 acres barley required 2.25 quarters seed. Therefore 7 times the yield less 2.25 gives the surplus for any given year.

7 acres peas required 1.75 quarters seed. 7 x yield less 1.75 = surplus.

7 + 3 acres fallow, meadow and pasture supported 20 sheep.

1290 - 1550 yield per sheep = 1.4 lbs yield of flock = 1 tod (28 lbs)
1550 - 1636 " " " = 1.9 lbs " " " = 1.35 tods
1636-1700 " " " = 3.0 lbs " " " = 2.14 tods

	1290-1300	1371-1380	1411-1420	1481-1490	1551-1560	1570-1575	1606-1614	1636-1641	1696-1700
Surplus									
Barley in quarters	11.75	11.75	11.75	11.75	11.75	5.45	9.65	19.59	10.00
Peas in quarters	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	2.10	4.2	9.17	4.41
Wool in tods	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.36	1.36	1.36	2.14	2.14
Price									
Barley in shillings	4.00	4.00	3.66	4.18	9.00	7.49	15.07	14.57	23.14
Peas in shillings	4.00	4.00	3.66	4.42	8.17	8.65	13.30	16.80	21.50
Wool in shillings	10.00	11.00	7.46	6.80	10.46	12.41	18.86	19.15	20.00
Receipts									
Barley in shillings	47.00	47.00	43.00	49.12	105.75	40.82	145.33	285.43	231.4
Peas in shillings	21.00	21.00	19.21	23.21	42.84	18.17	55.44	154.06	94.82
Wool in shillings	10.00	11.00	7.46	6.8	14.23	16.88	25.65	41.05	42.80
TOTAL REVENUE	78	79	69.67	79.11	162.81	75.87	226.4	480.51	369.01
Expenses in shillings									
Tithe	7.8	7.9	6.97	7.91	16.28	7.52	22.64	48.05	36.90
Rent	20.0	20.00	20.00	12.00	12.00	12.00	30.00	30.00	30.00
Food for x persons (as above)	~~15.84~~ 20.00	15.84	14.49	16.55	30.06	23.81	50.30	48.66	77.29
TOTAL EXPENSES	~~43.64~~ 47.80	43.74	41.46	36.46	58.34	43.33	102.94	126.71	144.19
SURPLUS CASH	~~34.36~~ 30.20	35.26	28.21	42.64	104.47	32.54	123.46	353.80	224.82
Day wages in pence									
Common servant		2-4	1-2	1½-3½	2-5	2-5	2-9	3-8	4-8
Harvester		2-5	2-3	3-5	5-10	-	5-16	6-12	6-12

Table 18 : Revenue and Expenditure for half a virgate

viz. 12 acres arable and pasture

Constants: Family size 5.0 persons (1280-1345); 3.96 (1371-1490); 3.34 (1550-1700)

Food 1 quarter barley per person per year

3 acres barley required 1.13 quarters seed. Therefore, 3 times the yield less 1.13 gives the surplus for any given year.

3 acres peas required 0.75 quarters seed. 3 x yield less 0.75 = surplus.

3 acres fallow + 3 acres meadow and some pasture supported 10 sheep

1290 - 1550 yield per sheep = 1.4 lbs yield of flock = 0.57 tods
1550 - 1626 " " = 1.9 lbs " " = 0.67 tods
1636 - 1700 " " = 3 lbs " " = 1.0 tod

	1290-1300	1371-1380	1411-1420	1481-1490	1551-1560	1570-1575	1606-1614	1636-1641	1696-1700
Surplus									
Barley in quarters	4.87	4.87	4.87	4.87	4.87	2.17	3.97	8.23	4.12
Peas in quarters	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	0.90	1.80	3.83	1.89
Wool in tods	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.67	0.67	0.67	1.00	1.00
Price in shillings									
Barley	4.0	4.0	3.66	4.18	9.00	7.48	15.07	14.57	23.14
Peas	4.0	4.0	3.66	4.42	8.17	8.65	13.30	16.80	21.50
Wool	10.00	11.00	7.46	6.80*	10.46	12.41	18.86	19.17	20.00
Receipts in shillings									
Barley	19.48	19.48	17.82	20.35	43.83	16.23	59.79	119.91	95.34
Peas	9.00	9.00	8.24	9.94	18.36	7.79	23.94	64.34	40.64
Wool	5.00	5.50	3.73	3.40	7.00	8.22	12.64	19.18	20.00
TOTAL REVENUE	33.48	32.98	29.79	33.69	69.20	32.24	96.36	184.26	155.97
Expenses in shillings									
Tithe	3.35	3.30	2.98	3.36	6.92	3.20	9.64	18.43	15.60
Rent	10.00	10.00	10.00	6.66	6.66	6.66	16.66	16.66	16.66
Food for x persons as above	~~15.84~~ 20.00	15.84	14.49	16.55	30.06	23.81	50.30	48.66	77.29
TOTAL EXPENSES	~~28.78~~ 33.35	29.14	27.47	26.57	43.64	33.67	76.60	83.75	109.55
SURPLUS CASH	~~4.70~~ 0.13	3.84	2.32	7.12	25.56	-1.43	19.76	100.51	46.42
Day wages in pence									
Common servant		2-4	1-2	1½-3½	2-5	2-5	2-9	3-8	4-8
Harvester		2-5	2-3	3-5	5-10	-	5-16	6-12	6-12

(* Lloyd p.44)

The tables speak for themselves. Rarely did the subsistence farmer, the half virgater, manage to do more than cover his costs from the produce of his holding alone. High wool receipts aided him in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, low rents in the fifteenth and sixteenth, but in the seventeenth the rise in rents was not offset by rising wool receipts while the price of foodstuffs continued to rise so that it became more than ever necessary to supplement his income by finding part-time employment.

At all times then, the subsistence farmer relied more or less heavily upon supplementary earnings. If we are to look below the small group of husbandmen and yeomen to the group of artisans, subsistence cultivators and servants, we must endeavour to discover something about the balance between supply and demand for full-time and part-time labour, both in the agricultural and the service sector, and also about the wages offered.

The movement of wages 1300-1700

The excellent study on wages and consumer prices made by E. H. Phelps Brown and Sheila Hopkins is unfortunately out of context for this present study. Their sources were drawn from towns where more commodities had to be bought and had to be paid for at retail prices.[1] Three categories of source material throw light on rural wage rates: estate accounts provide information on the wages of harvesters, carriers, and

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1 E. H. Phelps Brown and Sheila V. Hopkins 'Seven Centuries of Building Wages' and 'Seven Centuries of the Prices of Consumables compared with Builder's Wage rates' in E.M. Carus-Wilson (ed.) Essays in Economic History. II (London 1962).

full time servants in husbandry; borough accounts give similar information for artisans, daily hire and carrier services; the wage rates published annually by Justices of the Peace as enjoined by the Statute of Artificers, record piece rates and day rates with or without livery for both winter and summer, also the annual wages of servants in husbandry and of artisans according to their experience, and lastly the wages of women and of children. Inspection of this last category of documents makes all too clear the danger of relying on single column averages. Wage series such as those complied by Lord Beveridge and Phelps Brown and Hopkins provide valuable information on general trends, but it is not possible to lift a figure from their tables for any given data and assume that that is what the average day labourer earned, because there was no such being as the 'average' day labourer; the differentials between male and female, town and country, county and county, winter and summer, with or without food were too marked. This is what renders our knowledge of fourteenth and fifteenth century wage rates so unsatisfactory, and even for the late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries an insufficient number of justices' assessments have so far been discovered for a complete average of county rates to be drawn up. Justices were supposed to adjust wages to meet fluctuating food costs and they did sometimes keep this consideration in the forefront of their minds, but they also had to take into account the demand for labour in an area; the need to keep wages down in the interests of the small farmer; 'to protect one class of worker against another' as Tawney put it. In her London Ph.D. thesis written in 1932, Dr. N. Hindmarsh concluded that market and assessed

rates corresponded fairly closely during the period 1563-1650, after which date the market rates for skilled labour rose though not for the servants in husbandry. R. K. Kelsall and W. E. Minchinton accept this view.[1] The tables which appear on the pages following have been put together from accounts and official rates available in print. Unfortunately, none survive for Leicestershire, but Rutland and Northamptonshire are well represented. Only some of the many grades and many specialist trades have been selected. For day rates, I have quoted only the extremes, that is to say, the lowest rate, that for winter with livery, and the highest rate, that for summer without livery. This conveys some idea of the most and the least a man could earn in one day, but does not of course imply that a man worked for any stretch of time at the same rate, or that he could find employment every day of the week, month or year.

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1 W. E. Minchinton. Wage Regulation in Pre Industrial England (London 1972) - Introduction to the reprint of R.K. Kelsall's 'Wage Regulation and the Statute of Artificers' (London 1938).

Table 19 : The annual wages of 'servants in husbandry' who in addition received board, lodging, and sometimes clothing

	Realm. 1351	Kibw. 1390	Kibw. 1414	Notf. 1431	Realm 1444	Northants 1560	York. 1563	Kent 1563	Lincs. 1563	Lincoln. 1562
Bailiff		10.s.	40.s	28.s	28.s.	45.s.	30-36s.	48.s.	33/4 – 41/4.	40-80s.
Common Servant					18/4	20s.	20-24s.	38/4	26/8	26/8-80s.
Best Woman					14s.	20s.	20-25s.	26/8	33/4	–
Boy					9s.	–	–	20.s.	20.s.	
16-24 yrs.							1-13/4		under 20. 4s.	20s.
10-16 yrs.										10s.
	25 Ed III 2. cc.1-7.	M.M. 6276	M.M. 6300	EHR. (1898) 299-302.	Rogers IV. 115	Ec.HR. I. (1927-8) 131-134	*H SL. II 223-4	EHR xli. 1926 260-73	H SL. II. 221-3	H SL. II 225-7

	Rutl. 1563	Rutl. 1610	Norf. 1610	Lincs. 1621	Suff. 1630	St. Albans 1631	Gloucs 1632	Heref. 1632	Shrews-bury 1640	Worcs 1663
Bailiff.	50.s.	52.s.	66/8	46/8	60/-	-	80s.	53/4.	60s.	80.s
Common Servant	38/4	40/-	40.s.	33/4	40-55s.	-	40.s	40.s	46/8	50.s
Best Woman	26/8	26/8	33/4	24/-	30-40s.	-	30.s.	20-24s.	34.s.	40.s.
Boy	20/-	20s.	28s.	-	33/4	-	-	25-30s	30s	-
16-24 yrs				16s						
10-16 yrs.										
	Rogers. IV. 120-23	Archaeologia. XL.(1794) 208-07.	EHR XIII (1898) 522-27	HMC. Rutl. I 460-62	EHR XII(1897) 307-11	VCH Herts. IV. 227-8	Rogers VI 694	EHR lvii(1942) 115-19	T. Salop. Arch. Soc. lvii (1956) 136-42	HMC. Varians. I. p 323

	Heref. 1666	Somers. 1666	Northants 1667	E. Yorks. 1669	Warw. 1685	Somers. 1685	Wilts 1685	Bucks 1687	Oxon 1687
Bailiff.	110s	80s	120s	80s	90s.	90.s	120.s.	100-120s.	120s.
Common Servant	40s	40s	60s	55s	50s	90s	100-120s.	80-90s	-
Best Woman	30-35s	-	35s	36s	35s	30s	70s	40-50s	50s
Boy	25s			-		-			
16-24 yrs			35s				50s.	50-60s	32/6
12-15 yrs.				23/4				20-33/4	
	EHR lvii(1942) 115-19	Somers. Quarter Sessions. Rec. IV. p. 13	ECHR I. 1927-8 133-4	EHR lii (1937) 283-9	Archaeologia XI (1794) 208-11	HMC. 7th Report 1879. Appd. 698-9	HMC Varians I. 174-5	Bucks Sessions Rec. I. 227-9	Oxf. Rec. Soc. XVII. (1934) IXIII - IXIV

* Hughes and Larkin, Tudor Royal Proclamations.

Table 20 : Day rates, showing the range from winter to summer, with and without food in pence per day.

	Realm 1351	Leics. 1365 (borough)	Norf. 1431	Realm 1444	Northants 1560	York 1563	Kent 1563	Lincs 1563	Lincoln 1563
Labourer		2-4d.	1-2d.	1½-3½d.	2-5d.	-	3-9d.	-	-
Male Mower	2-5d.				5-10d	4-9d.	5-11d.	4-10d	5-10d.
Female Mower							3-7d	2-6d	
Thresher per quarter	1½ - 2½d.		2-4d.			3-5d.	2½ - 10d.	8-10d.	5-12d.
Mason and Carpenter	1½ - 4d	4-12d	2-3d	3-5½d.	5-8d.	5-10d.		4-12d.	4-10d
Carter		16-24d.				2-5d	4-8d	2-8d.	
	25 Ed III 2. cc. 1-7	Leics. Borough. Recs. II 140.	E.H.R (1898) 299-302	Rogers IV 115	Ec HR I. (1927-8) 131-134	H & L. II 223-4	E.H.R xli (1926) 260-73	H & L II 221-3	H & L II 225-7

	Rutl. 1563	Rutl. 1610	Norf. 1610	Lincs 1621	Suff 1630	St Albans 1631	Gloucs 1632	Heref 1632	Shrews. 1640 bury	Worcs 1663
Labourer	3-9	2-9	2-9	2½-5	4-12	4-5	4-8	3-8	3-8	-
Male Mower	5-11	5-16	5-16	3½-9	6-16	10-14	-	6-12	6-16	6-12
Female Mower	3-7	3-9	2-9	1½-6	4-8	-	-	-	4-8	4-8
Thresher per quarter	2½ - 10	4 - 16	4 - 16	5-8	8-24	-	16	4-6	-	-
Mason and Carpenter	-	4-14	4-14	4-10	8-16	-	12	6-12	8-14	6-12
Carter	4-8	4-9	4-9	3½-8	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Rogers IV 120-23	Archaeologia XI (1794) 200-207	E.H.R xiii (1898) 522-27	H.M.C. Ruts I. 460-62	E.H.R xii (1897) 307-11	V.C.H. Herts. IV. 227-8	Rogers VI 694	E.H.R lvii (1942) 115-19	T. Salop. Arch. Soc. lvii (1956) 136-42	H.M.C. Various I. 174-5

	Heref 1666	Somers. 1666	Northants 1667	E. Yorks 1669	Warws. 1685	Somers 1685	Wilts 1685	Bucks. 1687	Oxon 1687
Labourer	4-8	-	3-8	-	4-8	-	-	3-8	-
Male Mower	6-12	8-16	6-12	6-10	6-12	7-14	12-18	6-16	10-16
Female Mower	-	6-16	4-8	3-6	2-4	4-7	6-12	4-8	6-10
Thresher per quarter	8-12	5-12	8-12	5-12	4-8	4-12	3-10	-	9-10
Mason and Carpenter	5-12	7-16	12-18	12	6-16	12-14	-	8-14	14-16
Carter	6-12	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	(£5 0 p.a.)
	EHR lvii (1942) 115-119	Somers. Quarter Sessions. Rec. IV. p. 13	Ec HR I. (1927-8) 133-4	EHR liii (1937) 283-9	Archaeologia XI (1794) 208-11	HMC. 7th Report 1879 Appx. 698-99	HMC. Various I. 174-5	Bucks. Sessions. Rec. 1 227-9.	Oxf. Rec. Soc. XVI. (1934) lxiii - lxiv

In the course of the period under consideration, 1300-1700, a significant alteration took place in the balance between subsistence farming and supplementary employment among the group of married smallholders. As the number and size of smallholdings diminished so the dependence of the smallholder upon alternative employment increased and two factors assumed vital dimensions in their lives, namely, the number of days work they could get in a year and the amount in real wages that could be earned in a day. Given little technological progress during the period, job opportunity and food costs mirrored faithfully the fluctuations in population levels. A low population level in the fifteenth century increased the amount of work a man could get and also the wage he could command, while at the same time food prices fell. The reduction in the number of smallholders and the increase in the number of landless cottage labourers which also took place during this period did not present serious side effects until the population level began to rise in the last decades of the century. By this time the agricultural economy had adjusted to conditions of labour shortage by converting arable to pasture and later demands for higher wages did not encourage a return to labour intensive forms of husbandry. Successive sixteenth century governments were faced with the problem of encouraging arable cultivation in order to provide employment for the rising tide of vagrants, and for this they had to keep wages down, while at the same time they had to ensure that wages bore some relation to rising food costs, again, in order to reduce the number of destitute poor. In the seventeenth century population growth levelled off, prices

steadied and as the labour pool shrank so wages and job opportunities improved or at least did not deteriorate further.[1]

A few general remarks can be made about the figures on these tables before moving on to an examination of the Kibworth area in particular. The rise in the wages of both categories of servant in the mid-sixteenth century is conspicuous, but while those of the servant living-in, usually referred to as a 'servant in husbandry' continued to rise slowly during the seventeenth century, those of the part-time man did not and those of the artisan made only slight increases. Servants in husbandry were hired by the year and were provided with bed, board and sometimes clothing by their employers. Their wage can therefore be looked upon as a year's savings. This was the way in which single men and women could accumulate a small amount of capital. They were in fact mostly young people, they seldom stayed with the same employer for more than one year and it not infrequently required the intervention of a J.P. to hold them to their contract if conditions were not to their liking or the prospect of better pay elsewhere presented itself.[2] The enlarged farms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries expanded the demand for full time servants but in spite of the number of 'vagrants' on the roads, this demand does not seem to have been fully met. The full time farm labourer, living in a tied cottage and serving the same farmer for a life-time was a way of life to be developed in the next century.

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1 Tawney argued the scarcity of wage labour in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but later work has shown that, if anything, there was under-employment by the mid-seventeenth century. See Minchinton op. cit. p.15, 65-68.

2 R.K. Kelsall Wage Regulation under the Statute of Artificers (London 1938) p.36ff.
A. MacFarlane The Family Life of Ralph Josselin (Cambridge 1970) Appendix B and Bibliography.

The wage of the skilled day labourer, represented in the table by carpenters and masons, rose less steeply than that of the unskilled labourer in the period 1445-1563. Nevertheless it nearly doubled. After this date the rate with food remained more or less static though the rate without food increased by 4-8 pence. It is curious that their wages did not increase substantially during the period of the 'great Rebuilding', 1570-1640.

Wages of the unskilled labourer doubled between 1444-1560 and had doubled again by 1630, after which they remained static for the remainder of the century. Women's wages likewise rose between 1563-1630 after which they fell to below the 1560 level. A similar trend can be seen in the wages of threshers; between 1431-1560 the rate with livery remained static but the rate without more than doubled. In the period 1560-1630 both rates doubled again, after which they fell. The rise after 1560 may well reflect the activities of the justices in relating wages to food prices, since otherwise we should expect the rate of unemployment in this period to have given rise to a fall in wages.

It is now time to examine the impact of these general trends upon one small area of Leicestershire. If we revert to the rental of 1372 when there were only 4 full virgaters compared with 26 half virgaters among the customary tenants we may legitimately wonder whether there was any place at all for the type of servant we have been discussing.[1] There was no

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1 M.M. 6372.

demesne farm and therefore no large scale employer and no corresponding wage accounts. There are, however, references to 'servientes' in the court rolls and in the Poll Tax returns for 1377.[1]

The servientes in the court rolls under the court leet section appear as brawlers or were being sworn into a tithing; in the latter circumstance their age is sometimes noted and we learn that some at least were only boys of twelve years or thereabouts.[2] These brawlers have surnames quite different from their employers and unfamiliar as village surnames, and none of them subsequently appear under the court baron section as taking up land. The Polle family, bailiffs from 1387-1443 and from 1510 or 20 until 1537, employed such a servant in 1373, 1389, 1391, 1393, 1397, 1406 and 1520. The Browns, a family of drapers employed a servant in 1373, 1393, 1410, 1442. Other employers were William Wright who employed a woman servant in 1375, Richard Chapman (1376), Robert Smith (1385), the Tailler family (1389), John Couper (1412), one of the Hildesleys (1412), John Peek (1413 and 1440), John Haford who employed a wiredrawer in 1425-26, and John Parker (1474). These servants seem to have been full time servants or apprentices.

The servientes listed in the tax returns belong to a somewhat larger category, since many of them bear familiar local names and either already held land (as minors ?) or later came to hold land. They were evidently junior members of village families who worked for their own or other households.

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1 P.R.O. E.179 133/26.

2 M.M. 6424.14 (1442). See also Chapter Six.

The assessors distinguish between sons and servants apparently on the criterion of age. Boys were sworn into tithing at the age of twelve and again if they left the village and returned to it, so it is possible that the assessors considered a boy between the ages of twelve and eighteen as a 'son' and over the age of majority as economically independent and therefore as a 'servant' even in his parental home.[1]

As we move into the sixteenth century the court rolls become less informative and the term 'servant' in the tax returns is dropped in favour of the descriptive category 'assessed on wages'.[2] However, wills begin to survive from the early part of the century, and inventories by its end. From these a table has been drawn up which gives some indication of the income and size of holding which could and did support servants. All employers from Kibworth have been included in the table and a few from neighbouring villages who were related to Kibworth families and whose wills I, therefore, have transcribed. An exhaustive list of all employers within the Hundred would obviously provide a more useful complement to the map relating land use to labour density, but time does not allow for the search this would involve.[3] The tax lists for 1522-24 cannot, unfortunately, be made to shed much light on the subject, since they do not include <u>all</u> the inhabitants of Kibworth Harcourt and presumably not all the inhabitants of other Leicestershire villages either. Of those assessed as wage earners on the Kibworth lists, many held land and others practised a craft trade, and so cannot be accurately classified as wage labourers

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1 P.R.O. E.179 133/35, 26. For a fuller discussion of sons and servants see Chapter Six.

2 P.R.O. E.179 133/109; E.179 133/124.

3 Map 13.

Table 21 : The wealth and trade of those who actually employed servants in the Kibworth area

Date	Employer	Village	Occupation	Sum of Inventory	Size of holding	Servants
1520	Amicia Polle	Kibworth H.	Widow	£43 7s.0d	Extensive copyhold	1
1526	R. Smyth	Kibworth B.	-		-	1
1538	W. Marriot	Kibworth H.	Husbandman	£22 0s.0d	3 virgates, copy.	1
1538	R. Ryliff	Kibworth H.	Husbandman	£21 6s.8d	2 virgates, free.	1
1544	T. Deacon	Kibworth H.	-	£21 18s.4d	1 virgate, copy.	2
1545	T. Carter	Kibworth H.	-	Legacies meagre	-	pl.
1552	R. Coleman	Foxton	-	£25 17s.8d	-	1
1554	T. Freeman	Gumley	-	£63 13s.4d	-	pl.
1558	W. Jurdan	Foxton	Husbandman	Generous legacies	Extensive	2
1558	R. Rogers	Kibworth H.	Heir to have 'occupacion'	£66 6s.8d	-	1
1559	J. Eleston	Gumley	-	£36 0s.0d	-	pl.
1559	T. Raye	Kibworth H.	Lawyer-courtier	£332 16s.6d	4-7 virgates	pl.
1560	W. Hull	Kibworth H.	-	-	-	1
1564	W. Dorman	Fleckney	-	£44 0s.0d	-	2
1569	J. Coleman	Foxton	-	-	-	1
1572	T. Arsere	Smeeton	Herdsman	£13 14s.6d	-	1
1572	T. Clerke	Kibworth H.	Husbandman	£111 4s.0d	-	1
1581	J. Eliot	Kibworth H.	Carpenter	-	-	1
1584	T. Freeman	Gumley	Husbandman	£79 5s.0d	-	pl.
1586	T. Bayley	Smeeton	-	£40 + £40 lease	-	5
1590	R. Fox	Kibworth H.	-	£66 2s.4d	2½ virgates, free.	1
1591	R. Brian	Smeeton	-	£103	-	pl.
1572	W. Bowden	Kibworth B.	Rector	£200+	3 farms, 2 mills	pl.
1598	M. Coxon	Kibworth H.	Bailiff to Raye	-	3 virgates +	pl.
1604	M. Eastwood	Kibworth	Widow	-	-	1
1605	R. Bryan	Kibworth	Yeoman	£380 0s.6d	1½ virgates, copy.	pl.
1605	T. Watts	Turlangton	-	£300+	-	pl.
1620	W. Coleman	Kibworth B.	Husbandman	-	3½ virgates	1
1646	D. Coleman	Kibworth B.	Yeoman	-	-	2
1636	T. Coleman	Kibworth B.	-	-	-	1
1640	J. Bingley	Gumley	Rector	-	-	pl.
1659	T. Brudenell	Stonton W.	Gent.	-	-	pl.

Table 22 : The personal estate of employees

Date	Employee	Village	Occupation	Sum of Inventory	Dependants
1569	W. Craxnell	Smeeton	Labourer	£13 4s.2d	Wife, no children
1572	T. Arsere	Smeeton	Herdman	£13 14s.6d	Wife, no children
1575	N. Polle	Hallaton	Labourer	£3 0s.0d	Wife, 3 children
1580	R. Coleman	Kibworth H.	Cottar	£13 8s.4d	Wife, 2 children
1584	J. Burgess	Smeeton	Labourer ?	£11 16s.0d	Single
1590	H. Almey	Smeeton	Labourer	£18 18s.6d	?
1590	E. Bosden	Medburne	Labourer	£23 7s.2d	?
1589	J. Meane	Fleckney	Cottar	£10 6s.4d	?
1633	J. Varnam	Turlangton	Servant	£17+	Single
1661	A. Porter	Kibworth H.	Widow	-	
*1656	N. Porter	Kibworth H.	Labourer	-	
*1652	E. Porter	Kibowrth B.	Labourer	-	"Old"
1682	N. Porter	Kibworth H.	Labourer	- (messuage)	Wife, 1 son
1654	J. Jeffery	Smeeton	Labourer	Married that year	
1697	J. Carter	Kibworth H.	Labourer	£14 in legacies	Single
1636	T. Goodman	Kibworth B.	Labourer	£17 2s.4d	?

* Their deaths mentioned in the Parish register, but no surviving will or inventory.

Analysing a muster roll drawn up in 1608 for the city and county of Gloucester, Tawney noted 'the small part which wage labour played in the agricultural economy of seventeenth century Gloucestershire'. He found that the majority of yeomen and husbandmen employed no servants but relied on the work of the family and relatives.[1] As the table indicates, the same can be said of Kibworth Harcourt. Gregory King estimated not more than 150-200,000 earning over £3 a year in the entire kingdom, and some 350-400,000 earning under £3, that is, common servants, women and boys.[2] In an area of relatively small farms cultivating only barley and peas, which do not require as many ploughings as wheat, this corner of Leicestershire employed a very small proportion of the nation's full-time labour force. (Kerridge estimated two ploughboys for a downland farm of more than 60 acres.[3])

Gervase Markham describes in detail the ploughman's day in late December when the peas ground was being broken for fallow. He, the ploughman, rose at 4.00 a.m. and retired at 8.00 p.m. From 7.00 a.m. until 3.00 p.m. he worked in the fields, in which time he ploughed 1-1½ acres of stiff clay.[4] The remainder of the daylight hours were spent in rubbing down and feeding the ploughbeasts. When there was no ploughing to be done he would be set to carting; hurdles, dung and fuel in spring, hay, barley and peas in summer.[5]

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1 A. J. and R. H. Tawney. 'An Occupational Census of the Seventeenth Century.' Ec. H. R. 1st series V (1934-35) p.52.

2 Gregory King. op. cit. p.769. See also Clapham. Cambridge Hist. Jl. I

3 Kerridge, thesis, p.443.

4 In practice, probably much less.

5 Markham.'Farewell to Husbandry' op. cit. p.145-47.

One of the most detailed and interesting accounts of the shepherd's day has come down to us in Henry Best's farming notes. At times the pressure of work was great, but for relatively long stretches of the year the shepherd was valued for his skill in observation and judgement rather than for the hours of work he put into the job. It was a nice question whether to employ a full-time shepherd at £2 a year and livery worth £10 in the early seventeenth century, or to risk one's flock with the common herd. In some years Henry Best kept over 200 sheep, but he kept on his shepherd in 1641 when he had only 32 sheep and 13 lambs.[1] There were at least four private flocks of this size in sixteenth century Kibworth and more in the seventeenth. So there were perhaps four shepherds in the village in addition to the common shepherd. However, only the common shepherd held a cottage, so the others, if others there were, would have been living-in with their masters.

A number of the servants alluded to in the inventories were women. Of these some were undoubtedly 'chief women' who could 'cook, bake, brew, make malt, and oversee other servants', in the words of the Justices of the Peace for Rutland in 1610 who granted them a maximum wage of 26s. 8d. Others were but 'simple servants' who could do 'but out-work and drudgery', in other words milk the cows, look after the poultry and 'sweepe the house and wash the dishes'.[2] Again, these were mostly single women and lived in. It seems that if the master of the house died, the contract ended, for the provision is frequently made in the wills, 'my servant x to have so much if she stay'.

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1 Best, p.94.

2 Ibid, p.133.

These full-time servants shared in the economy of the village and they doubtless shared the same cultural outlook, but in many respects they were outsiders. They were unrelated to anyone in a community where everyone was related to everyone, they were birds of passage, and one may well ask why outsiders held these jobs and not villagers. The families with large holdings needed all their members but those with smallholdings did not. The question of livery may have been the deciding factor. Just as Robert Loder worked out that it cost him more to keep a man living-in[1], so the man in service must have reckoned that he could live better at his master's expense and for this reason preferred to live in neighbouring villages where he could live-in, rather than in his home town where he could be expected to live in the parental home. This would help to explain the scatter of familiar Kibworth names over the surrounding villages within a short radius; very few of this diaspora held land in other villages, many are specifically described as 'labourers'. Seen in this light, the Poor Law system of returning unemployed persons to their home town was both reasonable and practical.

A smallholder could not at the same time work as a full-time servant in husbandry, his interest lay in part-time employment. Opportunity for seasonal employment on the land in Kibworth Harcourt depended largely on the number of larger farms in the area which practised extensive arable cultivation. The Survey made for Merton College in 1635 lists the total acreage of each freeholder and copyholder and also notes the

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1 Loder, p.72.

proportion between pasture and arable on each tenant's land. Unfortunately this distinction is misleading since much of the land listed as arable in the open fields was in practice under leys. There were 12 farms ranging from 43-206 acres, the rest were smaller.[1] Of the 1,117 acres covered by these 12 farms, it is difficult to estimate the proportion under crop. The old system would have put as much as half under the plough, the rest being fallow or permanent pasture. The up and down system, for which there seems some evidence in the seventeenth century, would have put only one third under the plough. So the arable would have been from one-third to one-half, that is, 359.5 to 539.27 acres.

To calculate the number of harvesters required we have two statements to go by. First, Henry Best's estimate that one man could mow 1½ acres in one day.[2] Second, the 'roll of all inhabitants' at Kibworth Harcourt for 1686 which lists 73 men.[3] This list includes one or two yeomen-gentry and some old men, so let us take 60 men in the village both willing and able to work during the harvest. Sixty men could mow 360 acres in 4 days, or 540 acres in 6 days.

Best goes on to note that for his barley crop he employed one stooker, three binders, and four to six rakers to every six mowers.[4] So with the sixty mowers would go ten stookers, 30 binders, and 50 rakers. This gives us a total labour requirement of 150 men and women. In practice, of course, the

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2 Best, p.114. Gervase Markham estimates 1½ acres grass on level ground, 2-2½ acres barley on level ground and 1 acre wheat on level ground. (Husbandry p.141.)

3 M.M. 6451.

1 See p.105

4 Best, p.53-4.

barley and peas were not harvested concurrently, so the labour force required can be halved. When harvesting his peas, Best liked to use units made up of three men, two women and a boy.[1] Women and boys were paid less than men so it is reasonable to suppose that they were employed in preference to men whenever the nature of the work permitted it. So out of the sixty or so available male harvesters only about thirty would be needed for the peas harvest and rather more for the barley harvest since 'bindinge and stookinge of wintercorne is a man's labour and requireth as much and rather (more) ability and toyle than the other',[2] viz., mowing and shearing. So thirty men and forty-five women and boys might hope to get from four to twelve days' work bringing in the barley and peas at the rate of 12d a day without food for the men and 8d a day without food for the women. There would be the chance for another 3-4 days' work getting in the hay crop at the same rate of pay. A man, woman and boy, working without food for sixteen days could earn 37s.0d between them.

The harvest home festival marked the end of the season for supplementary earnings. During the winter months there was only threshing at 8d a quarter until the seed corn was threshed and thereafter at a lower rate. Hedging and ditching was paid by the rod according to the breadth and depth of the ditch. The rate varied between 5-12d the rod in mid-sixteenth century Kent to 3-6d the rod in mid-seventeenth century Suffolk. Hedging cost 1½d the rod in both counties at both dates. The

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1 Best, p.93.

2 Ibid, p.42.

rate for day labour in winter dropped to 4d with food and 8d without. In March it went up to 6d and 12d.[1] By this date women's work became available, weeding in the fields, and by June there was the possibility of being hired to wash sheep at 3d the score with food at the rate of 120-130 sheep a day. A week or so later came shearing time when a shearer could earn 4d per score at the rate of 60-70 sheep a day. For every shearer two winders would be needed, a man to help the shepherd and a couple of children to mind the tar-pot and to collect odd locks of wool.[2] Spread among sixty men, the opportunities for winter work did not go very far!

On the whole, it would seem that the demand for labour in Kibworth Harcourt did not quite meet the supply, though there does not seem to have been an acute shortage of work. (In 1801, however, there were only 348 acres under the plough in the fields of Kibworth Harcourt, Beauchamp and Smeeton Westerby together, the outcry then about unemployment will be appreciated.[3]) In many parts of England men lived in one village and worked in another often quite some distance away. The accompanying map will show that this cannot have been the practice in Gartree Hundred.

Map 13 shows the parishes of the Hundred, with the 1831 boundaries, the date of their enclosure when much of the arable was put down to pasture,[4] and the population of the parishes in 1603.[5] It will be seen that to the north-east

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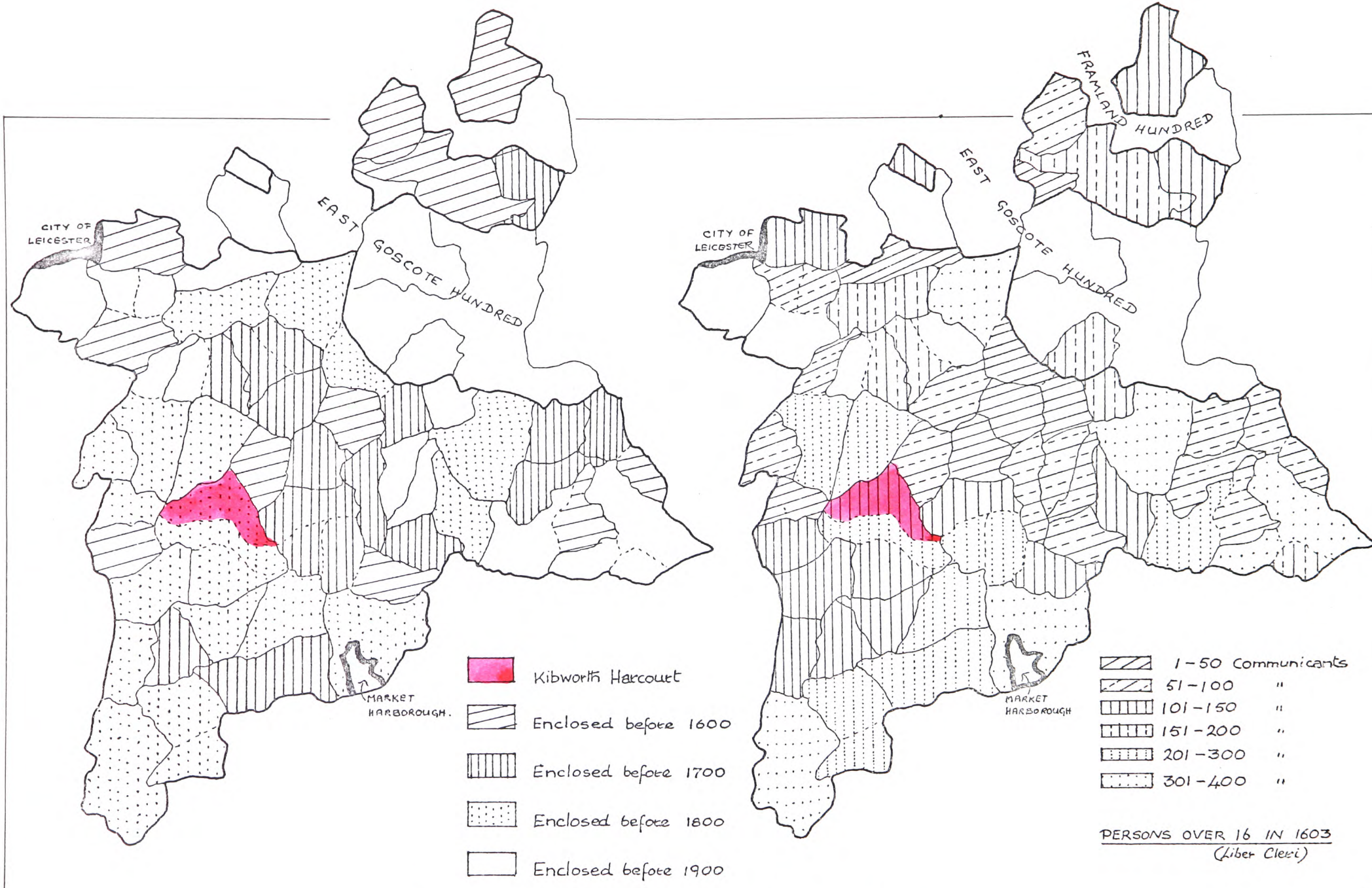
1 For sources, see footnotes to Figures 19 and 20.

2 Best, pp.18-22, 94, 96.

3 Hoskins, T.L.A.S. 24 p.148.

4 V.C.H. Leics. V passim.

5 V.C.H. Leics. III p.168-9 based on the Liber Cleri of the Diocese of Lincoln, 1603 (Lincs. Rec. Soc. XIII) which lists communicants, i.e. persons over 16 years of age.



Map 13 THE HUNDRED OF GARTREE

(Boundaries as in 1831)

of Kibworth Harcourt lay parishes enclosed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, mostly under grass and with populations of less than 100. These offered little or no work for outsiders. North, west and south lay parishes enclosed in the eighteenth century, only six of which had a population of over 200; Great Glen, Burton Overy, Kibworth Beauchamp, Foxton and Great Bowden lie strung out along the Leicester - Market Harborough route, Theddingworth lies in association with the market town of Husbands Bosworth. The parishes with under 200 adults would have enjoyed the same balance between supply and demand as Kibworth Harcourt, those with over 200 may well have found difficulty in supporting the additional numbers and have been sending labourers out rather than receiving them.

One can conclude that supplementary employment was restricted to the hay, barley and peas harvests, a total of two to three weeks' employment in the year.

There remains one last sector of employment which has not been discussed, the service sector. In the fourteenth century hereditary craftsmen such as the smith and the carpenter were also small landholders, by 1700 they were cottars. In the fourteenth century they formed a distinct group, secure in their monopoly of a small number of indispensable crafts which provided a regular income in addition to the produce of their land. Land was constantly being hired or let by them; they frequently held more than one half-virgate, they stood surety for one another. Other half-virgaters had to rely on seasonal work to raise money for their rent, the craftsmen were in occupation of the only full-time employments in the village.

By 1700 the half-virgate holding had disappeared leaving on the one hand the landless wage earner and on the other the landless village craftsman. The wage-earners left the village but the craftsmen remained, preserving fifteenth-century surnames into the twentieth century. They were in not quite the same category as the simple half-virgater, their links were with the surrounding market towns, Hallaton, Harborough, Glen Magna, Barrow on Soar, the names of the simple half-virgaters are not found in the towns but in the surrounding villages.

Kibworth Harcourt supported a carpenter, a miller who ran two mills (a horse mill and a windmill), a tailor, a butcher, one or more bakers or brewers, a smith, a carter, a growing number of innkeepers as traffic increased along the London road, and a common neatherd, shepherd and swineherd. There was no large-scale employer in the village so artisans relied not on annual wages with livery but upon the prosperity of the yeomen, husbandmen and cottagers among whom they lived.

Carting was well paid in the medieval period. According to the Leicester Borough accounts, a carter could earn 1s.4d to 2s.0d a day, a carpenter 1s.0d, a slater 9d.[1] But we are given an interesting insight into the economics of the business at the village level in 1448. In that year Merton College put up a new building in Kibworth Harcourt consisting of hall, chamber and stables and worth £26. The bailiff, John Caunden, made three incomplete attempts to draw up the accounts for this outlay and from these we learn that nearly every man in the

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1 Bateson, op. cit. Vol. II, p.140.

village took the opportunity to earn something by carting. They were not paid at the same rate as the Leicester carters of 1365-66; for example, William Heyne received only 3s.0d for carting timber from Rothley Park which lay some miles to the north of Leicester city.[1] It becomes clear that most men had their own cart and the beasts to draw it. There was no demand for a carter within the village itself or within the immediate vicinity; carting meant long distance enterprises, and it is significant to note the number of carters who head the lay subsidy lists as being more wealthy than their fellow townsmen.[2] In Kibworth the Carter family played a vigorous part in the rapid series of land transactions which took place in the fifteenth century. By the sixteenth century goodman Carter was known as Master Carter and was worth £226 in movables[3]

Where there are carts and ploughs there must be a carpenter-cum-wheelwright. The thirteenth century rentals mention a '<u>carpentarius</u>',[4] and in the sixteenth century there were two, Thomas Kilpeck worth £36 3s.4d when he died, and John Eliot from Newbold Verdun worth £46. During the intervening period no reference survives to a carpenter but the family of Wrights is prominent and if not they then some other family must have performed the vital functions of a wheelwright in this farming community.

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1 M.M. 6465, 6324.

2 P.R.O. 179 133/35 (Gumley); 133/29 (Fleckney); 134/243 (Cheddingworth); 134/287 (Glooston); M.M. 6439.1.i.

3 L.R.O. Inventories <u>passim</u>. Also P.R.O. E.179 134/283. (1611) Robert Carter, <u>Gent</u>, listed as worth £3 in goods.

4 M.M. 6376.10 Ed.I (1282).

A windmill and a horse mill belonging to Merton College were leased for varying lengths of time usually to the same man. The horse mill, surrounded by a mud wall and roofed over with thatch stood in the village square to the north of the town cross.[1] The thirteenth century windmill stood on the high ground to the north-west of the village. In 1356 the timber of this mill was sold, except for the sailyards, and building expenses were incurred for the next year or so.[2] It was probably at this juncture that the mill was moved to a higher site to the north east of the village on what is today called Old Mill Hill. In 1448 the mill received a new look and in 1515 it was entirely rebuilt 'de novo' on which occasion it was probably again moved, this time to its present site on the third of Kibworth's hills, south of Whistlegate.[3] A fine postmill is depicted on this site on the 1635 map.

The men who leased the mill were nearly always outsiders and none established permanent links with the village. The longest connection was formed by the Bryslante family, five of whose members successively ran the mills between 1412 and 1445. The last was dismissed from office for charging excessive tolls[4] and he then took the mill at Kibworth Beauchamp, there he was killed with 'a bastard sword' in 1451 by John Attelok his successor at Kibworth Harcourt.[5] The miller's trade was a specialised one, most of the men who leased the Kibworth mills had held mills elsewhere and their sureties were millers from

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1 M.M. 6421.1.

2 M.M. 6405 (30 Ed.III.)

3 M.M. 6350.

4 M.M. 6424.16.

5 P.R.O. Cal. Pat. Rolls 1446-52.10 Nov. 1451.

other villages. The fact that they did not stay long in Kibworth and that they were constantly accused of charging excessive fees would suggest that the amount of barley to be ground in the village did not meet their outgoings, chief of which was their rent of 26s.8d p.a.

In addition to the common mill there was the common oven, whose upkeep and repair was the responsibility of the whole village in the fifteenth century.[1] In the seventeenth century the Hubbert family for years occupied a 'parva officina' called the Bakehouse,[2] and it was here that housewives, in an area short of fuel, brought their dough to be baked. In addition to the common bakehouse there were bakers licensed to sell 'human Bread'. In the fifteenth century licensees were the wives of the more prosperous villagers but by the sixteenth century licences were taken out by outsiders from Leicester, Market Harborough and Bowden Magna.[3] None of these later licensees settled in the village so it is possible that their premises were sublet to a local.

For many generations the Parker family leased the 'kiln' from Merton College.[4] This was probably an open kiln used for drying grain in wet years and for malting barley. A good example of such a kiln was discovered at Barrow in Rutland,[5] and another at Great Casterton also in Rutland.[6] Corn-drying kilns are

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1 M.M. 6434 et alia.

2 M.M. 6452 et alia.

3 M.M. 6441 ff.

4 M.M. 1373 (1485).

5 E. G. Bolton. 'Excavation of a House and Malt Kiln at Barrow, Rutland' Med. Arch. IV (1960) p. 128-131.

6 P. Corder. The Roman Town and Villa of Great Casterton, Rutland Third Report 1954-58. (Nottingham 1951) p.53-55.

common along the northern margin of corn cultivation where the grain has to be harvested before it is ripe, and in Britain Sir Lindsay Scott has traced them as far south as Northamptonshire.[1] To Gervase Markham they were such a familiar feature of rural life that he does not trouble to describe the normal seventeenth century kiln, but concentrates upon the 'Ancient forme', the new French kiln, and what he found was the best, the west country type, which however suffered the drawback of being only capable of drying about 8 bushels at a time.[2] It is curious that the kiln so seldom features in manorial surveys although it is conspicuous in Welsh surveys. It may be that the corn drying kiln was so integral a part of the agrarian economy that like the organisation of the open fields and the village flocks it remained outside the cognisance of the manorial lord. Be that as it may, the upkeep of a kiln was considerable, the skill required great. To brew the malted barley into ale or beer also required time and skill. At all times there were about four or five wives or widows of the prosperous villagers paying an annual fee of 4d-8d for the licence to brew and sell ale. For example Katherine Polle (1486-1511), the Mariots (1489-1531), the Parkers (1456-84), the Brewsters and Bradleys whose connections extended to Leicester and Coventry (1521-39), the Pyffords (1452-89), the Wrights (1499-1511) and the Bryans who were also butchers (1590's). Many of these wives were also bakers in the earlier period, and their husbands ran inns. The Parkers ran an inn in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and this building, the White House, still boasts two extensive

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1 Sir Lindsay Scott. 'Corn-Drying Kilns' Antiquity XXV (Dec. 1951) p.196-208.

2 Markham. 'Huswife' p.190-299.

subterranean cellars, the Bryans ran the Rose and Crown which flourishes still today. George Fox also ran an inn in the seventeenth century. In 1778 there was an inn called 'The Red Lion' next to George Foxton's house.[1]

Butchering was a sideline, carried on in conjunction with baking or with moderately prosperous farming.[2] As has been said, the demand for meat in the village was small and the big cattle markets at Harborough and Northampton too near for the graziers to require the services of a middleman. Only four men are known to have been butchers, John Pyfford (1443-81) renowned for 'drawing blood' in brawls, John Kynde (1532-52), and Christopher Bryan (1594-1601), and Ambrose Deacon in 1610.

There was a skinner in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries,[3] a sadler in the fifteenth,[4] a tanner in the sixteenth[5] and eighteenth[6] and a glover[7] and shoemaker[8] in the seventeenth, all possibly referring to the same establishment. John Polle, glover in 1643 may have been related to the John Polle, shoemaker who died in Harborough in 1639 worth £50 18s.0d.[9] Similarly,

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1 Nichols The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester Vol. II Pt.II. (London 1790) p.639.

2 P.R.O. E.179 133/35.

3 M.M. 6366.7, 6407.19.

4 M.M. 6421.1.

5 L.R.O. Inventory of John Smith 1541.

6 Nichols, Vol. II Pt. II p.637.

7 L.R.O. Inventory of Thomas Polle 1738.

8 M.M. 6446.

9 L.R.O. Inventory of John Polle of Market Harborough 1639/40 (73).

there was a tailor[1] and in the fourteenth century, a webster, and a draper in the fifteenth[2] and a fuller in the sixteenth.[3] One or two women in the seventeenth century are referred to as spinsters which implies spinning as a livelihood, but the stocking knitting which took root in Kibworth Beauchamp, Smeeton Westerby and Turlangton seems to have made no progress in Harcourt or indeed in any other village except Little Stretton.[4]

There was always a blacksmith and always herdsmen, but more will be said about these when we come to describe living conditions.

It cannot be said that the village supported a large number of artisans. With difficulty it supported a miller. It always needed a wheelwright, a smith and herdsmen. A tanner, tailor, butcher, and carter maintained a precarious position within it. Comparatively wealthy bakers, brewers and innkeepers supplemented their income derived from other sources by providing these services. To repeat, in the fourteenth century, these village craftsmen held half virgates like most other villagers and enjoyed the advantage of a steady source of supplementary income. They retained their land longer than their fellows but lost it in mortgages in the seventeenth and lasted on as cottagers until the twentieth. The half virgaters who did not enjoy these opportunities for supplementing their income took steps to increase their lands in the fifteenth

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1 P.R.O. E.179 133/35.

2 M.M. 6407.21. P.R.O. E.179 133/35.

3 L.R.O. Inventory of Richard Roworth 1584.

4 V.C.H. Leics. III p.4.

century; those who did not, lost what they had during the inflationary years of the late sixteenth century and the early seventeenth, and became landless wage labourers.

This attempt to compare living standards between groups and over a number of years by measuring the margin between income and expenditure has its advantages in that it reveals trends and raises further questions, such as how did 25 families subsist on half virgates in the thirteenth and early fourteenth century. How soon did the subletting of copyhold on a large scale come in, as early as the 1480's? What was the part played by mortgaging? What was the effect of the reduction of the number of smallholders upon the social life of the village and the processes of local government? It also forces the historian to investigate very much more closely such elementary questions as peasant diet and rural employment which can only be satisfactorily approached with a specific area in mind. But of course it has its disadvantages in that no allowance is made for accumulated wealth in the form of housing, furniture, education, family traditions and taste. The profit margin is a very sensitive indicator and enables those interested to discern trends which will not be manifest in the style and manners of a group until many years later. Therefore, this method is the necessary foundation, but HOW a man spent his surplus is also of great importance; conspicuous consumption could ruin a peasant as surely as a duke.

Fortunately, the inventories, or many of them, allow one to form a fairly clear idea of the contents of men's houses and the amount of living space.[1] What follows is largely

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1 See Chapter Three p.118 note 1.

descriptive and is intended to give an impression of how different groups lived in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Harrison could have had Kibworth in mind when he wrote,

> 'There are old men yet dwelling in the village where I remaine, which have noted three things to be marvellouslie altered in England within their sound remembrance.... One is the multitude of Chimneys latelie erected, whereas in their yoong daies there were not above two or three, if so manie, in most uplandish townes of the realme but each man made his fire against a reredosse in the hall, where he dined and dressed his meat. The second is the great amendment of lodging.... The third thing they tell of, is the exchange of treene platters into pewter, and wooden spoons into silver or tin.'[1]

Thomas Ray., courtier, lawyer, yeoman of the Queen's Wardrobe of the Beds, brought the novelties of London to Kibworth in the mid sixteenth century.[2] He occupied what is today called the Manor House and acted as bailiff to Merton College. His house stood in a class apart for size and comfort though it was modest enough by national standards. He died in 1559, shortly after his arrival. In the hall stood a cupboard, a frame table with two carpets, a chair and 7 busset stools with 9 cushions and wall hangings. The new parlour contained a cupboard, a standing bed and a pallet bed, two coffers, a carpet and a hanging. In the old parlour was a standing bed, four chests, and a press with hangings. The chests contained a 'dyaper table cloth', 1½ dozen towels, 1 dozen topboard cloths, 26 pairs of fine sheets, 24 pairs of coarse sheets, 12 table cloths and 3 dozen napkins. In the closet over the parlour were 10 carpet cloths for tables, 5 pairs of fustian

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1 Harrison op. cit. p.239.

2 P.R.O. Cal. Pat. 6 Nov. 1558.

blankets, 7 pairs of woollen blankets, 4 feather beds, 3 flock beds, 6 bolsters and 16 pillows, 8 counterpanes one of them scarlet, 2 quilts one of them covered with sarsenet, 1 standing bed with 'test and corthens of sarsenytt', 5 little stools, 2 chairs and 8 cushions, a chest, 2 cupboards, 1 coffer and a trendle bed. In addition there was a buttery containing porringers, candlesticks and similar utensils, a chamber over the buttery containing 2 bedsteads, a cupboard and a coffer, a chamber over the hall containing another bedstead and a store of 10 stones of wool, a storehouse containing pitchforks and other instruments of husbandry, a milkhouse, larder, kitchen, maid's place and men's chamber in which there was a malt kiln. In all, his personal estate was worth £332 16s.6d.

More wealthy than Ray but less sophisticated was the yeoman Robert Bryan who died in 1605 worth £380. A widower, he lived with his son Robert and his butcher brother Christopher in a house comprised of a hall with a chamber above it, a kitchen, dairy, servant's chamber and cheese chamber. This may have been Tenement 44, the free chapel of former days. His silver spoons were worth 30s.0d the rest of his silver £13. A maid and servants looked after his needs. His 15 kine had provided him with 70 cheeses and he ran 180 sheep on his 1½ virgates plus some leased land.

At the western end of the Main Street still stands John Iliffe's house described in Chapter Four. Inventories of the Carter family describe the same 7-roomed house for 1641, 1670, 1690 and 1709. The earliest inventory mentions a hall and parlour with chimney between them, a little parlour and kitchen, and a chamber over the parlour. By 1670 there was a chamber

over the hall, by 1690 there was a chamber over the little parlour by then called the buttery. This was probably Tenement 26 on the 1635 map. Thomas Carter, husbandman, died in 1641 worth £222 but the inheritance was split between his sons William and John and the family fortunes declined thereafter.[1]

From husbandman we turn to blacksmith. This is a straight tale of declining fortunes. In February 1692 Samual Clerke died possessed of goods worth £30 19s.0d. His debts amounted to £32. His brother and sister lived under the same roof and he left a wife and five young children. The house, in which these nine people lived consisted of a hall, parlour and shop with a chamber over the parlour. The hall contained a table and three chairs, one 'loyndiron' (endiron, which implies a chimney) 2 pewter plates and 3 pans. The parlour contained a bedstead, a cupboard, a coffer, a trunk, 2 barrels and 2 tubs. The chamber over the parlour contained simply a bed. In his shop were his bellows, hammers and other instruments. Without the house he kept a horse, two cows and a hog. Twenty-five shillings worth of barley lay in his barn, 21s.0d worth of peas and 11s.0d worth of hay. Out in the field was sown wheat worth 21s.0d. His debts included 42s.0d for meat, 10s.0d for coal, 3s.9d owed to John Hubbard for shepherd's wages, 20s.0d to Miss Cox for house rent, and finally 15s.4d for 'a dockter in the house'. The 20s.0d must have been a loan from Miss Cox because the house was copyhold and leased from Merton at 4s.0d a year plus 6d for the shop and a £3 fine every seventh year. His widow and only son

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1 See Chapter Four p.153 and Chapter Seven p. 337-339.

died before 1700 and the property was divided. The shop passed to his brother Daniel who died in 1729 worth only £13 5s.0d. The hall then contained 2 tables, a grate, 1 crock, 3 small pans and some pewter. The parlour contained 1 bed, the chamber over it 2 bedsteads and some 'small bedding'. The shop was still there and he kept one cow, but business had evidently not been good. The land meanwhile had been divided between Samuel's two surviving daughters, Mary Fletcher and Alice Clerke. By 1772 Mary Fletcher's share had become part of Lebbeus Humphrey's 'bottom garden'.[1]

The inventories of two shepherds survive. In 1662 William Hodge left £7 15s.8d, a three roomed house and a cow, pig and 2 ewes with lambs in the yard. In 1661 John Hubbert senior left to his shepherd son John three sheep and one bay of his house. His wife, Isabel, was to have the other two bays. It was a one hearth house[2] next to the Hall Close and was held from Merton College, Tenement 32. Both the daughters were married.

In 1541 John Smith, tanner, left a three roomed house and £38 12s.0d worth of goods. The hall contained a board, 2 forms, a cupboard and 3 chairs. In the parlour were 3 coffers, 4 mattresses and some bedding; in the kitchen 3 cupboards and the usual array of kitchen utensils including two saltcellars. In the yard was a horse, 2 kye, a heifer, 3 hogs, 3 loads of hay and some coal. In 1716 William Smith occupied a similar three roomed dwelling with 2 hearths, and with the house went

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1 L.R.O. Humfrey Papers DE.526 and supra p. 165-166.

2 P.R.O. Lay Subsidy 251/4 Mich. 1664.

a quarter of a virgate. He was worth only £11 6s.0d and he instructed his executor to sell the land in order to settle debts and pay off the mortgagee. The remainder was to go to his two sons and two daughters. This land also became part of Lebbeus Humfrey's 'bottom garden'.[1]

Richard Deacon, husbandman, was worth £52 13s.4d in 1570 but he and his five children occupied a two-roomed dwelling. His grandson, Nicholas, died in 1593 leaving five surviving children the eldest of whom inherited the lease of the farm while the younger, Ambrose, set up business as a butcher, baker and brewer.

Richard Rowerth and his three children occupied a two-roomed house. The lease of his half virgate was worth 20s.0d a year and in 1584 he kept 27 sheep worth £6 5s.0d and no cattle. This was double the stint to which he was entitled so perhaps he had put his arable down to leys or else rented some additional grazing. His eldest son, Hugh became a shoemaker and kept on the half virgate for an annual rent of 7s.4d plus a fine of 70s.6d to be paid every seventh year.

The cottar, Richard Coleman lived with his wife and two children in a single room containing a table, a form, 2 chairs, 3 stools, 1 old ambre, 2 coffers, 2 bedsteads, a board, shelves and various utensils. Outside in the yard were his pullen, 4 kye, 4 ewes and lambs, 6 other 'small sheep' and 1 small hog. His peas, barley and hay were worth 26s.8d in November, and all his possessions were worth £13 8s.4d.

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1 L.R.O. Humfrey Papers DE.526 and supra p.165-166.

In the village there were always the old to be provided for by their children. Reference has already been made to Nicholas Gilbert's provision for his parents in 1360. In 1520 John Polle's widow occupied a complete house to herself comprising hall, parlour and kitchen. She had 6 kye, 3 calves, fivescore sheep, hogs, pullen, wheat, barley and peas in the barn, firewood and timber, and a precious coffer worth £10 standing in the parlour. However, most widows were less fortunate. In 1624 Richard Rylye, yeoman, left his wife 1 acre arable in every one of the fields of Kibworth Harcourt, 2 loads of hay to keep her cow each year, 'a room for a board in the house she now dwells in and room about the barn to lay her corn and hay in', a bedstead, her furniture 'and the old pied cow'. In the same year Henry Watts, husbandman left his wife half the household goods and two of his best kye, half a yardland which her son was to plough and dress for her, 1 load of coals a year and 1 load of wood every two years, the bay of the barn next the stable to lay her corn and hay in, part of a hovel to lay her peas in, 'the chamber over the parlour for her own use and room in the hall to make her a fire'. Her son was to do all her carting for her. The house was Tenement 3 by this time extended to its present size but without the second floor lofts. In 1632 Nicholas Porter, labourer, instructed his son John to build his mother a chimney in the parlour where she dwelt or else to 'build her one sufficient bay in the yard and make her a chimney in it for her to live in, and she shall have leave to keep beans and one pig in the yard and have the third part of the hovel that is in the yard and one cow and all the household goods that she brought with her

and 18s.0d a year', in addition to diet, washing and lodging and a cow and a sheep kept with his own. Unfortunately no inventory was made, but John and his wife Alice renewed Nicholas's lease of the western half of Half Hayward's Meere, the eastern half of the Gravell pits, a dole on the western side of Churchhadland, the northern part of Combes Meere, a piece to the east of Hogate and a close called Fish-poole-dike next to Marsh field. For this collection he paid an annual rent of 6s.11d and a fine of 20s.0d every seventh year which was raised to 30s.0d in 1693.[1] The house at Fish-poole-dike had been abolished by 1779. This was all grazing land, so he would have had to buy barley for three adults as well as find 18s.0d for his mother each year. Only if he worked full time for 50s.0d to 80s.0d a year could he hope to meet these expenses.

These inventories tend to confirm the impression gained from the budget tables, and from Figures 42 and 43 showing the return to legacies in kind among the poorer landholders in the late seventeenth century, of a decline in the fortunes of the smaller landholders towards the end of the period we have been studying. Some, like the Clerkes, still lived in houses which had been enlarged and improved in the previous century; they retained their cupboards and chairs and their permanent bedsteads which contrast so markedly with the trestles and boards of the late medieval period, but no new items of furniture were added. Fortunately, they retained the custom of making a will and having an inventory taken of their goods, so that the halt, and in some cases the decline, in the standard of living is clearly set before us.

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1 M.M. 6448,6455.

If we look back to Tables 17 and 18, we see that a holding of 12 acres arable and pasture in heavy clay country producing mainly barley and peas could provide the average family with its food for the year, but could not produce enough surplus to pay the whole rent regularly or to supply a ceremonial and replacement fund. Seasonal employment provided the necessary surplus. This balance between smallholding and seasonal employment can fairly be called subsistence level within the context of Kibworth Harcourt. Reduction in the opportunities for seasonal employment, for example large scale conversion of arable to pasture, could upset this balance as also could the increase in the number of smallholders and cottars competing for seasonal jobs such as harvesting.

Rural economy in the medieval period rested on the maintenance of this delicate balance. The smallholder held his land in return for works or rent. If it was rent he owed, then there had to be a demesne or one or more large agricultural units in his vicinity which could offer him employment for wages, he could not squeeze the rent out of his land. Ideally, there had to be a nice balance between large holdings and small holdings, and the number of very small holdings had to be very small indeed. In the thirteenth century the 8 or 9 virgates of demesne at Kibworth Harcourt were leased out in quarter virgate pieces and there was no longer a big employer in the village. It is not at all clear from what source the half virgaters derived their surplus for rent during this period, possibly from wool sales or from quarter virgate shares of the demesne. In the fifteenth century many, in fact most, of the half virgaters became full virgaters, able to pay their rent out of the profits

of their land and no longer dependent on occasional employment. Sixteenth century inflation allowed the virgater to increase his profit margin and to set aside enough capital with which to buy or lease more land. The virgate, therefore, was a less stable unit than the half virgate, additions were constantly made to it, so that by 1635 there were only four single virgate tenements in Kibworth of 18, 20, 27 and 31 acres, the rest were over 2½ virgates, the largest 7. These multi-virgate holdings offered employment for a small number of semi-landless men. However, no return was made to the medieval system. There were by this date few half-virgaters, that is men who did not look for more than seasonal work. Therefore, either higher wages had to be paid or labour requirements reduced. The latter was the obvious course in the excellent grazing region round Kibworth. So a new balance was arrived at, one of moderate sized pasture farms on the one hand and landless craftsmen on the other. The way of life which depended upon both land and wages did not return.[1]

Medieval historians not infrequently talk about peasants being 'burdened' with labour services. From this discussion of the seventeenth century situation it will be seen that while the virgater may have looked upon labour services as a burden and a nuisance, the half virgater may well have preferred a low rent and certain employment to a higher rent and the necessity to seek employment at low rates.

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1 Cf. J. Ibarrola 'Structure Sociale et Fortune dans la Campaigne Proche de Grenoble en 1847' (Mouton 1966) p.13. "Depuis la rupture de l'économie traditionnelle de type domanial, l'union métier auxiliaire - exploitation agricole a fait place à une complémentarite artisanat-agriculture".

There seems little reason to believe that the thirteenth century economy in Leicestershire supported a large labour force. Poor transport facilities prevented the county from becoming a wheat growing area; the crops grown were barley and peas which require less intensive cultivation. The lay estates in the county did not comprise many manors and on these manors the demesnes were small in extent, most were under 150 acres in arable. Labour services actually performed were not heavy; on none of the manors examined, did Prof. Hilton find week-works performed, at most 17 days in the year were demanded.[1] Fourteen to twenty-one days work in the year was the most a seventeenth century wage labourer might hope to get. What is notable is that a large proportion of the thirteenth century peasantry paid money rents and correspondingly, manorial demesnes were cultivated by wage labour. Now the number of thirteenth century demesne farms was very much less than the number of seventeenth century yeomen farms and the number of half virgaters very, very much greater, so that it is difficult to imagine how these half virgaters managed to raise the money for rent and why they consented to actually pay for the privilege of uncertain employment.

The problem can be more clearly seen in concrete terms at Kibworth Harcourt. Here a demesne of some 190-220 acres was cultivated with the help of relatively heavy labour services. A virgater owed two days' ploughing per year with his own plough and without food; two days' harrowing and hoeing with food; two days' mowing on the lord's meadow with one man, and

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1 Hilton, V.C.H. Leics. II p.145-198.

an indefinite amount of gathering and carrying hay using the lord's cart; four days' autumn reaping with two men and without food; two more days' reaping with four men this time with food; various other carting services within the county.[1] There were at the time this list was drawn up three virgaters and 25 half virgaters. So for six days' harvesting there would be 124 men to harvest about 144 acres of barley, peas and some wheat. We have already seen that 60 men could mow 360 acres in 4 days and if one adds the stookers and rakers then 150 men and women would be sufficient. Evidently the bailiff at Kibworth Harcourt could get in his entire harvest with the help of labour services alone. But the number of plough services were not sufficient; two or more full-time plough men would have been necessary.

So the supply of employment at Kibworth was much the same in the thirteenth century as in the seventeenth but the demand was far greater. The rent too was greater, 10s.0d in the thirteenth century as against 6s.8d from the late fifteenth onwards.

Yet these men somehow found the money and paid their rents. Their diet and their standard of living must have been of an entirely different order to that of the fifteenth century onwards, and it is scarcely surprising that the 'peasant house' does not appear in the rural landscape before the late fifteenth century.

The commutation of labour services to money payments introduced an imbalance to the economy which ended only in the plagues of the late fourteenth century.[2]

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1 M.M. 3094.

2 Cf. P. Goubert 'Et cependant tous ces paysans qui théoriquement ne pouvaient vivre sur leurs terres, ont véçu ... mais ils ont vecu en s'en dettant'. Beauvais et le Beauvaisis de 1600 a 1730 (S.E.V.P.E.N. Paris 1960) p.182.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF THE PEASANT HOUSEHOLD

The inheritance pattern practised in a region defines the size and age structure of the group dependant on the tenement. But it is also true that the smaller the tenement the more restricted will this household group have to be.[1] In Chapter Five it is argued that a twenty-four acre holding could comfortably support a household of 3-5 persons whereas a twelve-acre holding could not. The reasons are summarised in Figures 17,18. Other factors enter in, such as whether rent was paid in cash or in labour, but it is clearly important that the size of the household in relation to its landed resources should be carefully examined. This is the object of the present chapter.

Modern demographic historians and their predecessors, the early census makers, experienced considerable difficulty in defining their terms.[2] Demographers look for rates of population growth and so are drawn into taking the active reproductive pair as the core of the family or household and relegating the grandparents to the shadowy realm of 'ascendants' or 'upward extension'! In reality the grandparents were at the head of the household and controlled its economic resources until they died. They did not necessarily live in the same house as their children, and so one could have two houses and two couples that were nevertheless dependant upon the same tenement. In

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1 A. V. Chayanov, Peasant Farm Organisation (Moscow 1925), p.64.

2 P. Laslett and R. Wall, Household and Family in Time Past (C.U.P. 1972), pp.28-32, 159-161.
L. Berkner, 'The Stem Family and the Developmental Cycle of the Peasant Household: an Eighteenth-Century Austrian Example' American H. R. 77.2 (1972), p.410-411.

addition, there could be servants or lodgers living in one or other of these houses. In the seventeenth century the word 'household' was more familiar than the word 'family', and by 'household' a man meant all those persons who sat at his 'board' - hence the distinction between 'boarders' and 'lodgers'; a lodger lived under his roof but shared not his board and consequently was not part of his household. Since our approach in this study is the same as that of the seventeenth-century householder, namely to estimate the number of persons to be fed per household per year, I am here using the term 'household' to mean the total number of consumption units per family holding, and I include not only children but also grandparents, adult relatives and servants.

Figure 23 (overleaf) illustrates the developmental cycle of the average family at Kibworth Harcourt. It serves as a convenient point of reference for the following discussion.

The model demands precise information on the following points:

(i) the average age at first marriage. This gives the generation span;

(ii) the average length of life of men. This gives the generation overlap;

(iii) the average number of children per family;

(iv) the infant mortality rate;

(v) the birth interval;

(vi) the age at which children left home.

Figure 23 : Table to show the developmental cycle of a household in the seventeenth century, and to show the number of consumer units on a 12 and a 24-acre holding.

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Grandfather	X	X	X																										
Grandmother	X	X	X	X																									
Husband	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wife	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sister																													
Brother																													
Sister																													
Brother																													
Daughter	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	L															
Son			x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	L	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
Daughter					x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	L										
Son								x	x	x	x	x	D																
Daughter												x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	L				
Consumption units:																													
12 acres	4	4	4	3	2	3	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
Average = 3.34 persons per household																													
24 acres	4	4	4	3	2	3	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
Average = 3.82 persons per household																													

Key: D = died L = left home ? = may have remained at home on 24 acre holding, x = under five years old. but not on 12 acre holding

If precise data on all six points can be extracted from the sources, an estimate of average household size can be made for each stage of the developmental cycle. Unfortunately, the primary sources for the late medieval period are less comprehensive than the later documents. They yield valuable information on the age at which children left home, the character and place of servants in the household, the average age at marriage and the average length of marriage, but they are silent on the average number of children per family, the birth interval and the infant mortality rate. The early modern documents on the other hand shed abundant light on points one to five, but little direct information on the age at which children left home.

With considerable reluctance, I have sacrificed chronology to clarity and have set out the early modern evidence first in order to be able to present a complete set of the data necessary for the completion of the model. I have followed this with a presentation of the medieval data which, being less complete, is best seen in the light of the more detailed knowledge taken from the later period. The results are summarised in their true chronological sequence at the end of the chapter.

The first section of the following investigation will, therefore, be confined to the period 1575-1700. It is based on the parish Register, and the wills and inventories which between them allow the reconstitution of some fifty families in Kibworth Harcourt. Use has also been made of the court rolls and rentals. Each of the above six points will be discussed and the conclusions recorded in the text and on the model.

The first step in the enquiry was to delimit the age-span of a generation. For this the average age at marriage for men was extrapolated from the reconstructed family descents. In a few instances the parish register recorded not only the date of a man's birth but also of his marriage, in most cases it recorded the date of birth of his first child. The first child was generally born within the first year of marriage, so it was found to be a reasonably safe assumption to take the date of marriage as one year before the birth of the first child. For the 87 cases in which date of birth and of marriage can be thus deduced, 29 years was found to be the average age at marriage. (In only 26 cases could similar information be assembled for women, giving an average at marriage of 23.6 years. Fortunately, the statistics for women are not essential to this stage of the investigation.)

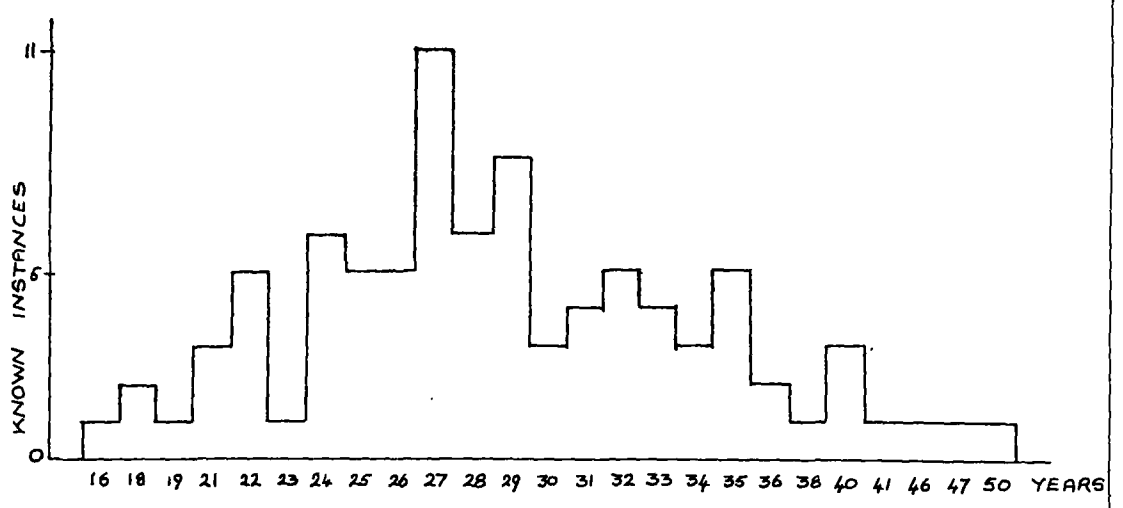


Figure 24 : Age at first marriage for men in the seventeenth century.
Average age 29 years.

Twenty-nine years is a high average figure but agrees well with the findings of Hajnal and Drake for the eighteenth century, with the few figures which have been collected for the seventeenth[1] and sixteenth centuries,[2] and with those for fourteenth-century Florence.[3] As can be seen from the histogram, many Kibworth men married between the ages of 23-27 and these would have lived to see their grandchildren. Those who married later stood less chance of seeing their grandchildren. Thus the figure also agrees well with the estimate based on different data that 50% of married men at Kibworth would live to see their first grandchild's seventh birthday and 50% would not live to see the birth of their first grandchild.

The length of overlap between grandparents and grandchildren can be established by two processes. In the first the age at marriage, doubled, can be subtracted from the age at death. In the second, the probability of overlap can be deduced from two slightly different sets of data; the time that elapsed between a man's marriage and the birth of his first grandchild, and the time that elapsed between a man's marriage and his death.

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1 J. Hajnal, 'European Marriage Patterns in Perspective' in D. V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley (eds.) Population in History (London 1965), p.107.
M. Drake 'Fertility Controls in pre-industrial Norway' in D. V. Glass and Roger Revelle (eds.) Population and Social Change (Arnold 1972), p.186.
P. Styles gives 30.2 as average age for men in 1698, 'A Census of a Warwickshire Village in 1698' Birm. H.R. III (1951-52), p.33-51.

2 G. Creighton, 'When did Renaissance Man Grow Old?' Studies in the Renaissance. XIV. p.7-32.

3 D. Herlihy, 'Vieillir au Quattrocento' Annales 24 (1969), p.1338-52. R. Burr-Lichfield, 'Demographic Characteristics of Florentine Patrician Families from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries' Jl.Ec.H. 29 (1969), p.191-206.

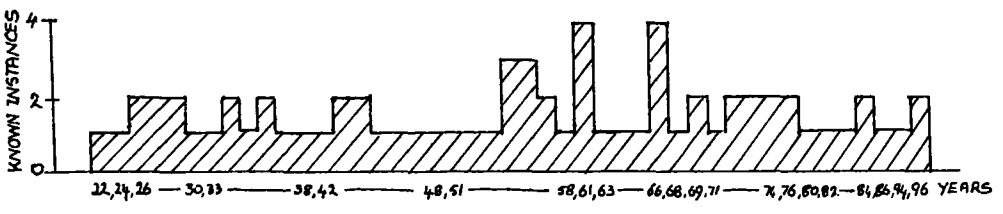


Figure 25 : Histogram to show age at death of landholders at Kibworth 1536-1700

The first of these requires us to know the average life span of a married man. In 69 cases the register gives us the date of birth and death of married men at Kibworth, and this, the most direct source, yields us an average of 55.8 years. In order to get a larger sample 173 cases were taken for which the dates of marriage and death only were known. The average length of marriage in the seventeenth century was found to be 32.13 years. If we add the average age at marriage to the average length of marriage we arrive at a total of 61.3 years. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries marriage and taking up land were so strongly inter-related in this social context, except in the case of minors, that it is legitimate to identify length of landholding with length of marriage. If we add length of landholding to age at marriage in the seventeenth century we arrive at an average life-span among landholders of 60.65 years.[1] These three types of data give us an average life-span of between 55-60 years. A difference of five years is somewhat unsatisfactory and this

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1 But see Hajnal op. cit. p.119-26 for possibility of earlier marriage in fourteenth century, also S. Peller, 'Births and Deaths among Europe's Ruling Families since 1500' in Glass and Eversley op. cit. p.89.

2 See below. p. 281-283, 334.

has prompted me to attempt the second process involving the use of probability theory.

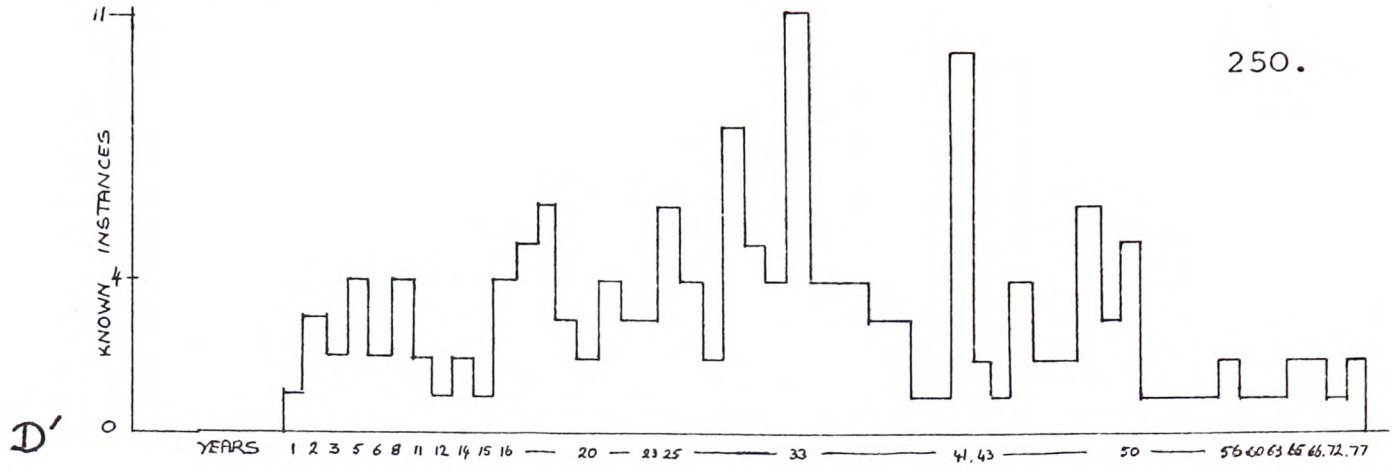
Two histograms were prepared, one showing the time that elapsed from the marriage of a man to the birth of his first grandchild (G'); the second showing the time elapsed between a man's marriage and his death (D'). In this way the two best represented sources of data for the seventeenth century were utilised.

The data was punched onto computer cards, and using the equations

$$P = \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \left[D(t) . \sum_{i=0}^{t=1} G(i) + \tfrac{1}{2} G(t) \right]$$

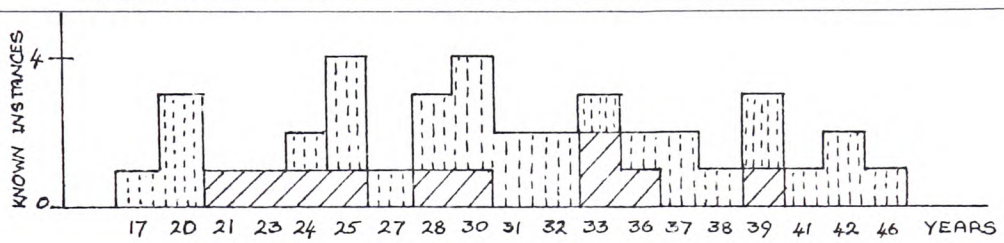
and $$Q = \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \left[G(t) . \sum_{i=t}^{t=\infty} (i-t) . D(i) \right]$$ followed by PXQ, the following results were arrived at. The probability of a man being alive when his first grandchild was born was 0.5. The average overlap of grandfather and grandchild in those houses in which a grandchild was born was 7.27 years. Therefore, the average length of overlap of grandfather and grandchild over the whole community of Kibworth Harcourt was 3.74 years. In other words grandparents and grandchildren shared the same board for an average of 3.74 years in every generation.

Using the charts of reconstituted families in Kibworth, it was not difficult to arrive at the average number of children per couple and to note the exact age at which children died if under twenty-one. When the number of children recorded in the register was compared with the number of children mentioned in the father's last will and testament, it was



D'

Fig. 26 : Histogram to show length of marriage of men in Kibworth in seventeenth century (date of marriage and death known)



G'

Both dates known definitely

Date of marriage inferred from date of birth of first child

Fig. 27 : Histogram to show the time elapsed from the marriage of a man to birth of his first grandchild in seventeenth century

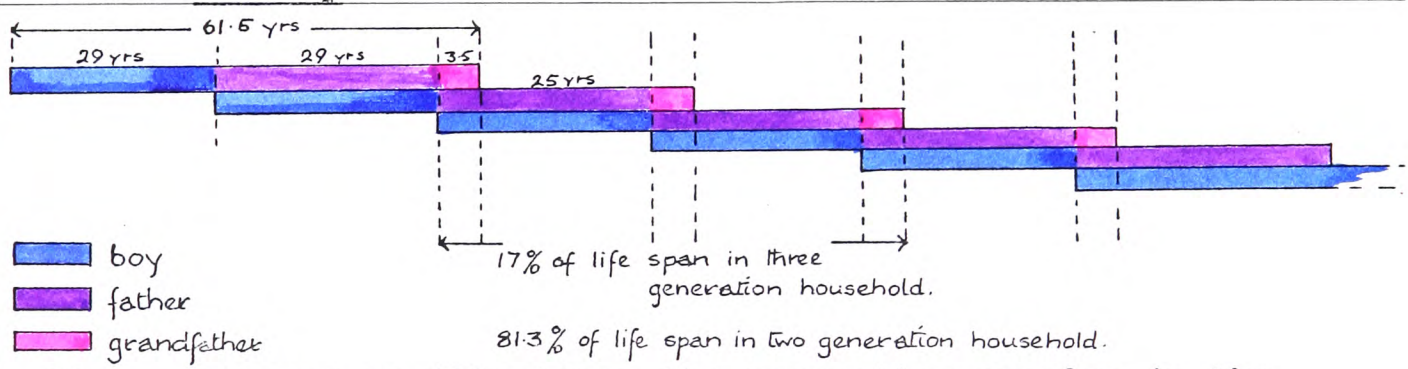


Fig. 28 : Diagram to illustrate the generation overlap in the average Kibworth household in seventeenth century

Data:-
- Average age at first marriage of men = 29 years
- Mean duration of marriage for men = 32.13 years
- Average time elapsed from marriage of man to birth of first grandchild = 30.27 years
- Probability of a man being alive when his first grandchild is born = 0.5 (i.e. 50:50)
- Average overlap of grandfather and grandson in those houses in which a grandson was born = 7.265 years
- Average overlap of grandfather and grandson over the whole community = 3.738 years[1]

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1 Styles op. cit. found 10 out of 80 households contained three generations.
E.A. Wrigley, Population in History (London 1969), p.131-134.

noticed that there was occasionally one more child in the will than in the register. For reasons to be more fully discussed shortly, there are some grounds for believing that occasionally a baptism was not recorded in the register. Therefore, the figure given in the will was preferred to that provided by the register.

On average, 4.87 children were born to each father. From the demographic point of view it would be interesting to know the number of children per completed family, the age of the mother at first marriage being known. Unfortunately, this is not possible with the Kibworth material since second marriages are not often recorded in the register. However, for the present purpose it is sufficient to know the total number of children a father had to provide for. A total of 956 children were born to 192 fathers. Of these 160 died before reaching their twenty-first birthday i.e. 1 in 6 and of these 70% died before reaching their fifth birthday. The Department of Health and Social Security gives a child its first increase in allowance for food and clothing at five years. I have, therefore, taken a child's fifth birthday as the point from which to include it as a consumption unit at its father's table. If 70% died before reaching ~~this age~~ five years, then four surviving children per couple would seem a reasonable round number to use for the model.[1]

The spacing of these children was of course very important and not difficult to ascertain, using the family trees. Except

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1 Styles op. cit. Average children per family = 4.6-5.46. Child mortality from one in five to one in seven. (Kibworth one in six.)

during the Commonwealth period, the date of baptism not of birth was recorded. Baptisms were not confined to Sundays but took place singly throughout the week. Often a child was baptised and buried within a few days, and one gets the impression that there was no long delay between birth and baptism. The intervals between baptisms in the same family were simplified to the nearest whole week and the final average given in months. Within each family the interval was noted to be on the whole very regular; for example, the spacing of Thomas and Alice Carter's children reads as follows: 1 5/12; 2 6¾/12; 1 5¼/12; 1 11½/12; 1 8½/12; 1 8½/12. If a child died before weaning, the interval between its birth and that of the next child was often shortened, and if an older child died it was often replaced by a benjamin considerably younger than his siblings which raises the average by giving an unusually long birth interval. A birth interval of 50-60 months recurs sufficiently frequently for one to suspect that these are in fact double intervals; that a baptism has been omitted from the register. The suspicion is strengthened by the tendency of the wills occasionally to note one child more than in the register, and by the register itself which, about once in every 2½ years, records no entries at all for the space of exactly one month. This raises an interesting administrative point; were church rites performed for Kibworth laity in the neighbouring parish churches during these intervals (one would anticipate some reluctance to register births in an alien parish)? However, these long fifty month intervals tend to weight the average somewhat too high, at 32 months. As can be seen on the histogram below, I have therefore selected a distribution limited to the more common

intervals, which reduces the interval to 29.67 months or 2½ years. This agrees well with the findings of Goubert, and Wrigley and moreover is a convenient figure to work with.[1] At most an error of two months per child would spread the family out over an additional eight or ten months.

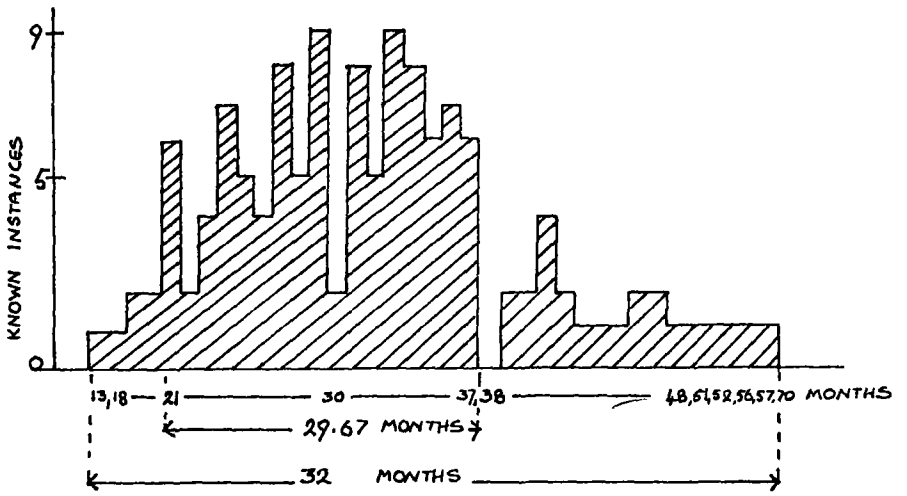


Figure 29 : Frequency distribution of birth/baptism intervals to the nearest whole month (seventeenth century)

So far the data has been of a solid, factual nature and it is as well to summarise here the conclusions based upon it. In every 29-year-generation, there would, on average, be grandparents in the house for three and a half of those years, and one grandparent for possibly longer. There would be an average of five children per family, arriving at two and a half year intervals, and of these one would probably die before it reached its fifth birthday.

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1 P. Goubert, Beauvais et la Beauvaisis de 1600 à 1730. (S.E.V.P.E.N. 1960) p.32.
Wrigley op. cit. p.93-4.

These averages are true of all households irrespective of the size of the tenement. The number of consumption units per household in any given year will vary considerably according to the age at which the children leave home. If they left home at between sixteen and twenty-one the average household size could be five or more. If,however, they left at twelve at the latest then the average household size at any time would be in the region of 3.2 persons over five years of age. Unfortunately, we have no direct evidence concerning this important variable and must move onto more inferential ground. Two main lines of enquiry have been followed; the first, the age at which children were considered old enough to be moving into the adult world, the second, the need for the child's labour at home.

A boy was sworn into tithing at twelve and again if and when he returned to the village; he was liable to pay tax at twelve; he could legally marry at fourteen and a girl at twelve; he could take communion in the seventeenth century at sixteen.[1] Kibworth men who died leaving minors generally stated at what age their children were to receive their child portions. Among the girls, 18.75% were to receive their portion when sixteen, 14.5% when eighteen, 35.4% when twenty-one and 30% when they married. Among the boys 10% were to receive their portion when sixteen, 26% when eighteen, 52.5% when twenty-one and only 5% when they married. In two instances executors were charged with bringing up a man's sons

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1 According to Glanvil the son of a sokeman could inherit when fifteen, the son of a knight when twenty-one. (Op. cit. p.82.)

until they were eighteen, but the boys were not to receive their portions until they were twenty-one. In another case a boy was to receive his legacy when nineteen but was to be maintained until he was twenty-one. Two boys were apprenticed when they were eighteen and nineteen respectively. A child's portion was often only paid years overdue, so it cannot be argued that a child left home when he or she received the portion. However, the impression is that at Kibworth in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries children left home rather late, perhaps when about sixteen or later, which fits the labour theory of their being needed at home on middle-sized holdings i.e. 30-60 or more acres.[1]

When J.P.s drew up wage schedules for their counties they often included a scale for children. The schedules for Suffolk and Bury St. Edmunds (1630) lay down a starting rate for boys between sixteen and twenty-one and award full adult pay to boys over twenty-one. The Norfolk schedules (1431, 1610) award a lower rate to boys under fourteen and to girls between twelve and twenty. The Warwickshire J.P.s allowed for servants and apprentices between twelve and eighteen. In East Sussex (1614) apprentices between twelve and twenty-one and servants between eighteen and twenty-one received less than full pay, and the same was true for children in Rutland under sixteen. The question of child labour has not, to my knowledge, been systematically explored for the pre-industrial period. It is noteworthy that in populous areas such as East Anglia children could be employed at the early age of ten, but did not receive

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1 Macfarlane op. cit. Appendix B: Upper class children were usually sent away from home between 10-15 years, the lower classes left home about 13.

full pay until they were twenty-one. In less well populated areas, such as Rutland, a boy could command full pay at sixteen. At Ealing in 1599 nearly all the servants recorded in the survey made in that year were single and between the ages of fifteen and twenty, most being over eighteen.[1] Analysis of other town listings usually produces an average of 2.45-2.61 children per household. This would indicate that the period when all the children were still at home was rather short, in which case children in these areas must have been leaving home at about twelve or earlier.

From this inconclusive line of argument we can turn to another, the labour market. On a one-man holding a twelve year old boy was a useful and inexpensive addition to the labour force. He could fetch and carry in the yard, feed the great beasts as well as the poultry, mend tack and in general ease the work load on a holding which could not fully employ an adult servant in husbandry. The holder of a twelve-acre tenement may not have felt he could afford the luxury of keeping even one son at home to work; he may well have put his children into service when they were twelve or less. The holder of a twenty-four acre holding may have kept at least one son to help on the land. If he did not have sons of his own, he may have taken in a boy, a 'spaught' in Henry Best's tongue, to go with the ox plough and help load the wain. Men with larger holdings could have taken two or more boys, one to help in the kitchen, one in the fields and

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1 K. J. Allison 'An Elizabethan Village Census', B.I.H.S. 36 (1963) p.91-103. Also J. Smith, Men and Armour. (1608) gives interesting information on the age of servants in Gloucestershire.

a girl to help in the dairy.

If this was indeed the situation, then twelve-acre holders would be sending out all their children at an early age, twenty-four acre holders would have been keeping one at home, and yeoman farmers would have been taking in boys as well as full-time servants. As Laslett observed, there were not many large households but 53.6% of the population lived in them.[1] The system operated in nineteenth century Suffolk and Buckinghamshire and was well suited to the structure of seventeenth century Leicestershire - there were enough middle-sized farms and few small ones.

I suggest, therefore, that a halfyardlander's household was reduced to an average size of 3.2 persons over five years of age, and that a yardlander could maintain a household of 3.9 in good years but could contract to 3.2 in bad years.

There remains one last important factor to be taken into account. The children who left home at twelve would come back when they married or were twenty-one to receive their child portions. So what their father saved in sending them out into service he gave back to them in the form of dower. As is discussed in Chapter Seven a child received his dower as often in kind as in cash, even at the end of the seventeenth century. He received an interest in the property; a part share in a cow or the cart, or part of the furniture. So as a generation grew up the house and yard stood the risk of being denuded of these movables. In fact the wills show the same tables,

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1 P. Laslett,'Size and Structure of the Household in England over Three Centuries.' Population Studies 23 (1969), p.207.

chests and other furniture remaining in the house from generation to generation. In one Kibworth case children are to forfeit their portions in kind if they marry or depart. Two courses of action were possible; either the children accepted a cash equivalent for their share, or they remained in the holding thus leaving their share in the common fund. The latter course can only have been practical if the portion was a fair exchange for maintenance for life. In other words, the larger holdings, which could provide larger portions could also do with additional labour and could have maintained celibate brothers or sisters in the household. The small holdings could neither provide a large portion or maintain additional adults of whose labour they had no need. It is not possible to make a quantitative estimate of the number of celibates in Kibworth households. However, some of the wills of the larger landholders explicitly make provision for a son or daughter to be maintained for life, or for an uncle or aunt to continue in the 'privilege' of being maintained in their nephew's house. The word 'privilege' suggests that the practice was not common.

In the centuries when the uniform yardland or half yardland tenement was the norm, dependant adults other than grandparents were numerous before the plagues, rare after them, but by the lat fifteenth century, as multi-yardland tenements replaced the old system, the presence of adult relatives or servants became common, so common in fact, that by the eighteenth century they were a characteristic feature of European society.[1] The balance between children, celibates and servants in these larger farm households has been admirably described by Lutz

1. Cf. Hajnal. op.cit.

Berkner as he found it in eighteenth century Bavaria. A similar balance between household size and agricultural resources obtained also in England. And just as the larger acreage made possible and desirable a larger household, so a smaller acreage made impossible the continued residence of children after the age of twelve, and reduced the household size to about 3.34 persons.[1]

Having seen what can be done with the abundant data of the early modern period, one is encouraged to embark upon the more difficult task of analysing the medieval evidence with a view to extracting comparable data. The medieval records are silent on the subject of births, birth intervals and infant mortality. However, the persistence of late marriage over the period 1300-1700 would suggest the persistence of recognised practice in the matter of weaning, both because child-rearing tends to be heavily dictated by tradition and because the practice reduces the total number of children and spreads the economic burden over a longer period of time, a consideration which weighed heavily in the smallholder's scale of values. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, a two and a half year birth interval is the most probable estimate. The rate of infant mortality was probably higher in the fourteenth century than in the seventeenth due to poorer housing and diet but men married marginally younger so that the average number of surviving children in the two periods was much the same. Thus one is not completely in

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1 N.L. Tranter, 'Population and Social Structure in a Bedfordshire Parish: the Cardington Listing of Inhabitants 1782'. Population Studies 21 (1967), p.261-282. He found the average size of cottage families to be 3.74, with an average of two resident offspring per family; 5.0-5.5 baptisms per family; birth interval 2½ years; but one in three died before fifteenth birthday; retired parents lived in a separate house.

the dark over the matter of fertility and infant mortality in the late medieval period, thanks to the light shed by the seventeenth century, but one is definitely on less sure ground than in the later period.

The key documents to the fourteenth century are the tithing list for Kibworth Harcourt drawn up in 1280 and the poll tax lists for 1377-9 and 1381. These capture the village community at two convenient points of time and serve as a focus around which to reconstruct the biography of each family in the village at those dates. These biographies can be extracted from the court rolls with occasional recourse to the rentals and are complete for the 1377 period, but are more sketchy for the 1280's. This is because the court rolls in the hands of Merton College only begin at this date, so that one cannot, for example, look up the date of marriage of a 'son's' father. Moreover, when I made the transcript for the pre 1360 period I noted all land transfers but only biographical details relating to a few selected families. However, this limitation did not impair results to any significant degree.

The tithing list,[1] drawn up on the back of a court roll, lists the four tithings in the village, giving the name of each male head of household, his brothers and his sons over twelve, and they are explicitly described as brothers or sons. When boys are described as sons of so-and-so, while father's name does not appear on the list, then it is assumed that the latter is dead and we are dealing with a widow and her sons. Some of the names have been crossed through, but comparison

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1 M.M. 6376. 8 Ed. I.

with the court rolls shows this to have been part of the process of updating the list and I have included these names in counts made for 1280. The list as it appears in the following pages has been edited to group members of each family together and the total amount of land held by each family group has been included to give some indication of the economic resources of each family in relation to its numbers.

There are two copies at the Public Record Office of the Poll Tax list dated to 'Edward III or Richard II' i.e.1377 or 1379.[1] The list provides an almost complete register of all persons over 14 present in the village at that date. Comparison with the court rolls shows some 21 persons who for one reason or another were amerced in the manor court but are not mentioned in the list. Of these, William de Clipston was taxed at Gumley, John Asteyn and John Kynde at Smeeton Westerby, John Russell at Kibworth Beauchamp, Robert Palfreyman at Carlton Curlieu and William Clerke at Saddington. This leaves only Valendine, Wright, Osborne, Parker and Michell as significant omissions; the Valendines had been holding land since at least 1280 and continued to do so for a few more years, the others had only recently taken land in the village. The remainder were but temporary residents, if resident at all.

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1 P.R.O. E.179/133/26.

In his pamphlet Lay Subsidies and Poll Taxes (Phillimore 1963), Prof. M. Beresford outlined some useful criteria for distinguishing between the 1377 and 1379 Poll Tax returns; for most counties the original lists of tax-payers, parish by parish, have survived for 1379, whereas only the lists of parish totals survive for 1377. Unfortunately, this is not the case for Leicestershire, for which county two sets of lists survive, both of which give the name of every taxpayer. In other words, the original draft for the 1377 returns seems to have survived and not the final version. The lists are almost identical, since males over fourteen were taxed in 1377 and males over sixteen in 1379, two years later. There was, therefore, no intake of younger persons in 1379, though very careful comparison might show the fall out of older men. It has not been possible, therefore, to date the list selected more closely than 1377/9. However, in this present context the date is not important since boys who were fourteen in 1377 would be sixteen in 1379. The list provides the names of 'sons' and 'servants' at a fixed date, the court rolls provide the information concerning their ages. I have taken the tax date to be 1377 and calculated accordingly. Should the reader prefer to take 1379, he/she would be working with the same list of villagers' names, but the persons concerned would be two years older. For example, the boy sworn into tithing in 1375 would be fourteen in 1377 and sixteen in 1379, and if he married in 1390 he would be twenty-seven whatever the date of the tax return. The latter tells us he was present at the 'roll call' at a particular date, but precise knowledge as to his age can only be learnt from the court rolls.

Table 30 : The 1280 Tithing List for Kibworth Harcourt, Leicestershire

Family land	Adult Members of the Family: Married	Adult Members of the Family: Marital status unknown	Children: Father living	Children: Father dead
½ virgate	Hugh Godwine		John Robert	
½ virgate		Roger Gilbert Robert Gilbert		
1½ v. + alia	Ive Godyer		William (heir) Nicholas Radulf	
?	Walter Brid'		Hugh	
1 placea	Robert Brun Richard Brun		William John Henry	Nicholas son of Nich:Brun Robert " " " Roger " " "
1½ virgates		William son of Reginald Robert " "		
1½ virgates	Robert Couper		Reginald Couper (heir)	
1 toft	Robert the Leech		Robert (heir) John	
½ virgate	Robert Chop		Robert Hugh	
½ virgate	Radulf Carter		Nicholas Hugh	
½ mess (1295)	Alexander Mildus		William Nicholas	

Table 30 continued

Family land	Married	Marital status unknown	Children: Father living	Children: Father dead
½ virgate	Ive Serrene - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -		Robert	
		Robert le Serrene		
		Walter le Serrene		
				John son of J. Serrene
2 v. + aula	Robert Sibile - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -		William Roger	
		Robert Sibile, jun.		
		William Sibile		
		Alexander Sibile		
		Ive Sibile		
1 cottage	Amice the Washerwoman - - - - - - - - - -		Henry (heir) Ive	
1 virgate	Robert le Bonde - - - - - - - - - - - - - -		Roger Bonde	
		Robert Bonde		
?		Ive Chapman)		
		Robert Chapman)brothers		
		William Chapman)		
½ virgate	Roger Johie - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -		Robert Johie	
?		William Huralinebell*		
		Nicholas Huralinebell		
				**Hugh s. 'of Ive Hura' John " " Robert " " Radulf " "
1 virgate		Robert Chure		
		Robert Chure, jun.		

* 1282 pledge for the miller, together with other artisans

** 1280 Messor.

Table 30 continued

Family land	Married	Marital status unknown	Children: Father living	Children: Father dead
½ v. land	Walter Yorte	Radulf	Robert	
½ virgate	Hugh Harcourt	John Harcourt, Nicholas Harcourt } brothers	Hugh (heir)	
2 virgate	Robert Polle	Hugh Polle, Henry Polle, John de Westerby (Polle)	Nicholas (heir)	Henry son of Nicholas P. William " " "
1 virgate	Radulf Prepositus		William (heir)	Roger s. of Robert, reeve
?				John " " " " Ive s. of William, reeve
½ virgate	Robert Wygerne		William	
2 virgate +	Roger Wade	Robert (brother)	Roger (heir)	
½ virgate	John Valendyn		William	
½ virgate	William Taylur		William (heir)	
1 toft	Roger Molend'		William	
1 cottage	William Molend'		John	
1½ v. + domus	Robert ad Fontem		John (heir) Roger William	

Table 30 continued

Family land	Married	Marital status unknown	Father living	Children	Father dead
½ virgate					High s. of 'Scolate' John s. of 'Scolate'
½ virgate					John (heir) s. of Hugh Nicholas s. of Hugh Walter " "
-					Nicholas s. of Hugh Man
-					William s. of Mon'
?					Nicholas s. of 'Alotte'
1 virgate					Robert s. of Rob Arun
?					Roger s. of Roger
1 virgate					Hugh s. Alexander (Sander?)
					Richard s. of Walter
½ virgate					John s. of Walter
-		Osbert Sutor			
1 cottage	John Honde				
Mill		Hugh Leycester			
½ virgate		Ive Asteyn			
-		William de Aweston			
-		Robert Textor	- - - - - - - - - - - - -		Robert s. of le Textor
-		Henry Textor			
1 virgate	Nicholas Faber				
½ virgate	Robert Nichol				

Table 30 continued

Family land	Married	Marital status unknown	Children: Father living	Children: Father dead
1 virgate		Adam de Burton		
½ virgate	Robert Silvestre			
½ virgate	William de Reynes			
-		Robert de Missingden		
1 cottage in 1377		William Gamelot		
(Arun lv.)		Alexander Godaron*		
1 toft		Robert Skinner		
1 toft		Robert the broker		
1 toft		the shepherd		
½ virgate		William le (-)ole		
-		Robert Tulbe		
-		Robert Zerte (= Yorte, listed above)		
-		Hugh Flemint		
-		William Haneck		
- (Johie ½v.)		Roger Yars (= Roger Johie, listed above)		
-		William de Kelmscot		
-		John Finger		
½v. in 1291		William le Ore		
TOTALS				
28¼ - 29¼ v.	32 (including 6 without children in tithing)	46	38	27 (16 widows)
			65	

* 1300 = Chaharon, later Arun or Sirrene.

The 1381 list is less comprehensive but it gives greater detail; for example, it gives the names of wives, thus enabling one to distinguish one William Brown from another; it occasionally gives occupation, for example Robert Gilbert, Merchant; and most important of all it groups together at the end the single persons in the village, male and female under the title 'servientes'.[1]

I have used the 1377/9 list as the basis of the accompanying edition, have arranged the names in the same order as they occur in the 1280 list, have filled in the names of wives and have bracketed variations found in the 1381 list. This last is for comparative purposes only, the persons so bracketed have not been included in any counts unless specifically stated. Lastly, I have inserted the amount of land held by each family group. The amounts of land here quoted are based on the 1372 rental and are by no means as accurate as the amounts given for 1280. This is because the 1372 rental was drawn up in 1340 and kept up to date by many crossings out and interlinings which makes it only too easy to ascribe the same holding to more than one occupier.

The analysis of the two lists reveals a pattern of late marriage and long life similar to that of the seventeenth century. It also shows how in conditions of severe rural underemployment in the thirteenth century, sons and young men tended to stay at home causing considerable strain upon family resources, whereas in the wage labourer's hey-day after the fourteenth century plagues they could find work at the age of twelve, with a consequent easing of pressure on the domestic

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1 P.R.O. E.179 133/29.

economy which facilitated saving and a gradual improvement in living standards.

The tax lists of 1377/9 and 1381 mention both sons and servants and in so doing provide a vital clue to the age structure and composition of households and to the labour market of the area. The court rolls provide sufficient information about each of the village families, with rare exceptions, for one to be able to deduce the age of these sons and servants and to be able to give the latter more familiar descriptive labels such as grandmother, father or son. We can dismiss at once the idea that servants were necessarily wage labourers.

The maximum possible age of sons can be discovered by looking up the year of the father's marriage. Further information about the sons themselves can also be found in the court rolls; for example the year in which they were sworn into tithing or left the manor, or took up land, the presence of brothers, the size of the family holding and so on.

The results can be summarized as follows. Of the twenty sons mentioned in the 1377 list and court rolls, ~~fourteen~~ six were about fourteen years of age, including one who had just left for Coventry, ten were anything up to twenty-seven years old and of these many had been away from the manor and had but recently returned; to quote two examples, the sons of Richard Godyer and Robert Scherman had just returned from Coventry. Of the remaining four little is known since their fathers were freemen whose land transfers were not recorded in the court rolls.

Table 31 : The 1377/79 Poll Tax List for Kibworth Harcourt, Leicestershire

Family land	Adult Members of the Family Married	Marital status unknown	Children Sons and daughters over 14	Servants
1¼ v. + 1 cot.	Rob. & Emma Gilbert (merchant)		(1391 Nich. sworn in to tithing)	
	Nicholas Gilbert & wife			John Tor Robert Alice (1381:- -(Alice Gilbert, (elderly relative) -(Will Gilbert)
1 v. + 1 cot. + alia	Mabyl, widow of Nich. Godwyne		William (inherited 1377)	(1381: Robert Godwyne, younger son.)
3 virgates	Ric. Godyer & wife		Son	
	(1381 Nich. & Sara Godyer)			(John Godyer, son)
1 free mess.	Will and Isabel Brown		Son (Will, inherited 1392)	
1 mess, 1 cot.	John & Joan Brown		Son	
x acres, 5 rods	Rob & Margaret Brown			
2½ v. + ¼ v. 2 acres	Adam & Joan Brown (draper)		2 sons	servant
2 virgates	John & Amice Couper (son of Robert)			Matilda, his mother
	Robert & Agnes Couper		son	
3 v. + alia	John & Alice Peche (son of Roger Pek)			
	Roger Pek & wife			(1381 Roger Pek widower)
2 v. + free	Robert & Matilda Carter (father of William)			Robert (son) Anna (daughter)

Table 31 : continued

Family land	Married	Marital status unknown	Children	Servants
	William & Emma Carter			John son of Will Carter & wife, Joan
-- (Thorpe Langton and K.B.)	Robert Scherman & wife		son(Robert) daughter	servant
2 v., 2½ rods, 1 placea (aula) 2 mess	Robert & Emma Sibile William Sibile & wife (1381) Jn. son of John Sibile & Alice)		son	
-- S.W.	John Bonde & wife			
¾v. + 2½ acres	Ric. & Agnes Chapman, constabull		William	
1¼v. + 2 cots.	John Joye & wife			(1381 Jn. Joye retired 1381)
½ virgate	Hugh & Beatrice Tory			
2½ v. + alia	Richard Polle & wife			
1 cot.	Joanna Polle, widow William & Emma Polle (1381 Nich. & Felicia Polle)			John) sons ? Robert)
½ acre	Dionis' Wakynt			Emma (1381 Emma Watlyng)
½ virgate	John & Joan Tayliowr			servant (son)
	Amice Tayliowr		daughter	
1 cot. + ¼ v.	John & Agnes Scolas		(son in 1367)	
2 cots. + ¼ v.	John & Margery Mann Robert Mann		(son in 1368)	
1¼ virgates	William & Amice Alotte		John (1383 inherited)	

Table 31 : continued

Family land	Married	Marital status unknown	Children	Servants
2v., 1 mess., 5½ acres	Robert & Agnes Smyth			Agnes Smyth (widow of Jn Smith)
1½ virgates	Henry & Millicent fitz Nicholas			John (son ?)
1 twodelrod	John Bordet & wife		(1372 John in tithing)	(John Burdet 1381-widower?)
1¾v., 1 mess.	John & Agnes Heyne		(1373 son)	
1 placea, 4 acres	Adam & Isolda Heyne		daughter	(1381 Rob. Heyne, lived at Coventry)
-- K.B.	John & Amice Wodher			
1½ v. + 1 mess.	John & Dionesia Marram		daughter	
	Henry & Alice Marram		William took land 1371 John " " 1375	
3 virgates	John & Alice Sander		(1378 Matilda)	
	Robert & Margery Sander(M.1361)		(1383 John)	
	Amice Sander (widow of Nich. died 1392, land to Robert)		son	(1381 Amice Sander grandmother)
¾v. + 3 acres	William & Alice Hychcok		son (Shangton) daughter	(1381 Amice Hychcok, daughter)
1 v. + 3 acres	William & Agnes Atte Cross		(1369 William)	
--	Richard Pyper & Wife			(Ric. Pyper 1381 widower)
¾ virgate	John Lod (Nogge) & wife		(1372 John into tithing)	William Nogge (1390 Reccessit) Robert Nogge (1427 surr. 1 cot (Both adult sons)
¾ virgate	John Thorpe (father of Agnes Atte Cross)			

Table 31 : continued

Family land	Married	Marital status unknown	Children	Servants
1 mess. + 15 acres	Gilbert Swan	- - -

Persons omitted from the 1377 Tax list but mentioned in the court rolls c. 1377
William de Clipston + servant (taxed at Gumley)
John and Agnes Asteyn (taxed at Smeeton Westerby)
John and Agnes Kynde (taxed at Smeeton Westerby and Kibworth Beauchamp)
John Russell (taxed at Kibworth Beauchamp)
William Clerke (taxed at Saddington and Gumley)
Robert Palfreyman (taxed at Carlton Curlieu)
William and Robert le Wright with a servant
William and John Osborne, Avis, Matilda, Emma
William and Agnes Parker
John and Matilda Michell
Adam Valendyn
John Neatherd
John Maxwelle, serviens
William Glass, serviens
Stephen Glover
John de Daventry
John Custodus
Kitchener
Bed'
Simon Milner
John Chynden, miller

Sons seem thus to fall into two categories, boys of little more than fourteen, and men in their mid-twenties, many of whom had been away and had returned around 1377 to take up land. This impression is strengthened by a closer study of the court rolls in which boys sworn into tithing in the earlier seventies are later reported as having left the manor and do not feature in the 1377 Tax List; others are recorded as having taken up land within a year or so of being sworn into tithing and appear in the List as married men. Some indeed, are sworn into tithing twice which would indicate that they had been away from and had returned to the manor, for example John Man sworn in 1367 and 1372, William Carter sworn in 1369 and 1375.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to check the year of marriage for fathers on the 1280 tithing list, therefore our knowledge of the age of sons on this list cannot be quite so precise. Sons in the terminology of the tithing list, are boys of twelve years or over who are still dependant on their fathers or their widowed mothers. In addition there is a category not found on the 1377 list of brothers of land holders, many of these would be adult sons since, as will be seen, men did not usually come into their inheritance until they were in their mid-twenties, which would put their younger brothers in their late teens or early twenties. The most marked difference between the membership of households in 1377 and 1280 is the greater number of boys and young men still living under the family roof in 1280. There are sometimes as many as three boys over twelve in a household; moreover, only ten of the sons recorded on the tithing list can be

definitely shown to be heirs, the rest were either definitely younger sons or sons whose subsequent history cannot be traced, which in most cases would mean that they died or migrated. The absence of so many heirs, however, provides the link with the 1377 situation. Even if they remained at home for much longer in the thirteenth century, it would seem that even in 1280 they did work away from home for a period before they inherited their father's land. For example, Ive Serrene inherited from his father in 1292 but he was not enrolled on the 1280 list although his younger brother, Robert, was. The alternative would be to assume that they married at about sixteen, a theory which, as will be seen, fits in with none of the other evidence. A man usually married when he inherited, which would put Ive Serrene in his mid-twenties in 1292.[1] William, son and heir of William Taylur in 1280 did not inherit until 1291: Reginald Couper did not receive land from his father until 1296 which would make him not less than twenty-eight when he married. Others took land immediately after being sworn into tithing and they could not legally hold land under the age of eighteen. These one must assume had been away from the manor, for example, Roger Wade, a son in 1280, who took land in 1281.

One can conclude therefore, that households contained more boys in 1280 than they did in 1377. Moreover, the smaller the holding, the greater the number of boys, a situation which indicates severe under-employment. There were, in addition, a greater number of dependant adults in the 1280's.

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1 Cf. Chapter Six p. 282.

In absolute figures there were 78 men, 16 widows and 65 boys working in the village in 1280, as against 49 men, 4 widows, 31 servants (i.e. including women adult dependants) and 20 sons in 1377. The following columns illustrate the proportion of men, widows (w) and boys to the size of the holding, and the figure illustrates the alteration in these proportions which took place during the interval 1280-1377. (Figure 32)

The term 'servant' applies to a somewhat older and wider category of family dependants than children. Search of the court rolls revealed that of the thirty-one servants mentioned in the 1377 and 1381 Lists, thirteen were adult sons, eight were widows and widowers, two were grandmothers, five were relatives, one was a 'foreigner' (who in the interval moved from one household to another), and of the remaining two nothing is known. Among the adult sons were some who were married; John Carter for example, lived with his wife Joan in the house of his father, William Carter, and both he and Joan were classed as servants of William in the 1381 List.

We thus have a village community in 1377 made predominantly up of elderly persons, married couples and children under fourteen. Of the 45 married couples, 29.5% had been married for more than 25 years and all their children had left home; 25% had been married for 16-25 years and had some children still at home; 45.4% had been married for less than 16 years and all their children were under fourteen. Apart from these married couples there were four widows, four widowers, some

Figure 32 : The Decline in Labour Units per Holding 1280-1377

1280 Holding	Men	Average	Boys	Average
Toft	1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,2,	1.08	0,0,0,0,0,0,1,1,2,2,2,6,	1.16
Half virgate	w,w,w,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,2,2,2,2,3,3,3,	1.45	0,0,0,0,0,0,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,2,2,2,2,3,0,	1.00
Whole virgate	w,w,1,1,2,	1.2	0,1,1,1,1,	0.8
1½ - 2 virgates	1,1,1,2,2,4,5,	2.28	0,1,1,1,3,3,3,	1.7

1377 Holding	Men	Average	Sons and Servants	Average
Toft	1,1,1,	1.0	0,0,0,	0
Half virgate	1,1,2,	1.3	0,0,2,	0.66
¾ virgate	1,1,1,1,1,1,	1.0	0,0,1,1,2,3,	1.15
Whole virgate	0,1,1,1,	0.75	0,0,1,1,	0.50
1¼ - 3 virgates	1,1,1,1,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,3,4,4,	2.00	1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,2,2,3,3,3,4,5,	2.00



men boys — TOFT

men boys — HALF VIRGATE

men boys — VIRGATE

men boys — MULTI-VIRGATE

(Shaded shows the proportion for 1377, unshaded the proportion for 1280)

five boys over twelve and ten sons in their twenties, to which can be added five daughters and the nineteen or so adult relations referred to above and dubbed 'servants'.

The high proportion of married couples in the Poll Tax Lists for the country generally, prompted Hajnal to suggest that a non-European pattern of very early marriage was the norm in England for this date.[1] He was not, of course, aware of the practice among half-virgaters, who at this date still constituted the overwhelming majority of English villagers, of sending their children out to work at an early age after the 1340's and 1360's. If boys left home at an early age and did not return unless to marry then it follows that most men in the community would be married, but it does not follow that they married young.

A similar analysis of the age structure of the village in 1280 cannot be carried out since the Tithing List does not explicitly state whether a man was married or not at that date. However, the court rolls reveal that forty eight of the men listed in 1280 were married including six without children. One cannot tell for how long they had been married because the series of court rolls does not ante-date the Tithing List by a sufficient number of years. But in addition to the forty-eight one should add the tofters such as the shepherd, the brokers, and the skinner who were almost certainly married since they were established in secure occupations. This brings the number of married persons to fifty or more including widows and widowers. There was not, therefore, very much difference between the total number of married couples and

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1 Hajnal op. cit. p.119.

widows in 1280 and 1377; 50 and 53. This stability in numbers among the resident community is borne out by surname analysis and illustrated in Figures 38,39. The number had grown to some sixty couples by the seventeenth century, but on the whole the community remained relatively static throughout the period 1280-1700. So too did the fertility rate. According to the Register, the average number of births per annum in the seventeenth century was in the region of twenty-four, of whom about eight to ten were born each year in Kibworth Harcourt. If we take the average age at marriage to be 25 in the fourteenth century as against 29.9 in the seventeenth, and the average number of children per family to be about five, then the 45 couples in 1377 would produce about 9 children a year, or, if the widows and widowers are included then 10.6 children a year. This ties in neatly with the fourteen boys aged about fourteen in 1377.

However, if the number of unmarried men in a village is small, it does not follow that men married young. The average age at marriage can be approached by two indirect methods. In the first, if we know the year in which a boy was sworn into tithing, and the year in which he first took land, then, assuming that he married just before or after taking land, one can calculate his age at marriage. The other method is to assume that the average length of time for which a man held land reflects the interval between the birth and the marriage of his eldest son. This would give the approximate age at marriage of the eldest son. Neither method yields precise results but they serve the very useful purpose of

definitely raising the age of first marriage out of the 'teens and into the twenties, thus firmly placing the marriage pattern within the Western rather than the Eastern tradition in thirteenth-century England. That the absence of boys over fourteen was due to marriage under twenty is an hypothesis entirely ruled out by both methods, which firmly place marriage in the twenties; not younger than 22.8 and not older than 27 years on average.

The first method is based on the fuller transcript of the court rolls after 1360 which made it possible to collect a dozen or so examples of a boy being sworn into tithing for whom a record also existed of when he first took land. Mention is normally made of a boy being sworn in only if he is twelve years and over and has not yet been sworn in as he should have been. Therefore, some of the examples cited below could refer to boys older than twelve, which would raise the corresponding age of marriage. In the case of these few examples, the average age at marriage was 22.8 years. Some inherited as minors and so could marry at the earliest possible age, others were possibly more than twelve when they were sworn in, so the average arrived at is probably too low.

Figure 33 : The approximate age at marriage

Name	Sworn into tithing	First took land	Approximate age at marriage
Jn fil' Nich. Taylur	1332	1342	12 + 10 = 22
Will' fil' Nich. Polle	1333	1350	12 + 17 = 29
Will. Alot (a minor)		1349	His son was 14+ in 1377, so he must have married c. 1360. i.e. he inherited as a minor?
Nich. fil' Will.Gilbert	1349	1359	12 + 10 = 22
John Carter (a minor?)		1349	His daughter Emma married in 1391, which suggests that Carter married c. 1370 and inherited as an infant?
Jn fil' Rob. Couper	1375	1393	12 + 18 = 30
Nich. fil' Rob. Polle	1350	1365	He reached majority in 1365
Jn Man	1367 and again 1372	1376	12 + 9 = 21
Jn Marnham	1375	1400 (married)	12 + 25 = 37
Willfil' Jn. Sybil	1364 (minor)	1375	x + 11 =
Will fil' Rob. Carter	1369 & 1375	1377	12 + 8 = 20
Adam Polle de K.B.	1391	1400	12 + 9 = 21
Ric. Brown	1407	1421	12 + 14 = 26
Jn fil' Rob. Polle	12 in 1441	1448	12 + 7 = 19
Will. Smith	1433	1439	12 + 6 = 18

We must now check that the taking up of land can be equated with marriage. The date of marriage is very rarely given, but if a son is sworn into tithing then the father must have married at least thirteen years previous to that date, or if a son or daughter is mentioned on a tax list, then the father must have married at least fifteen years previous to that date. The approximate date of marriage thus arrived at can then be compared with the date at which the father first took land. (Fig 34)

There can be little doubt that unless a boy entered into land as a minor, his first entry into land coincided with his marriage. It is true that in a few cases in the tax lists one finds a married son under the roof of his father, but I think one must accept these as instances of a special arrangement between father and son in which the son supports the father without becoming the legal holder of the land by copy of court roll. Normally, when a father retired he surrendered the holding to his son.[1]

Therefore, one can conclude that the average age at first marriage was not lower than 22.8 years for men. Also, that land was not often leased by young couples.

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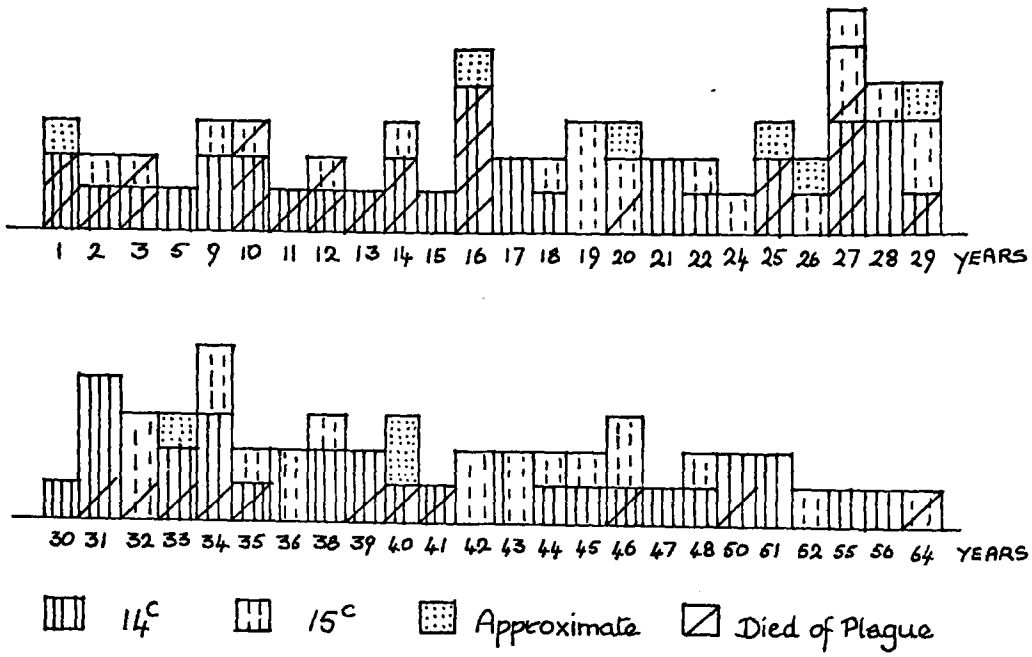
1 See p. 332ff.

Figure 34 : Coincidence of Marriage with Inheritance in Fourteenth Century

Name	Children in 1377/9	Probable date of marriage	First took land	Inherited
W. Brown	1 son	Prior to 1362	1358	
J. Brown	1 son	" 1362	1361	
A. Brown	2 sons	" 1358	1386	Took free mess. in 1364
W. Sybil	1 son	" 1362	1363	
J. Sybil		Married by 1381	1375	
N. Godwyn	1 son	Prior to 1362	1349	1349
W. Carter	Married son in 1376	" 1356	1349	
R. Carter	2 children	" 1358	1349	
R. Couper	1 son	" 1362	1362	
H. Marnham	3 children	" 1354	1349	
J. Marnham	1 daughter	" 1362	1351	
J. Sandur	Son inherited 1372 Daughter married 1378	1352	1349	
N. Sandur	Son ordained 1371	" 1351	1349	
R. Sandur	1 son	Married in 1361	1361	from wife
J. Sandur	-	Married in 1373	1372	
W. Alot	1 son	Prior to 1362	1349	1349
R. Chapman	1 son	" 1362	1361	
H. Nicholas	1 son 12 in 1376	" 1363	1349	
W. Atte Cros		Married in 1363	1363	1363 from wife
R. Smyth		Married by 1363	1362	from wife
J. Nogge	eldest 12 in 1372	Prior to 1359	1351	
R. Langton		Married in 1361	1361	from wife
J. Maister		Married in 1352	1349	1349
D. Boton		Prior to 1357	1351	

The second method for arriving at the average age of first marriage is to argue that the number of years a man held land reflected the interval between the birth and marriage of his heir. To provide this second counter-check and also to reach some conclusions about the average length of life of a landholder at this period, the following histogram was set out based on the court roll material. It shows the number of years during which each of the 111 men held their land. If the figure is only approximate, for example, if the year of surrender is not definitely known only the fact that his widow is subsequently recorded as holding the land, this is indicated by ⊡ but the case has been included in the final count. Lives brought to a premature close by plague have been indicated, since in these cases sons could inherit and marry rather younger than usual. Examples taken from the fourteenth century have been indicated by ▥, examples taken from the fifteenth by ▦. There are fewer samples from the latter century because after the reorganisation of 1439 land transfers were only infrequently recorded on the rolls.(Fig 36)

Figure 35 : The number of years for which a landholder held land



Average = 27.9 years

(Average length for those who died of plague = 20.8 years.
Average length for those who did not die of plague = 32.1 years)

Thus the average length of time for which a man held land agrees very neatly with the average age at which a son might expect to inherit his father's land, viz. under 27.9 years.

The average age at death of landholders was:

22.8 + 27.9 = 50.7 years

or 27.0 + 27.9 = 54.9 years

i.e. 50-55 years.

(By the seventeenth century men were marrying at 29 and holding land for about 32 years, giving an average life span of about 61 years.)

The late medieval peasant household can be summarised as follows: the average age at first marriage was 22.8 - 27 years. (Taken as 25 years in Figures 36 and 37.) The average life span of a man was 50-55 years, making a three generation overlap rare, although grandmothers often survived to see their grandchildren. The average number of children per family was probably the same as in the early modern period, namely five children per family of whom four reached maturity. Likewise, the birth interval was probably the same as in the later period, two and a half years. Sons often stayed on at home indefinitely in the pre-plague period, remaining as celibate brothers and uncles. The lack of rural employment which kept boys at home also kept daughters at home until they married. However, one finds fewer adult sisters and aunts in a household, probably because the high mortality in child-birth which made second marriages so common a feature of peasant life offered greater opportunity for marriage to girls than to boys; an opportunity rendered the more easy by the prevailing custom of small marriage portions. Nevertheless, the size of the pre-plague household was greater before 1349 than at any later period, namely, three to seven persons per household depending upon the age of the head of the house, giving an average of 5.0 persons aged five and over where the father lived to be fifty.

After the plague era employment was easy to come by and boys left home when about fourteen years and girls between fourteen and sixteen. The average household size fell to 3.96 persons aged five and over where the father lived to be fifty.

These conclusions have been set out in the following charts which allow the reader to follow the arithmetic processes involved and to make such adjustments as his own judgement or better documentary sources may provide. I would stress once again that whereas the seventeenth-century figures are well founded those for the fourteenth century do not belong to the same class; the word 'probable' has entered into the discussion in certain key areas, and this detracts considerably from their accuracy, without, however, rendering them valueless, not at any rate until better figures can be brought forward, since these figures are not, in fact, 'improbable'; far from it.

The nature of the evidence made necessary the reversal of the chronological order so that discussion of the early modern period preceded that of the late medieval. Before leaving the subject of household size it would be useful to summarize conclusions within a more orthodox time sequence.

The pre-plague household was large; at times a twelve-acre holding was supporting as many as seven persons aged five and over, and on average 5.0 persons. Rural employment lay behind this situation; men and boys, unable to support themselves on wage labour, tended to remain at home as celibate dependants.

The plagues of the late fourteenth century put an end to the crisis of underemployment. Households shrank to an average of 3.96 persons as youths and adults moved away in search of work and of holdings made available by the extinction of hereditary families. Men married between 22.8 and 27 years and lived for an average of 50-55 years. Unless weaning

Figure 36 : Table to show the Developmental Cycle of a Household in the Pre-Plague period, 1280-1349, and to show the number of consumer units on a 12 or 24 acre holding

YEAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Grandfather	D																								
Grandmother	X	X	X	D																					
Husband	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wife	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sister	M																								
Brother	X	X	X	X	X	X																			
Sister	X	X	X	M																					
Brother	D																								
Daughter		x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	M		
Son				x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Daughter							x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Son									x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Daughter												x	x	x	x	X	D								
Consumption units	5	5	5	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	5	5	6	6	6	7	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	5

Average household size = 5 persons

D = dead M = married x = under five

Figure 37 : Table to show the Average Household Size, 1371-1490, to be 3.96 persons

YEAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Grandfather	D																								
Grandmother	X	X	X	D																					
Husband	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wife	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sister	M																								
Brother	L																								
Sister	L																								
Brother	D																								
Daughter		x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	L							
Son				x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	L							
Daughter							x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	L		
Son									x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	L		
Daughter												x	x	x	x	X	D								
Consumption units	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	4	4	4	5	5	6	6	6	7	6	4	4	4	4	4	2	2	2

D = dead M = married x = under five L = left home

practices changed substantially in the fifteenth century, children in 1370 as in 1570 were born at roughly two-and-a-half year intervals, and on average four children per family reached maturity.

The plagues did more than reduce the population and increase the prospects of wage labourers, they also extinguished many hereditary landholding families whose lands consequently escheated to their lords. If this land was not incorporated into the seigneurial demesne, it was made available, often as full virgate units or larger, to newcomers who had made their money as wage labourers, or, to bear in mind a new class speculating heavily in land, those who had made their money in law or in the service of the crown. Many of these new tenements were from thirty to one hundred acres in size and required extra-familial labour to run them. Thus a new and significant household came into being, the household which included paid servants.

By the late sixteenth century, when detailed analysis once more becomes possible, the large household with servants had become commonplace in the villages, and the number of small twelve-acre tenements had dropped sharply. Labour was cheap, food prices high, land in short supply. Nevertheless, smallholders did not return to the old practice of maintaining landless brothers and sons. The attitude, which had developed in the fifteenth century, remained set, and children were expected to leave home and to fend for themselves. Therefore, the average household size on smallholdings did not return to the pre-plague level of 5.0 but shrank still further to 3.2.

At the same time yeoman tenants and freeholders were sending their own sons into trade and the professions and were employing cheap wage labour in their place. The size of their households was therefore considerably larger than those of the virgater and the half-virgater.

With the improvement in housing, diet and heating achieved by the seventeenth century, men lived longer, on average to about 60 years. A three-generation family therefore became more common, though the overlap was not great since men were marrying later by this date, seldom below the age of 29 years. Each landholder on average successfully reared four children of whom one son and most of the daughters remained in the village or the immediate vicinity, and the rest migrated. Therefore, the total population of the village remained static in spite of the excess of births over deaths.

Chapter Five sets out to demonstrate that the twenty-four acre unit on the Leicestershire clays could maintain a family at subsistence level even in periods of acute hardship, and in favourable circumstances could even make some small savings. By contrast, the twelve-acre unit was not viable except in very good years. It is with the households supported by these two units, the one just above, the other just below subsistence level, that this present chapter is concerned. The household size of husbandmen and yeomen with more than twenty-four acres is not therefore of relevance to this study, except as the potential employers of the smallholder's offspring. A single figure for household size can therefore be given, relating to twelve and twenty-four acre holdings only. Thus 5.0 for the

period 1280-1349; 3.96 for the period 1371-1490; and 3.34 for the period 1550-1700. In the last case, the lower figure, 3.34 has been selected rather than 3.82 because although a twenty-four acre holding may often have kept at home one boy to help on the land, thus bringing the average up to 3.82, it was possible in bad times to manage without this help and reduce the household to 3.34.

CHAPTER SEVEN

INHERITANCE CUSTOMS: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

For a study of fifteenth to seventeenth century inheritance patterns among smallholders in England it would seem, on first thoughts, unnecessary to push the enquiry back as far as 1066 let alone beyond. One would expect the spade work to have been done by the legal historians. The latter, however, tell the story of the development of legal as against customary theory and practice, a development whose roots do not extend back much further than the twelfth century and which was in many respects at variance with the customary outlook and practice of both magnates and small holders in medieval England. The law as a profession emerged in the twelfth century and its practitioners rapidly created a corpus of legal doctrine based on raison d'êtat, administrative convenience, stratagems for dynastic survival, Roman law, canon law, and a general desire to codify and to rationalise old practice in terms of current doctrine.[1] They freely admitted the existence of a parallel system of local custom and occasionally cited examples of local custom to illustrate certain arguments, but they showed no interest in its rationale. Therefore, no contemporary discussion of the laws of inheritance as practised by the majority of Englishmen in the middle ages has come down to us. It is left to the social historian to reconstitute the corpus of popular practice with regard to inheritance. This is not difficult to do for particular areas, using the court rolls and the probate

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1 S. F. C. Milsom, Historical Foundations of the Common Law (London 1969), p.91.
J. C. Holt, 'Politics and Property in Early Medieval England' P & P. 57 (1972), pp.3-52.

documents. What emerges is a bewildering variety of patterns behind which, man, being the rational animal he is, and never more calculating than when ensuring his own security, there must lie some fairly straightforward principles.

The most fundamental of these principles was that family land belonged to the whole family; every member had a claim to support from it, from generation to generation. Responsibility for its management could lie with a generation set, or with a single representative, but the position was one of stewardship, not of ownership. This attitude is not the product of urban society, and barely survives in industrial societies today, but it is still strong in agricultural societies and was strong in England in 1700, and this in spite of half a millenium of official preaching to the contrary.[1] However, so strongly did

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1 L. Beauchet, Histoire de le Propriété Foncière en Suède. (Paris 1904), p.1.
L. Beauchet, Loi de Vestrogothie (Paris 1894).
A. Bergen, The Law of the Westgoths according to the Manuscript of Aeskil. (U.S.A. 1906).
J. A. Barnes, 'Landrights and Kinship in two Brennes Hamlets.' Royal Anthrop. Inst. 87 (1957), pp.31-56
Radolphe Dareste, Études d'Histoire du Droit. (Paris 1889), pp. 349-350 for Icelandic law.
A. Gurevič, 'Représentations et Attitudes a l'égard de la Propriété pendant le Haut Moyen Age.' Annales 27.3 (1972), p.220.
H. J. Habbakuk, 'Family Structure and Economic Change in Nineteenth Century Europe' Jl. Ec. H. 15 (1955), pp.1-12.
Sir M. Hale, De Successionibus Apud Anglos: or a Treatise of Hereditary Descents. (London 1700).
I. Jutikkala, The History of the Finnish Peasant. Reviewed by F. Skrubbeltrang in Scand. Ec. H. R. XII.2 (1964) pp.165-180.
L. M. Larson, The Earliest Norwegian Laws; being the Gulathing and the Frostathing Law (Columbia Univ. Press 1935).
D. Herlihy, 'Land, Family and Women in Continental Europe 701-1200.' Traditio 18 (1962), pp.89-120.
Ernest Levy, West Roman Vulgar Law (Philadelphia 1951).
K. B. McFarlane, The Nobility of Later Medieval England (Clarendon 1973), pp.71-76.
F. de Schulte, Histoire du Droit et des Institutions de l'Allemagne. (Paris 1882).
T. Shanin, The Awkward Class. (Oxford 1972).
Westgermanisches Recht series for the Salic Laws, the Burgundian, Ripuarian, Lombard, Frision, Saxon, Anglian and other Leges Barbarorum. The text is in German and

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medieval lawyers argue against hereditary ownership of land, especially villein land, that the case against them must needs be outlined here with some care.

If we go back to a time when hereditary ownership of land was beyond dispute in Northern Europe, for example to that period when the early Irish laws were operative, we find a society made up of kindred groups each of which occupied its own territory or fintiu. Membership of the kindred was defined by descent from a common ancestor. Clearly, if this common ancestor had lived seven generations back, the kindred would be a large one, if only four generations back, it would be small. Hence the importance attached to the number of generations. The Irish derbraithir were confined to four generations, so that, when the fifth generation was of an age to hold land, the second generation became heads of separate derbfines. Thus a man was left in no doubt as to who his kindred were. Membership of the kindred gave him a claim to a share in its land both arable and pasture; a share which varied in its exact position and extent, as the total membership of the kindred was redefined once in every generation. In some societies the number of landholders was restricted to members of one generation only; not until the last of the senior

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p.294 l. continued

unfortunately the Latin original is not always supplied.
J. Yver, Egalité entre Héritiers et Exclusion des Enfants Dotés (Paris 1966), with commentary by E. le Roy Ladourie in 'Systeme de la coutume : structures familiales et coutume d'heritage en France au XVI^e siècle' Annales E.S.C. XXVII (1972) pp. 825-46, translated for the Past and Present Conference, July 1974.
F. Seebohm, Tribal Custom in Anglo-Saxon England (London 1902).
C. I. Elton and H.J.H. Mackay, Robinson on Gavelkind: the Common Law or the Custom of Gavelkind (London 1897 5th ed.)
M.D. Sahlins, Tribesmen (U.S.A. 1968).

generation passed away did the next take control of the land. Such a system effectively reduced the number of share-holders, though not the total number of persons supported by the land. The latter system would seem to have preferred a few large shares to many small ones, though here we are thinking in relative terms since we have little idea of the size of territories or of the balance between arable and pasture.[1]

Flexible though the system was, it was peculiarly vulnerable to the effects of population growth on the one hand, and to loss of territory in war on the other. The resulting population pressure on the land could be met by reducing the generation span of the kindred or by controls on marriage and on the age at marriage. The kindred could be temporarily, or permanently, reduced to the extended or even to the stem family. Lateral descent was preferred to lineal descent, in that a son inherited from his kindred rather than from his father, and grandsons stood anything from seventh to ninth in the line of succession, great uncles and their sons inheriting before them.[2] This may seem strange to modern ears, but it follows logically upon the principle that a permanent division of goods was only made upon the death of the landholder; those endowments which a landholder might make to one or other of his children during his lifetime were only of a temporary nature pending a definitive share when, upon the death of the landholder, the entire family inheritance was divided equally among all the heirs.

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1 T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'A Comparison of Old Irish with Medieval Welsh Land Law.' (Oxford D. Phil. thesis 1971).

2 Scanian Laws op. cit. p.276. Laws of the West Goths, op. cit. p.49. Icelandic Law op. cit. p.350.

There is ample evidence however, that by the twelfth century, if not long before, the kindred had become so reduced in size and territory in many areas, that insecurity of tenure was becoming a serious problem. If there was only enough land to support one family, then clearly only one son could inherit it, and until that son could be sure of permanent possession he could not marry and have children. And so we find that, although in some areas, the old practice was continued of returning gifts made inter vivos to the hotch-pot - to use the traditional English phrase - upon the death of the landholder, in others the practice developed of permanently endowing one son during the lifetime of the landholder, and, with permanent possession went, of course, the right of the son so endowed to transmit the land to his own son. Thus grandsons came to take precedence over senior generations.[1] In France this modification took the more subtle form of the 'option' by which a landholder could endow one or more of his children during his own lifetime on the condition that they made no further claims upon the inheritance after his death unless they first returned to the hotch-pot that share which he had given them.[2] The practice was not unknown in England. Bracton, for example, noted that a daughter who had already received a maritagium could choose whether to return her share to the pot or not.[3]

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1 Scanian Laws op. cit. p.283. Gulathing and Frostathing Laws op. cit. p.294. Customs of Kent op. cit. p.89.

2 Yver op. cit. passim.

3 Bracton, De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Anglie, 2 Vols. S. E. Thorne ed. (Harvard 1968) fo. 76b p.223.

Thus, in certain areas, monogeniture was slowly emerging where hitherto partible inheritance had been the custom. At the peasant level, where land was a source of livelihood rather than of political power, monogeniture is probably too definite a term. Bracton, as late as the thirteenth century, is specific in stating that primogeniture for socage holders did not entitle the eldest son to all the family messuages, but only to the first choice: if there was only one messuage, he should have it, but if there were more than one messuage, the remainder should go to the other children in order of seniority, and that those who received no land should receive the equivalent in value in cash or kind.[1] The same principles held sway in gavelkind areas.[2] In other words, where monogeniture was permitted, and even enforced for the sake of the survival of the line, there was a marked tendency to revert to partible inheritance whenever circumstances permitted.

The areas which adopted the option or monogeniture coincide remarkably faithfully with areas of open field cultivation, which happen to be also areas of widespread manorialization both in England and in France, I cannot speak for Germany. Homans used this correlation to support the thesis that monogeniture was the product of estate management and he may be correct.[3] Unfortunately, we know too little about population density in these same areas. It could be argued that monogeniture developed in areas of land shortage, which are also

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1 Bracton. De Leg. fo.76a, p.221.

2 Elton op. cit. pp.2-4.

3 G. C. Homans, 'The Rural Sociology of Medieval England.' P & P. 4 (1953), pp.32-43. Also 'The Frisians in East Anglia' Ec. H. R. 2nd ser. x (1957-8), pp.189-206.

the areas most susceptible to the processes of manorialization. Partible inheritance continued to be practised over wide areas which were characterised either by sparse population, or by dense populations supported by fishing, small industries and exceptionally rich pasture land. In other words, partible inheritance is found where there was enough land for all sons, or, where land was not especially significant and the distinction between land and chattels not vital to the survival of the family.[1]

Unfortunately, our knowledge of the Celtic and Saxon countryside is so slight that precise knowledge of the degree and extent of manorialization will probably never be available. All that we can say is that the nuclear family holding was already normal in the seventh century, that the kindred was already archaic, although it still formed the basic unit of society as far as social controls were concerned, (and continued to do so throughout the medieval period,) that some areas were already well populated although primogeniture was not common,[2] and that large estates, run by serf labour were a familiar feature.

Once the hereditary land of a family had been reduced to an area sufficient to support one family only, the composition of the household had to be tailored to fit the landholding. This was a simple economic and administrative necessity. However, the definition of a family cannot be changed as easily

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1 R. Faith, 'Peasant Families and Inheritance Customs in Medieval England', Agric. H. R. xiv (1966), pp.77-95. Also Habbakuk op. cit. p.10.
H. E. Hallam, 'Some Thirteenth Century Censuses' Ec. H. R. 2nd ser., x (1957-8), pp.340-361.

2 Faith. op. cit. p.79.

as a land boundary, nor can a family's attitudes. And so, when we come to study the composition of the peasant household in the thirteenth century we still find collaterals being supported by the heir to even the smallest of holdings, and in the sixteenth century we still find smallholders making equal provision for all their sons and daughters, while reserving the land to one only. We find peasants of villein status leaving their holdings to their heirs over countless generations, and distributing their chattels by will. The continuity in peasant attitudes from the tenth to the thirteenth century is evident and would not cause surprise were it not for the well known fact that such attitudes run clean counter to feudal theory and to the corpus of legal doctrine elaborated in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

It is necessary, therefore, to examine more carefully the practice of manor courts in the period between Glanvill and Bracton, in order to see how far they were in fact affected by the developing theory of common law, and whether or not pre-conquest attitudes could have survived two hundred years of attack.

Both jurists accepted the view that a villein could not transfer property to his heir or be the heir of anyone. Neither paid much attention to what went on in church courts and in manor courts. The church taught that villeins, as well as freemen, should make wills (for the benefit of their souls) and probate of villein wills took place in the manor court, where villein land transfers were also registered, subject to the custom of the manor. Custom, as to which member or members of the family

should inherit, varied from region to region, but the fundamental right of the family, as such, to inherit was never questioned. In fact, a lord could force an heir to inherit. Many of the key phrases and certainly the subject of those local custumals which survive in England, such as the Customs of Kent and the Customs of Rotheley are almost identical with the customary codes of Scandinavia, France and elsewhere in northern Europe. Bracton was not writing about customs, he was writing about that new science, lex. He writes, 'Custom, in truth, in regions where it is approved by the practice of those who use it, is sometimes observed as, and takes the place of, lex. For the authority of custom and long use is not slight'.[1] His enthusiasm for lex has led him to an exaggerated vagueness about custom, which was nevertheless, the 'law' of every manor court in the country, and the only law which the majority of Englishmen made use of; it did indeed take the place of lex. It would be a mistake, therefore, to accept the dicta of Bracton, and still more those of Glanvill,[2] as reflecting the values and practice of law in England outside the specialised and limited area of the king's courts, which dealt only with the cases of men whose status and form of tenure made them of interest to the crown.

Moreover, the king's courts themselves recognised that custom replaced lex in certain circumstances. A recent detailed

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1 De Leg. fo. 2a p.22.

2 T. F. T. Plucknett Concise History of English Law (Butterworth 4th ed. 1948) p.422 writes, "Glanvill's distinction was good enough for the first arresting phrase of a treatise, but it bore little relation to the state of the law in his time".

study of common law villeinage, analysed at some length the royal court's treatment of villein inheritance.[1] Its conclusion was the familiar one; that there was no villein inheritance at common law, 'the villein has no property of his own, and consequently cannot transmit property'.[2] But the author was forced to admit that in practice, villeins left land to heirs and inherited land - and their right to do so was upheld in manorial courts ,[3] and he went on to say the 'gap between legal theory and actual practice is wider (here) than at any other point in the system.'[4] Frequently the Justice in Eyre upheld local hereditary customs. For example, in the Curia Regis rolls for Berkshire in 1212 AD it is accepted that by local custom, a widow took the whole of the land which her husband had held, if he was a villein, but only one third if he was a freeman.[5]

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1 P. Hyams 'Legal Aspects of Villeinage between Glanvill and Bracton' (Oxford D. Phil. thesis 1968) and see also his forthcoming book Kings, Lords and Peasants in Medieval England.

2 P. Vingradoff Villeinage in England (Oxford 1892) p.159.

3 Hyams op. cit. p.118.

4 p.120. However, the common law distinction between free and villein tenants could on occasion be used by a lord as an obstacle to land transactions carried out by wealthy peasants, the object being, not so much to prevent the transaction as to extract from the villein actor a high fine for settlement out of court. For example, in 1265 Earl John de Warenne fined the executors of a prosperous Sussex villager half a mark for the freedom to administer the dead man's goods, on the grounds that, strictly speaking, the man's land and goods should revert to the earl, since the man was his villein. The earl might not have won his case in court, but it would have cost his villein more than half a mark to take the case to court.... Records of the Barony and Honour of the Rape of Lewis ed. A.J. Taylor (Sussex Rec. Soc. 44 (1939) pp.22, 23, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33 (1266).

5 Hyams op. cit. p.119.

In a Shropshire case for 1235 the justice upheld the custom that the land should pass to the youngest son while the chattels went to the wife and remaining children.[1] There are several references on the Winchester Eyre rolls for 1249 relating to East Anglia which accept the argument that, if land had once been held in villeinage, it could not at a later date become subject to partible inheritance.[2]

Both Dr. Hyams and Miss Levett have taken up the point of villein wills. Dr. Hyams found several examples taken from the plea rolls of the thirteenth century. Miss Levett found it a commonplace for the villein tenantry of St. Alban's Abbey to make wills which were proved in the manor court, particularly between the years 1377-1420.[3] Her examples were drawn from several manors and refer to land as well as to chattels. It must be remembered that these were years of severe dislocation, when many families were seriously depleted in numbers, and the next of kin not obvious. Land on these manors was left to widows alone, to brothers jointly, to one daughter alone to the exclusion of three sisters, and frequently it was sold, the next of kin being offered the right of pre-emption, and the money given to the church. This last was an accepted method of transforming material goods into spiritual resources which would benefit the family in afterlife, there being no remaining close kin to profit from the land itself.[4]

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1 Hyams op. cit. p.132.

2 Ibid p.118.

3 A.E. Levett, Studies in Manorial History (Oxford 1938), Chap.IV.

4 D. Whitelock, Anglo Saxon Wills (C.U.P. 1930).
D. Herlihy, op. cit. Traditio 18 p.89-120.
R. Faith, op. cit. Ag. H.R. XIV (1966) p.80.

Wills were not copied out *in extenso* in the Merton College rolls for Kibworth Harcourt, but there are frequent references to the executors of deceased tenants. Since it was the custom on this manor for the entire tenement to pass to the widow for her life, the executors had only to deal with the payment of debt and the disposal of chattels.[1] Similar references to wills appear on the Winchester Pipe Roll for 1208 in the guise of land taken up *de testamento* and *de legato* at Waltham, Downton and Taunton.[2]

It would seem then, that in spite of the observations of Glanvill and Bracton, a villein's right to inherit both lands and goods was upheld both by custom and by the Church. Moreover, the King's courts would uphold custom in those areas and places where custom took precedence over *lex*. A lord when he held a manor court was providing a service, he helped to settle disputed claims and to register transfers; it was not a court held for the purpose of hiring and firing tenants. So we may conclude that in England, as on the continent, villeins could devise their land *de jure* as well as *de facto*.[3]

Church law and customary law could clash, however. It is not clear how far back the Church's cognizance of wills extended, at least as far back as the Conquest.[4] The Church encouraged the free disposal of land; familiar with Roman law it saw nothing outrageous in allowing the individual to alienate land from the family. By contrast, customary law, the older,

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1 M.M. 6407.6, 21, 29, and 6408.1.

2 H. Hall, ed. *The Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester 1208-9* (L.S.E. London 1903).

4 Levett *op. cit.* p.212-3. Hyams *op. cit.* p.123-6.

3 Hyams *op. cit.* p.118.

the more deeply rooted, was specifically designed to prevent the alienation of land.

A fourth strand in the development of late medieval legal attitudes, was private estate practice. Customary law had little to say about slaves; men without land and of little or no status. Their masters were held responsible for their affairs; their well-being, behaviour, hours of work and so forth. But the laws have plenty to say about the recently freed man; how long he should have held land before he could claim hereditary title to it, who were his heirs, if he had no heirs to which lord should his land revert. Estate practice and local custom tended to be easily confused, and by the late middle ages were often treated as one and the same. Thus an estate custumal will often deal not only with services and rents, but also with succession rules, the rights of widows, warranty for sales, taken word for word from customary law. With this down-grading of custom, one might have expected lords to usurp the right to frame laws, in fact this does not seem to have happened, and the familiar phrase 'according to the custom of the manor' possibly carried greater weight than legal historians have attached to it.

If we can break away from the preconception of the medieval peasant as an eighteenth-century-type individual, holding land from a profit-orientated large estate for a term of years, and think of him as the representative of a peasant family, with hereditary rights to the land stretching back over five generations or more and forward indefinitely, then the customs governing inheritance assume considerable importance. The size of households, the size of holdings, the standard of

living, the pattern of migration, all hinge to a considerable degree on local inheritance patterns.

Unfortunately, there is no satisfactory method of collecting data rapidly for a regional, let alone a nationwide, study. Attempts have been made to estimate the turnover of surnames from one rental to another for several estates within the same period, and to indicate thereby the degree of mobility into and out of estates, and the strength or weakness of peasant attachment to land.[1] The snag is that, just as the court rolls do not distinguish between sales and leases, so the rentals do not distinguish between owners and occupiers; they tend to list the occupiers, who were often lessees or the mortgagees. Moreover, since they only record the land-holding group they do not indicate whether or not the men whose names no longer appear on a rental have actually left the village or not, or if the new names are genuine outsiders or simply sons-in-law or 'adopted' sons. Lastly, they were very often drawn up in a period of dislocation following high mortality, or estate reorganisation. In fact, the drawing up of rentals might serve as a demographer's guide to exceptional mortality!

The only other short cut would be to take custumals, as for example the thirteenth century custumal for the soke of Rotheley in Leicestershire,[2] or the better known Customs of Kent.[3] However, these custumals are rare, and full though

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1 R. Faith, 'The Peasant Land Market in Berkshire during the Later Middle Ages.' (Leics. D.Phil. thesis 1962) also A. Jones, op. cit. Ec. H. R. xxv.

2 G. T. Clarke, 'The Customary of the Manor and Soke of Rotheley in the County of Leicester.' Archaeologia xlvii (London 1882), pp.89-130.

3 Elton. op. cit.

they are, they do not tell us much about the structure of the household, or the size of the tenements which supported these households.

And so, in the end, one is driven to the detailed study of one estate. Hence this study of Kibworth Harcourt in south-east Leicestershire.

Figure 38 shows the length of time each family remained in the village of Kibworth Harcourt during the period 1280-1700, whether or not that family held land. It is based on tithing lists for 1280 and 1686, the Poll Tax returns for 1377, rentals for 1300, 1340, 1372, 1440, 1484, 1500, 1593, 1679, 1686, 1693 and 1700. The remaining dates are based on biographical reconstructions of each of the families listed in the previous rent-roll. So rapid was the turnover between 1410 and 1440 that a separate chart had to be made for this period, hence the gap in the chart before you. The second gap, that between 1540-1593 is due to lack of information. These biographical reconstructions were made from the court rolls for the fifteenth century and from the parish register and probate of wills for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The chart shows that, with the exception of five singlemen, every family mentioned in the 1280 tithing list held land. What it does not show is that the average household size was five, (since most families included adult sons and daughters) and that the average holding was twelve acres. In other words, there was severe over-population and rural under-employment. When a new rental was made in 1340, every one of the 1280 surnames featured on it without exception, and only five new names were added. What is more, the transfer of land from

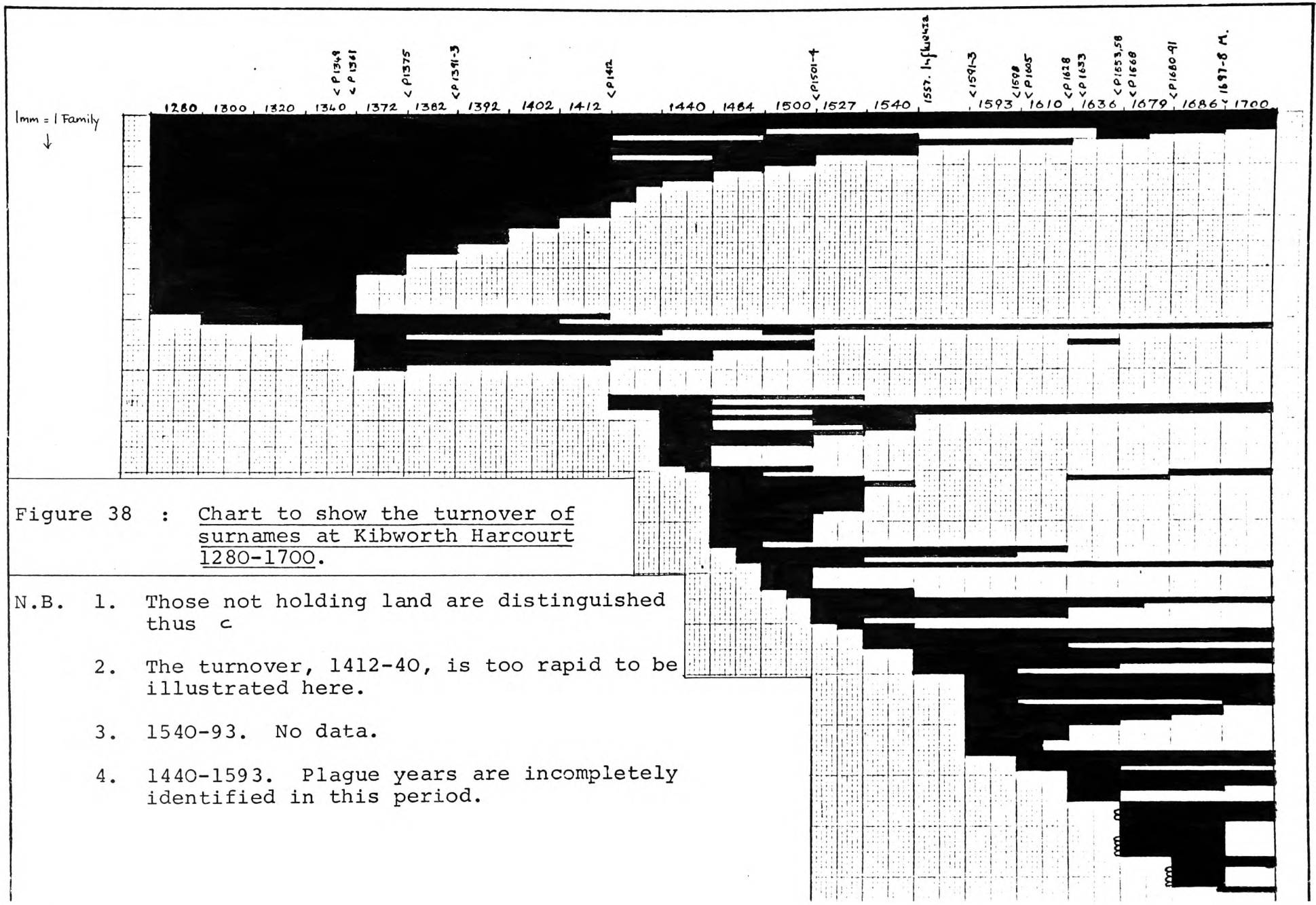


Figure 38 : Chart to show the turnover of surnames at Kibworth Harcourt 1280-1700.

N.B. 1. Those not holding land are distinguished thus c

2. The turnover, 1412-40, is too rapid to be illustrated here.

3. 1540-93. No data.

4. 1440-1593. Plague years are incompletely identified in this period.

father to son can be traced for these families in the court rolls, and the 1340 rental is an accurate and up-to-date list of tenants.

In 1348-49, 44 landholders in the village died. Only 4½ bond virgates and 2½ demesne virgates were not affected.[1] By the end of 1349 only one fifth of these holdings was still without a holder, all the rest had been taken up by sons, many of them minors, by brothers and by nephews. There was no need for daughters to inherit. Here is a straightforward example of the phenomenon of which Professor Arthur Lewis has given the classic exposition:

> 'the phenomenon of an economy in which labour is so plentiful that its marginal productivity is negligible, or nil, or even negative; an economy in fact which has nothing to lose in productive power if its surplus manpower is removed, and indeed something, perhaps much, to gain'.[2]

In 1354 there were more deaths and this time it was more difficult to find heirs, tenants were not finding it easy to keep up with rent payments and the first examples occur of villeins fleeing the manor. Eleven more died in 1361, an outbreak of 'pestilence' occurred in 1376, and the 70's and 90's were conspicuous for their high average death rate.

As plague followed plague at roughly ten year intervals, one family after another became extinct in the male line. New names appeared on the court rolls, as land passed to sons-in-law or to adopted heirs. The size of households shrank from 5 to 3.96, while the average size of family holdings increased

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1 See above p.47.

2 Quoted by A. R. Bridbury in 'The Black Death', Ec. H. R. 2nd ser. xxvi (1973), pp.590-91.

from twelve to twenty-four acres, and land in the hands of the lord was allowed to become frysca et inculta.

It was the custom on this manor for the usufruct of the entire holding to pass to the widow with reversion to the eldest son. The livestock and implements were divided equally among the remaining children. The novel situation of the late fourteenth century threw up two issues of considerable importance. The first was the question of equal division among heirs. According to Bracton, as we have already noted, if there was land for only one son, then, if primogeniture was the local custom, the eldest son should have it, but if there were two or more holdings, then the eldest son should choose for himself one holding, the second son should choose another and so on until there were no more holdings, the remaining children should be content with the equivalent in moveable goods.[1] In this, Bracton was enunciating a widely held principle, and one which was certainly followed by some families at Kibworth, the Polles for example. Many men in Kibworth around 1400 found themselves the possessors of more than one tenement. Had they decided to give one holding to one son the other to a second son, within a generation or two the standard family holding would have been once again twelve acres. In fact, a significant number did not, they passed all their land to one son. This was almost certainly not a premeditated policy, but simply an ad hoc response to circumstances. There were fewer male heirs than usual, formerly inalienable, customary land was now on the market and high wages provided the capital with

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1 De Leg. fo.75b-76a, p.220-1.

which to purchase extra-familial land. Therefore, younger sons could acquire new holdings for themselves.

The second issue was the question of land transfer from one family to another. Customary land was hereditary land, and how could hereditary right be conferred upon a man and his heirs? Surely not by the simple payment of a sum of money? Most of the Barbarian Codes have a good deal to say on this subject. The most detailed, to my knowledge, are the Gulathing Laws of Norway. According to them there are two types of land, hereditary or odal land and money land. Money land was a most unsatisfactory form of possession. At any time within 20 years of purchase, the seller's heirs could redeem it. After this initial 20 years the buyer's title became secure, but the land did not become hereditary land until it had remained in his family for five generations.[1] By contrast, land transferred by gift became immediately hereditary land. There were various types of gift, some, like the gift made by a king in repayment for service or hospitality, need hardly concern us in the peasant context, but the gift made in exchange for other land, the gift made to a son-in-law, and, significantly, the gift made to a foster son, are extremely interesting. Adoption could mean the legitimization of a bastard son with the consent of the heirs, but it could also take the form of a retirement arrangement in a case where there were no heirs. As the Gulathing laws put it, 'when a man takes another into his keeping for good or for ill and maintains him to fire and pyre, as the saying goes' (that is, until death) that man becomes the foster heir of the

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1 Larsen op. cit. paras 270-294. It is also interesting to consider the de donis clause in the Statute of Westminster in this light.

other.[1]

Now the average length of time for which a man held land in Kibworth was 27 years in the medieval period, 32 in the early modern period, and most men continued as head of the household until death, although there are two or three examples of a father retiring early, and arranging a retirement contract with his son (or nephew or son-in-law) which contract was duly recorded in the court rolls. Figure 38, however, shows a sharp decline in hereditary continuity between 1350 and 1412. Tenements also became much larger during this period and one would expect to find a crop of retirement arrangements, if not with heirs then with foster heirs. This prompted me to take a second look at the ad opus transfers at Kibworth. These occurred only within the period 1359 to 1419, and then very frequently indeed. It was found that an ad opus transfer occurred only once within the history of a tenement at Kibworth, and that when it passed from one family to another. Once land had escheated to the lord it was never subsequently transferred ad opus. Moreover, land which had escheated to the lord passed very rapidly from one holder to another, whereas land transferred ad opus usually remained in the hands of the taker for many years if not for generations. Why did outsiders take land ad opus when they could have had land from the lord exempt from fine and often rent-free for the first few years, so anxious was the lord to find tenants? One plausible answer is that an ad opus transfer conferred on the taker the hereditary rights of a foster son. Occasionally an ad opus

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1 Larsen op. cit. 111. Also Leges Langobardorum ed. Franz Beyerle (Germany 1972) pp. 44, 45, 124, 132.

transfer occurred between a father and son during this period, in which context it was certainly a retirement arrangement.

Maitland noticed a similar association of the ad opus transfer with a retirement arrangement at King's Ripton in 1301. In this instance one William the Chaplain granted his land ad opus the two sons of Roger and Catherine of Kellow, on the understanding that Roger and Catherine would look after and support him for the remainder of his days, and cultivate the land at their own cost.[1] At Kibworth, Robert le Yonge surrendered his messuage, one virgate of demesne and half a customary virgate ad opus Robert Godyer in return for maintenance for himself and his wife in 1349.[2] In 1360 John Maister surrendered a messuage and one and a half virgates ad opus his stepson Nicholas Gilbert, upon the understanding that the latter would provide the old couple with board, lodging and a small annuity.[3]

Ad opus is a very common term in the vocabulary of the court rolls and is usually taken to mean, land held in return for labour services, or, land over which the lord had the option of demanding labour services rather than rent, neither of which meanings is very far removed from that of performing labour services on a holding in return for the guarantee of succession to it.

If adoption into a family and its inheritance was indeed still a common practice in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, this makes a strong case for the continued peasant preoccupation

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1 F. W. Maitland, Select Pleas in Manorial Courts Vol.ii, Seldon Soc. (1888) p.106.

2 M.M. 6405.23 Ed. III.

3 M.M. 6407.4 dorse.

with hereditary land.

The case against peasant attachment to land, rests on the very marked turnover of surnames on many manors during the early fifteenth century. A glance at Figure 38 leaves one in no doubt that this was also true of Kibworth for the late fourteenth and fifteenth century, but a more careful scrutiny will reveal a return to something like the old stability by the seventeenth. Many of the short-stay surnames in the latter century were landless men and many of the new names were those of sons-in-law. The return to stability in the seventeenth century is more clearly seen if one follows through the tenurial history of the copyhold tenements. For example, of the fifteen tenements taken on 21 year leases in 1593-99, seven were in the same family in 1636, six had changed hands once, only one had changed hands twice, and the descent of the last cannot be traced. Taking the same fourteen tenements for the 1636-1679 period, eleven remained in the hands of the same family or in the hands of a son-in-law, the remaining three had all belonged to the Brian family, who moved back to the neighbouring village of Smeeton Westerby during this period, and allowed their Kibworth lands to pass to in-laws, who were themselves men of the blood of the village. In other words, there was no turnover among copyhold families between 1636 and 1679.

To return briefly to the period of maximum turnover - the fifteenth century - the average outsider held land in the village for not more than 12 years. To take the turnover of new names at even ten year intervals, would tend to underestimate

the number of temporary landholders. Therefore, rather than try to estimate the degree of instability, I have attempted to measure the degree of continuity and stability, by giving, in the accompanying table, the percentage of surnames which survived each forty-year interval.

Figure 39 : Table to show the percentage of surnames surviving each forty-year interval

1280-1340	100%				
1341-1380	80%	1280-1412	23.6%		
1381-1412	77%				
1413-1440	60%				
1441-1484	48%	1412-1527	27%	1280-1700	8%
1485-1527	51.5%				
1593-1636	69.2%				
1637-1686	75%	1593-1686	57.5%		

The sharp increase in the turnover of surnames coincided not only with the fall in the population level after the fourteenth century plagues, but more significantly, with the extinction of hereditary landholding families. In such circumstances, either the land reverted to common land and was shared among surrounding villages or appropriated by the lord, a phenomenon to which the many deserted village sites bears witness;[1] or, tenants who had no hereditary claim could be found to take up these holdings. The inflow of new tenants is reflected in the number of new names to be found on most court rolls during this period. Clearly, one cannot use the documents from this exceptional period to argue for or against peasant attitudes to hereditary land or the

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1 E.g. V.C.H. Oxon VI. Five such villages in Ploughley Hundred: Saxenton, Ardley, Cote, Tusmore, Bainton.

existence of a peasant land market in normal circumstances. But the documents of this period are crucial to the understanding of the legal position of peasant landholders in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At Kibworth, demesne land became leasehold without hereditary right, but customary land became copyhold with hereditary right. On other manors, customary land was granted out on leases and without hereditary tenure, or, demesne and customary tenements were thrown together and granted out with no clear understanding as to hereditary rights, but, at a later date were claimed to be leasehold without inheritance because they included demesne land.[1]

The estate documents present us with a further problem of interpretation which may have some bearing on inheritance customs. The Poll Tax lists for the Kibworth region show that the majority of villages in the area had adopted the practice of tenure ad voluntatem domini in place of tenure in bondagio.[2] Kibworth Harcourt still held by the old tenure but change was in the air. The earliest reference to holding at will occurs in 1331 but the movement did not gather momentum until the 1360's. In 1358 Richard Malt, a newcomer, took up land 'at the will of the lord' which his predecessor, Henry son of Nicholas, scion of an 'old' family had held 'in bondage'. In 1360 John Joye took at will a tenement which his father had held in bondage and there are half a dozen or so equally explicit examples of change. Unfortunately, we know nothing of the negotiations or motivation which lay behind these changes in tenure nor do any differences emerge from the study

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1 Many examples in Ploughley Hundred, Oxon.

2 P.R.O. E.179 133/29,35.

of the court rolls. As the following table shows, the tide of change was running strongly in the last decade of the fourteenth century. By the time the court of recognitions was held in 1439, all unfree tenancies were recorded as being held at will.

Figure 40 : Table to show the shift from holding 'in bondagio' to holding 'ad voluntatem domini'

Decades	References to land held 'in bondagio'	References to land held 'ad vol. domini'
1359-1369	34	7
1370-1379	4	3
1380-1389	6	4
1390-1399	7	20
1400-1409	0	8
1410-1419	4	16
1420-1429	5	37
1430-1439	2	44
1440-1449	0	17
1450-1459	0	0
1460-1540	0	7

It is clear that the change signified something to those concerned, but it is not easy to discern in what precisely the advantage lay. Most of what we know of copyhold tenure is based upon the commentaries of lawyers and surveyors upon established practice in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Most agree that copyhold tenure was derived from customary tenure in villeinage but none venture to describe how it differed from it.[1] According to Holdsworth, there were in the fifteenth century no generally accepted formularies or

1 Summarised by C. Calthorpe, The Relation Betweene the Lord of a Mannor and the Coppy-holder his Tenant (London 1635), p.89 and passim. edited by The Manorial Society No. 10 (London 1907). Also Bodleian, Viner 486.

categories for copyhold.[1] Prof. Hilton argued that the widespread adoption of rents ad placitum on the Leicester Abbey estates in the period 1340-77 was evidence of a peasant market at a competitive rate. 'The tenure ad placitum unprotected by custom, was essentially a tenure whose terms were dependent on market conditions, on the balance between the demand for land and the needs of the lord for rent or for the land itself.'[2] Given the low value of land at the time, this would operate in favour of the peasant, which may explain why the initiative came from the landholders at Kibworth Harcourt and why the court of recognitions, held in 1439, confirmed the new tenure shortly after the reduction in rents agreed in 1427. But this explanation is not entirely satisfactory. Rents thereafter, far from reflecting market trends became frozen; the rent fixed in 1427 still obtained in 1700. Moreover, land transfers ceased to be recorded in the court rolls, and, if the manor accounts are to be believed, no fines were taken until 1594. The hereditary principle remained firmly entrenched, and every transaction 'at the will of the lord' was also made 'according to the custom of the manor', the latter being the operative phrase. The change in 1439 seems to have been no more than an acknowledgement by the lord of an agreed drop in rents and an agreement to cease using the term nativus. Possibly the misleading phrase 'at the will of the lord' was inserted by lawyers to preserve the distinction between the jurisdiction of the lord's court and that of the king - it had to be made clear that the tenant was subject to the lord in matters tenurial, even when

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1 W. S. Holdsworth History of English Law Vol.III.

2 Hilton op. cit. pp.95-104.

the tenant owed no more in rent than 14s.0d for 24 acres, a derisory sum in 1700!

The terminology was again altered by the statute of 13.Eliz.c.10 by which deans and chapters, parsons and vicars, colleges and hospitals were forbidden to lease their lands for longer than twenty-one years or three lives. Thereafter, the tenants of Merton College duly took out twenty-one year leases at seven-year intervals 'according to the custom of the manor' but nevertheless continued to be classified as copyholders as distinct from the leaseholders of the demesne.[1] The custom of the manor had nothing to do with leasehold and the like but with hereditary right and, predictably, tenements continued to pass from father to son in same manner as before. At a much later date legally minded persons fused the two strands into a category known as copyhold by inheritance but without fixed fines.[2]

No discussion of peasant customs attaching to land and its descent can avoid the question of the existence of an active peasant land market. The argument for an active land market rests upon the assumption that sales of odd acres and rods of land are sufficiently significant to constitute a land market within the context of an agrarian subsistence economy.[3] Half an acre within an urban context represents

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1 *cf.* V.C.H. Gloucs. VIII p.232. At Tredington, Gloucs., leaseholds for lives replaced copyholds but the manor court continued to treat these new leaseholds as copyholds.

2 E. Kerridge, Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After (London 1969), pp.37ff.
M.M. Postan, Cambridge Economic History of Europe I (C.U.P. 1966), p.615. J. Bean op. cit. pp.20, 22-25.

3 M. M. Postan and C.N.L. Brooke ed. Carte Nativorum. Northants Rec. Soc. XX (1960). Challenged by E.J. King, Peterborough Abbey 1086-1310. A study in the Land Market. (Cambridge 1973) and by P. Hyams, The Origins of the Peasant Land Market in England,' Ec. H. R. 2nd ser. 23 (1970), pp.18-31.

considerable potential or actual wealth, either as building land or for market gardening. Half an acre within a fishing or pastoral area represents a useful supplement to a man's sources of income, what the two acre holding is to the modern Humberside steelworker. But half an acre in open field country was an anomaly; it could not possibly be thought of as a subsistence unit; it was of value only to the widow or the craftsman, both of whom had other means of support. Land to a subsistence cultivator meant an area sufficient to support a household; a land market only had meaning when the unit of exchange was at least a quarter or a half virgate. It is interesting to note for example, that three virgates at Kibworth, which became ownerless in the early fourteenth century, and were sub-divided to provide small plots for cottars, were re-assembled within a generation by these same cottars into standard full and half virgate holdings; in other words into viable agricultural holdings which made sense within the village economy.[1]

The fact that these sales of half acres were often accompanied by cartae serves to strengthen the case for the a-typical nature of the transaction. A very small unit of land, the single acre, was being detached from a whole unit, a virgate, and added to another. This is one possible interpretation of the nature of the sale; the other, the more plausible, is that a small unit of land assarted from the waste, and hence the customary, hereditable, possession of no family, was being transferred, and since no village custom existed to sanction or uphold such transfers, recourse was had to the written charter, a form adopted from pre-Conquest times by

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1 See Appendix II.

church and state to give authority to agreements of an unusual nature, for which no time-hallowed procedure existed, and which might, therefore, be challenged and disallowed at some later date. It could be argued that the alienation of small units of land could lead to the amorcelisation of virgates by the process of steady erosion. The fact that these transactions required the drawing up of cartae however, indicates that they were so rare that no normal procedure was ever developed to deal with them in the manorial courts. The freeholders at Kibworth were periodically called upon to show their cartae, when a relief was paid for example, or when a rental was being drawn up, the earliest extant record at Kibworth being the Inquisiccio carta held in 1291.[1] The business of producing cartae was always surrounded by some confusion, since no record of their content or sealing was kept in the Kibworth court rolls. The amount of land in question is consequently described as unknown, the services and rent as unknown, and an enquiry ordered forthwith. By contrast St. Peter's Abbey, Gloucester, kept its peasant cartae,[2] as did Peterborough Abbey.[3] As Edmund King commented on the latter, the charters deal with very small holdings of one or two acres often accompanied by a licence to build, and the list of charter holders reads 'like a register of daughters and younger sons'.[4] Now the holders of the one acre plots on St. Peter's Abbey estates were also widows and younger

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1 M.M. 6389.

2 R. H. Hilton, 'Gloucester Abbey Leases in the Thirteenth Century Univ. Birm. H.Jl. iv (1953-4), pp.1-17. This article is not comparable to E.J. King's work on the Peterborough cartae, since it contains no analysis of the cartae by date or by size of holdings. The limitations for the present discussion are therefore obvious. However, Prof. Hilton looked at the unpublished as well as the printed charters, and formed the impression that the majority dealt with full virgate holdings.

3 Postan and Brooke op. cit.

4 King op. cit. p.124.

sons. In other words these look like the dower holdings one comes across in most European peasant societies. At Peterborough and at St. Peter's they were treated as separate from the chief messuage, at Kibworth they were not. According to the later Kibworth wills, most widows held an acre in each field and house-space in the main house but do not appear as separate tenants on the court rolls.

The second argument for the existence of an active peasant land market is based upon the interpretation of the numerous transfers which took place every year as being sales. Such an interpretation leads to some curious situations; the membership of the peasant community at Kibworth was closed, outsiders were not encouraged, yet within this closed group land changed hands with staggering rapidity, the net result being that every man finished with the same land as his father had held before him. Thus A inherits a virgate in let us say 1300, he surrenders it to B in 1305, to C in 1310, to D in 1314 and in 1320 he dies leaving one virgate to his widow who then comes and surrenders this in court to her son. Clearly, these transfers cannot have been sales, they must have been leases. Another look at Figure 38 will again show how rare a permanent alienation was before 1349, in spite of an average of two transfers a year recorded in the court rolls for the 1280-1349 period. The practice of leasing land is perfectly compatible with the strong feeling that land should remain within the village community, and with the even stronger feeling that that land should not be alienated from the family. Yet it allows for the developmental cycle of the family, which at certain stages needs more land than at others.

1. See above p.48

So when we talk of a peasant land market, we must be sure that we are talking about complete subsistence units and about permanent alienations. The odd acre has significance for the townsman or the village craftsman or widow, but not for the peasant farmer. The lease made possible the retention of land within the family over many generations; the sale on the other hand, destroyed this continuity.

But leases are the medievalist's nightmare! How do we know, when we read an extent, how many under-settlers there were? The suspected prevalence of sub-tenants has probably been exaggerated. Fortunately at Kibworth the evidence about them is unambiguous. Between 1300-1310 or thereabouts, three virgates became tenantless due to lack of heirs. It was a period of acute land shortage, and so, very sensibly, the land was not offered to outsiders, but was broken up into small parcels and let to cottagers. In subsequent rentals these odd bundles of two acres, and five acres, and so on, are always identified as part of 'Robert Holke's virgate' or one of the other three. No indication is given that this Robert Holke had been dead some seventy years. Had only the 1372 rental survived, one might easily have been tempted to argue the practice of extensive subletting, hidden leases, lack of attachment to hereditary land, economic and social mobility, the emergence of the kulak and so forth. In fact, so unusual was the existence of odd, acre holdings in place of virgate holdings, that this group was always given a special mention in the rentals and their ancestry traced to the last full virgate holders!

But, it may be argued, if partition could happen to a vacant virgate, how do we know that holdings, recorded as passing from father to son, were not in practice sub-let or sub-divided to persons other than family members? Once again the documentary evidence answers this question simply and conclusively. In the first place, as has been seen, the rentals consistently distinguished between normal virgates and disintegrated virgates and name the present tenants of the latter. Secondly, in the fifteenth century, when holders of tenements frequently absconded secretly during the night, a body of supervisors was set up to inspect abandoned holdings and to report upon the condition in which they had been left. Damages were charged against the late holder, and the man's pledgers were called upon to find the money and to complete the ploughing. On no occasion did they call upon sub-tenants to pay or to plough. Lastly, when land in the lord's hand was let, never more than two or three acres were let from any one virgate. In other words, the subletting of the odd acre was a common-place within the system of fixed family lands, which could not be permanently alienated whatever the present size of the family. But the alienation of entire virgates could only happen in very exceptional circumstances such as the complete failure of heirs.

Up to this point the discussion of inheritance practice at Kibworth has been based upon the documentary evidence of rentals and court rolls. The discussion to follow will be based on the parish register and the probate records for Kibworth. The nature of the information yielded by these two

very different types of source material is complementary rather than continuous. Therefore, it may be useful to sum up the data deduced from the late medieval documents before entering upon a new line of argument.

The village community of the early fourteenth century was remarkably stable. Land passed from father to son and supported other, landless, members of the family. There was often more than one branch of a family in a village, so that if one line failed there were usually close kinsmen to hand. In the exceptional circumstance of a family becoming extinct the family could 'adopt' an heir if it did not wish the land to escheat to the lord. Whether or not a lord could veto an 'adoption' is not clear, in theory he probably could, in practice he was probably glad to be spared the trouble of finding a new tenant acceptable to the village. Merton certainly favoured ad opus transfers in the late fourteenth century when tenants were very difficult to find.

The drastic culling of village families which took place during the plague period made possible the accumulation of two or more units of family-land in the hands of one surviving line. This sudden increase in the size of holding, accompanied by a decrease in household size, (since celibate adults and adolescent boys could now find work 'abroad') made possible the accumulation of savings in the form of cash or capital equipment which had seldom hitherto been possible. Children could be endowed with cash portions in place of land or maintenance on the land. Consequently, these large holdings were not sub-divided in the next generation to provide as many children

as possible with a minimum smallholding. Instead, the large holding was preserved intact, but every effort was made to improve its profit so that larger cash portions could be distributed among the children.

The high turnover of surnames on the fourteenth and fifteenth century rentals can be attributed to the temporary dislocation of the hereditary descent of land, rather than to a decline in the peasant's attachment to land. By the seventeenth century the old stability had been regained.

The principal source materials for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are the probate records and the parish register. These shed abundant light upon the retirement arrangements of the Leicestershire smallholder, a subject which was as central to the economy and life style of peasants then, as it is in rural economies today. They also illuminate the related topic of marriage portions and child portions which had far-reaching repercussions on the regional economy.

The descents of some fifty families, extracted from the register, provide a framework into which the wills of these same families can be inserted, and against which they can be interpreted. For example, one can discover the age of subjects mentioned in the wills by consulting the register, and by this means can state with certainty that at Kibworth it was usual for the eldest son to inherit, a point which the earlier court rolls do not make absolutely clear.

Two hundred and seven wills were analysed. They all related to families living in Kibworth Harcourt, or, who had at one time lived in Harcourt and later lived in one of the other two villages of the parish, Kibworth Beauchamp and Smeeton

Westerby. In the first stage of analysis the wills were grouped by family and examined under the following heads.

- Date
- Residue left to
- Special arrangements for wife, if any
- Number of children
- Were child portions equal or unequal in value
- If unequal, who was favoured
- Legacies left to brothers and sisters;
  affines;
  cousins or kinsmen;
  nephews and nieces;
  grandchildren;
  godchildren;
  friends;
  servants.
- Specific mention of land
- Legacies in cash only
- Legacies in cash and kind (excluding land)
- Money to be put out at interest
- Legacies contingent upon obedience, marriage, etc.
- Remarks.

With the resultant charts before one, it was possible to select the more significant lines of enquiry, in particular, the deployment of the family's wealth upon aged dependants, young dependants, and persons who had a social but not an economic tie with the family, such as affines and godchildren.

The factual information thereby obtained for Kibworth could then be used to support a general discussion on the significance of dower arrangements in the life of the small-holder, the age of retirement and its repercussions on the age

structure of the village and the composition of the household; the manner of disposing of movable wealth among the next of kin, and the effect this had upon the potential for capital accumulation among peasant landholders. And lastly the implications of an increasingly cash dominated economy, even among smallholders, upon the expectations of the younger generation, the majority of whom would migrate to other areas, taking with them a large portion of the hard-won wealth of the village.

I have not attempted to distinguish between the attitudes of labourers, husbandmen and yeomen, the three groups represented in the wills, because it was found that practice varied from one generation to the next within the same family and economic group. The decisive factor was not class or family, but the age and family responsibilities of the testator at the time when he made his will.

Thus only those who had fulfilled their obligations, such as grandparents, widows, widowers, or those who had no such obligations, such as bachelors and single women, left legacies to the wider kin circle, for example to nephews, nieces, affines, cousins, grandchildren and godchildren, 'neburs' and servants.

The wider kin circle was thus relatively unimportant. By contrast, the distribution of land and goods between wife and children called for more detailed analysis, since the wills provided information on attitudes which could not be derived from the court rolls or the parish register. For example, it was the custom of the manor that the entire holding should go to the widow; from the wills we learn in what circumstances this custom was adhered to and when not. Likewise, it was the custom that only one son should inherit the land; the wills tell us in what sense he held the land, as sole owner or as family

representative. Custom at Kibworth tells us nothing about the rights of the remaining children, the wills are primarily concerned with them. The information derived from wills goes far towards bridging the gap between monogeniture and partible inheritance.

Accordingly, the sample was reduced to 193, by selecting only the wills of married men. These were divided into four categories: those wills in which the land was left to the widow alone, 29.5%; those in which the land was left to the widow and a kinsman or son to be held jointly by them, 17.6%; those in which the land was left to a son or daughter the wife being still living, 14.5%; and lastly, those in which the land was left to a son or daughter the wife being dead, 16.6%.

In the first category, those who left land to the widow alone, there were 56 wills. Of these, 40 testators left their property to their wife alone without any written condition safeguarding the interests of their heirs, and only 15 of these were childless. The remaining 16 inserted the type of limiting condition that one would expect; that their widows were to hold for life only, or a term of years or until the heir reached his majority, and were to forfeit the property if they re-married.

In the second category, those who left property to the widow and a kinsman to be held jointly, there were 34 wills. Of these, all without exception laid down explicit conditions. The wife was to hold jointly for life or until the heir was twenty-one, after which the heir was to guarantee her maintenance, unless she re-married. All except 7 of these testators left at least some children under twenty-one.

In the last category, 32 testators made wills in which the wife was not mentioned. In every case it was found that she had predeceased her husband. Seven of these testators left children all under twenty-one, of whom five left the property to the eldest son, the other two left it to be held jointly by all the children. Some or all of the children of the remaining testators were over twenty-one and the eldest son inherited. One case is significant. William Smith left four children and many debts. He instructed his executors to sell the copyhold in order to pay off the debts and to divide the proceeds equally among the two boys and two girls, giving to the youngest, a boy, an extra £5.

Thus there was a tendency to leave the land to the son if some or all of the children were over twenty-one, and to make the heir responsible for the maintenance of the widow according to prescribed conditions.

The results of this analysis of the wills within the context of family circumstances can be summarised as follows.

<u>In 33 cases where a man left children who were all minors, of these</u>:

42.4% left the tenement and residue to the wife alone;

39.3% left the tenement and residue to a wife and kinsman (usually a son);

18.0% left the tenement and residue to a son alone (the wife being still alive).

In the 51 cases where some or all of the children were over 21:

29.4% left the tenement and residue to the wife alone;

29.4% left the tenement and residue to the wife and a kinsman (usually a son)

41.2% left the tenement and residue to a son alone (the wife being still living).

In the 18 cases of a childless marriage:

83.3% left the tenement and residue to the wife alone;

16.6% left the tenement and residue to the wife and a kinsman.

It has not been possible to trace in a sufficiently large number of cases, the subsequent history of these widows, due to the convention in the parish register of merely noting 'widow' in the burial entries. One cannot be sure whose widow she was. Therefore, we cannot tell how long a widow remained a charge upon a tenement, sometimes for over twenty years, or how soon she handed over effective control to the heir and 'went her way' as the wills and the old laws phrase it. The wills of widows seldom deal with land, and the court rolls show that widows often handed over the tenement to their sons after only a short interval, but we do not know in what proportion to those who did not.

It is quite clear, however, that provision for his wife was an important, one could almost say over-riding consideration, in a man's mind when he felt that his own days were numbered. This raises an aspect of inheritance custom which is easily overlooked, partly because, without the wills, there is little one can discover about retirement arrangements, and partly, I think, because it is so often assumed that the life of the medieval

peasant was brutish and short, and that old age was consequently not a very probable eventuality. The age of marriage in a region was determined by the age at which it was customary for a man to retire, or, if retirement was uncommon, the age at which landholders tended to die. It was also influenced by the nature of the retirement arrangements in the region. For example, if it was customary for the heir to buy the land from his father, as in the Scandinavian countries and in Ireland, then he had either to find some means of earning the necessary money, or he had to marry a woman with a large marriage portion. In such circumstances, the age at marriage tended to be high and fathers could only afford to provide one of their daughters with a suitable portion. The number of single women, in consequence, was large and the growth rate of the population was correspondingly reduced. This is not to say that the growth rate was necessarily low, modern Ireland being the classic example to the contrary.[1]

I have not come across evidence in England for the practice of the heir buying the inheritance; he succeeded to it, but at the father's pleasure. Therefore, there was no pressing need for him to marry a girl with a 'fortune'. Something should be

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1 W. G. Williams, The Sociology of an English Village: Gosforth (London 1956), pp.46-52.
Rigmor Frimannslund, 'Farm Community and Neighbourhood Community' Scand. Ec. H. R. IV no. 1(1956),p.65-6.
C. M. Arensberg and S. T. Kimball, Family and Community in Ireland (Harvard 2nd ed. 1968), pp.105-112, 135-6.
Prof. Jutikkala op. cit. pp.65-180.
M. Spufford, English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, (forthcoming book.).

said at this point about marriage portions. In modern parlance the word 'dower' is usually associated with the jointure or marriage portion which a woman brings with her to her marriage. The concept is derived from Roman and canon law and is relatively recent. The old word for this contribution was the 'maritagium', and the word 'dower' had an older and quite distinct meaning. It was money or land which a free man gave to his wife at the church door at the time of his marriage. He was bound both by the common law and ecclesiastical law so to endow his wife. According to Glanvill, a free man could not endow his wife with more than one third of his lands, later lawyers held that the dower could be more, but not less, than one third.[1] However, we get nearer to common practice if we turn to the church manuals and rituals. Here we find the familiar formula, 'Wyth yis ryng I wedde ye, and wyth yis gold and sylvere I honoure ye, and wyth my gyfts I dow ye'. (York). The last phrase varies regionally and a common alternative is 'with all my worldely catel I thee endow' (Norfolk, Wales).[2] Among villeins the dower was often quite literally 'all my worldely catel', and the widow by right took the entire tenement; this was certainly the case at Kibworth, though in other regions she was endowed with only a half or a third of the lands. Thus the dower custom in an area went far towards establishing the age-structure of that region and the retirement custom.

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1 G.D.H. Hall,ed. The Treatise on the Laws and Customs of England commonly called Glanvill (London 1965), Books VI, VII.

2 W. G. Henderson ed. Manuale et Processionale ad usum Insignis Ecclesiae Eboracensis, Surtees Soc. 63 (1875) pp.xvi, 19, 167.

A girl's maritagium or marriage portion at Kibworth was the same as her child portion, and the child portions of all daughters were equal, so that lack of a 'dowry' in the modern sense, was not the serious impediment to marriage that it was later to become.

However, the corollary of a modest maritagium was the absence of a substantial sum from a daughter-in-law in old age. A man had to put off retirement for as long as was physically possible, in order to provide for each of his children and ensure an income for himself and his wife. Meanwhile, his heir waited. At Kibworth, during the late medieval period, the majority of transfers were from widow to son rather than from father to son inter vivos, and the number of retirement arrangements was remarkably few as we have seen. Therefore, one can conclude that the heir had to wait until his father died. However, when one enters the sixteenth century and wills become available, one finds that a surprising number of heirs were already married at the time when their fathers were writing their wills. The old rule: no land, no marriage, would seem to have been relaxed. At what date this modification took place is not clear, but one can argue quite plausibly that the increase in the size of holdings, and the reduction in the size of households had made possible the three generation family under one roof. Certainly at Kibworth it had become usual to allocate house-space under the same roof to more than one nuclear unit within the family. Thus an heir when he married was given house-space, but his father generally remained at the head of the household and farm. When the father died, the widow either remained at the head of the household,

'and she to have the ruling of my house', or she retired and was given house-space, usually a room with a hearth, and storage space in the yard. Thus John Carter, when he died in 1690, had been occupying seven rooms, his widow continued to occupy three of these until she died in 1711, while her son occupied the remaining four rooms. Thus, by the early modern period it was possible for a son to marry before he entered into possession of his inheritance. Nevertheless, he married late in life, so that the three generation phase in the developmental cycle of the family was on average only 3.5 years and the generation interval rather long, thirty years. This brings us to the question of child portions.

When a man died leaving minors, he usually stipulated that his children should receive their portions when they were 16, 18 or 21 or when they married. However, if one turns to the wills of older men and of widows, one finds that children in their late twenties had still not received their portions and that the heir inherited the obligation to provide them. So the long generation interval did not necessarily mean that a man had thirty years in which to accumulate the savings from which he could endow his children. The first few years would be spent paying off his siblings. The total amount to be raised and paid depended on his father's attitude towards the competing interests of his children as individuals, against those of the family inheritance.

In areas of land shortage the equal division of land among all sons could rapidly lead to the subdivision of family holdings until the minimum viable unit had been reached, beyond

which it would be economically suicidal to sub-divide. Younger sons could be expected to accept this as reasonable. But it does not follow that, because the land could not be divided among all the children, movables likewise could not be divided. We learn from the wills that the son who received the land did not receive the livestock and gear, these went to the remaining children. The heir could then either buy out his brothers and sisters, or could continue to support them on the tenement in return for the use of the livestock and the gear, at any rate for the first few years. In 1536 for example, Robert Smyth, who had only half a virgate and goods worth £13, left the land to his wife and eldest son and his goods to the other son and his daughters with the injunction, 'I will that my chyldren shall remain togyder in my house and live of my stok to the youngest be 16 years old'. In 1543, Thomas Stevenson of Smeeton, having made a similar division concluded, 'If any of my children depart or be married, their part shall be parted among the others'. We have already seen how, when William Smith sold his land, he instructed his executors to divide the proceeds evenly between sons and daughters alike, giving £5 extra to the youngest. These examples could be matched by many others and serve to illustrate one method of meeting the obligation to supply for many children without sub-dividing the land itself. In the days when most families in Kibworth held only half a virgate, this was probably the most common method of dividing the family inheritance. Seen in this light the sharp legal distinction between monogeniture and partible inheritance becomes somewhat blurred. (Gavelkind, incidentally,

does not mean strictly equal division among sons, or joint tenure. If there was only enough land for one son, then only one son could inherit. The sixteenth-century lawyers were probably correct when they derived gavel from gavella the Latin for gweli which was the Welsh family holding of four generations, the Irish gabhail and the Yorkshire and Scottish cavel likewise meaning hereditary, family land. Such land was divided equally when possible but not beyond the limits of common sense.[1])

It is possible in the case of a small number of Kibworth families to examine in detail the relation between the size of the holding, the value of the movable goods and the value of the legacies over a number of generations, to which one can add further refinements such as the effect, if any, of current market prices on the value of legacies. Such an exercise can hardly be described as a short cut, however, and only one sample has been worked through, for the Carter family as follows.

One branch of the Carter family held two and a half virgates of land from 1603-70, they then sub-divided it among three sons. At the same time they may have leased three virgates from William Sheffield which had belonged to another branch of the Carters throughout the previous sixteenth century. Wills and inventories survive for 1603, 1641, 1670, 1690, 1697, 1707, 1709, 1718. The following chart shows the value of the movables as appraised for probate at these dates, against which is plotted the total value of the legacies to children at the same date. From 1603-41 the family invested heavily in cattle

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1 Elton and Mackay op. cit. pp.2-4.
R. A. Butlin,'Northumberland Field Systems' Ag. H. R. XII (1964), p.107.

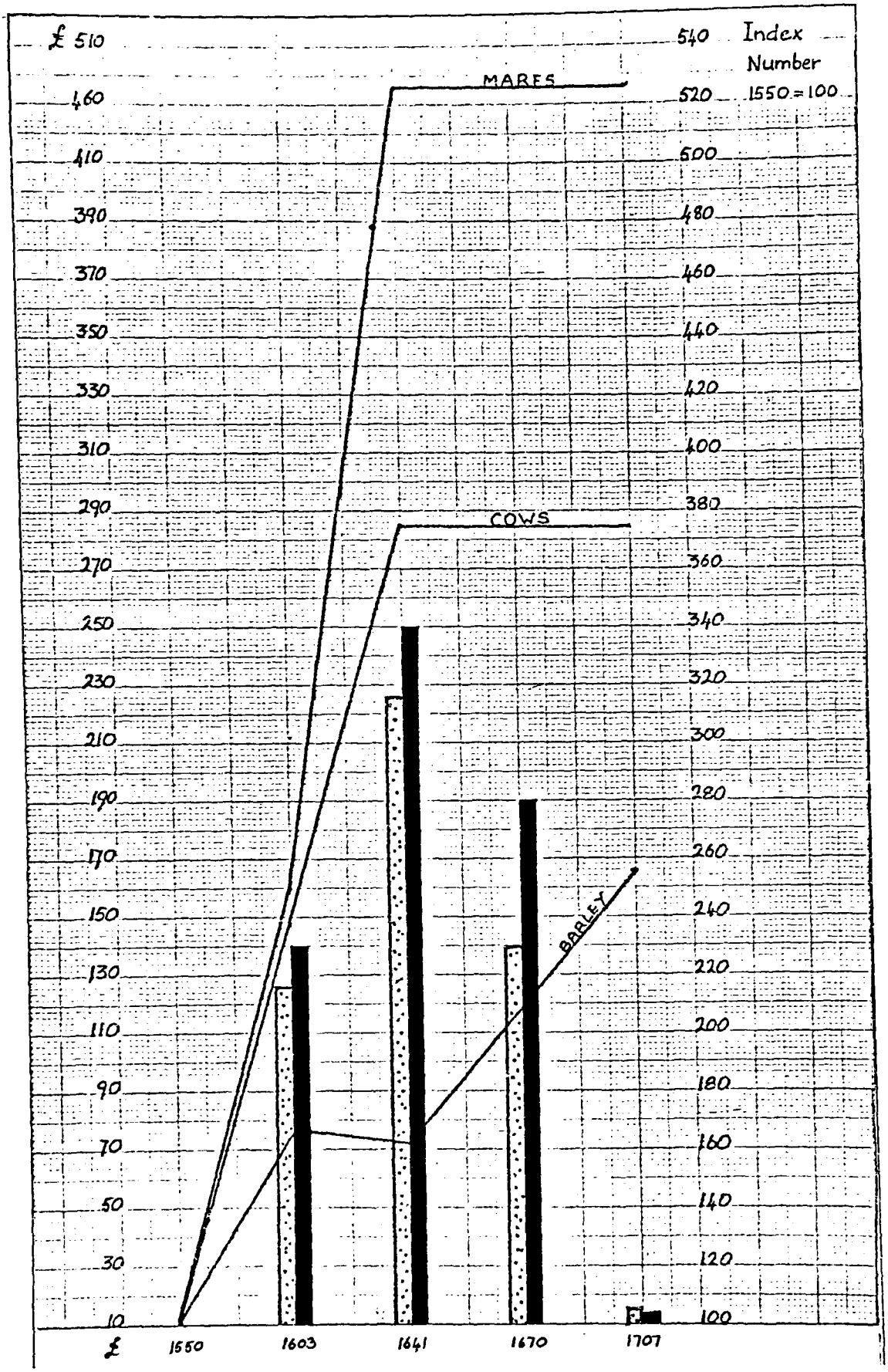


Figure 41 : Carter Family: Table to show their cash legacies ▬ compared with the value of their inventories ▭ on 2½ virgates.

and horses, but always kept some 35 acres under the plough. Therefore, the market prices for mares and for barley at these dates have been added, these are Leicestershire prices derived from inventories covering the whole county.

Figure 41 shows a steep decline in the family fortune after 1641. No reason is given, of course, but one can hazard the guess that the Civil War had something to do with it. The battle of Naseby was fought only a few miles to the south-west and tradition has it that Cromwell spent the night after the battle at Kibworth Beauchamp. Goodman Carter's cattle and particularly his mares would have been very much at risk. We shall never know, but his story may have read like the following for Mr. Abberley of Stafford. 'Whereas Mr. Stafford had eleven cows taken from him by the enemy it is ordered that he shall have two heifers and a white cow remaining in the Committee's hands and one other which was taken away yesternight if she can be found, if the right owner of the cow have not the same'.[1] With livestock prices continuing very high it would be difficult to replace losses. In spite of this decline in fortune, William Carter, when he died in 1670, left legacies which far exceeded his income and were more generous than his father's had been thirty years before when the family fortune was at its height. The result was disaster. Unable to meet his commitments, the elder brother divided the land among the claimants. Robert mortgaged his share for £172 and lost it, but the remaining brothers farmed the land jointly and only one married. The family survived as smallholders and carpenters

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1 D.H. Pennington and I.A. Roots ed., The Committee at Stafford 1643-44 (Oxford 1957), p.182.

until the twentieth century.

A simpler method, better suited for general surveys and regional comparisons is to work through the wills and inventories for a given parish (if one works parish by parish one can be sure that at least within the parish the value put upon goods in the inventory is consistent, since the appraisers were drawn from the same group of men) noting the nature and value of the legacy left to each son and daughter. This method deals only with the portions of younger and unmarried children but yields quickly a large sample.

I have used this method for the parish of Kibworth in order to plot the changeover from legacies in kind to legacies in cash. The figures also allowed me to chart the rise in the value of cash legacies and to compare this with the movement of prices in the Leicestershire area.

The accompanying figures, 42 and 43, allow one to make the following observations. Legacies in cash indicate a period of saving, of cash surpluses. They are worth more than a legacy in kind. For example, most cash legacies between 1520-60 were to the value of £5 per child. A plough throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was valued between five and ten shillings and a cart was worth between five and twenty shillings, averaging at about 12s.0d. The price of livestock rose sharply in the second half of the sixteenth century, from a minimum of 13s.4d in 1550 to a maximum of 45s.0d for a cow in 1600. In the same period the price of an ox went up from £1 to £ 3 13s.4d and of a mare from 13s.4d to 33s.4d. Prices continued to rise steeply until the Civil War, by which date mares fetched £3-£4, cows £2-£3 and oxen £5. Prices remained at this high

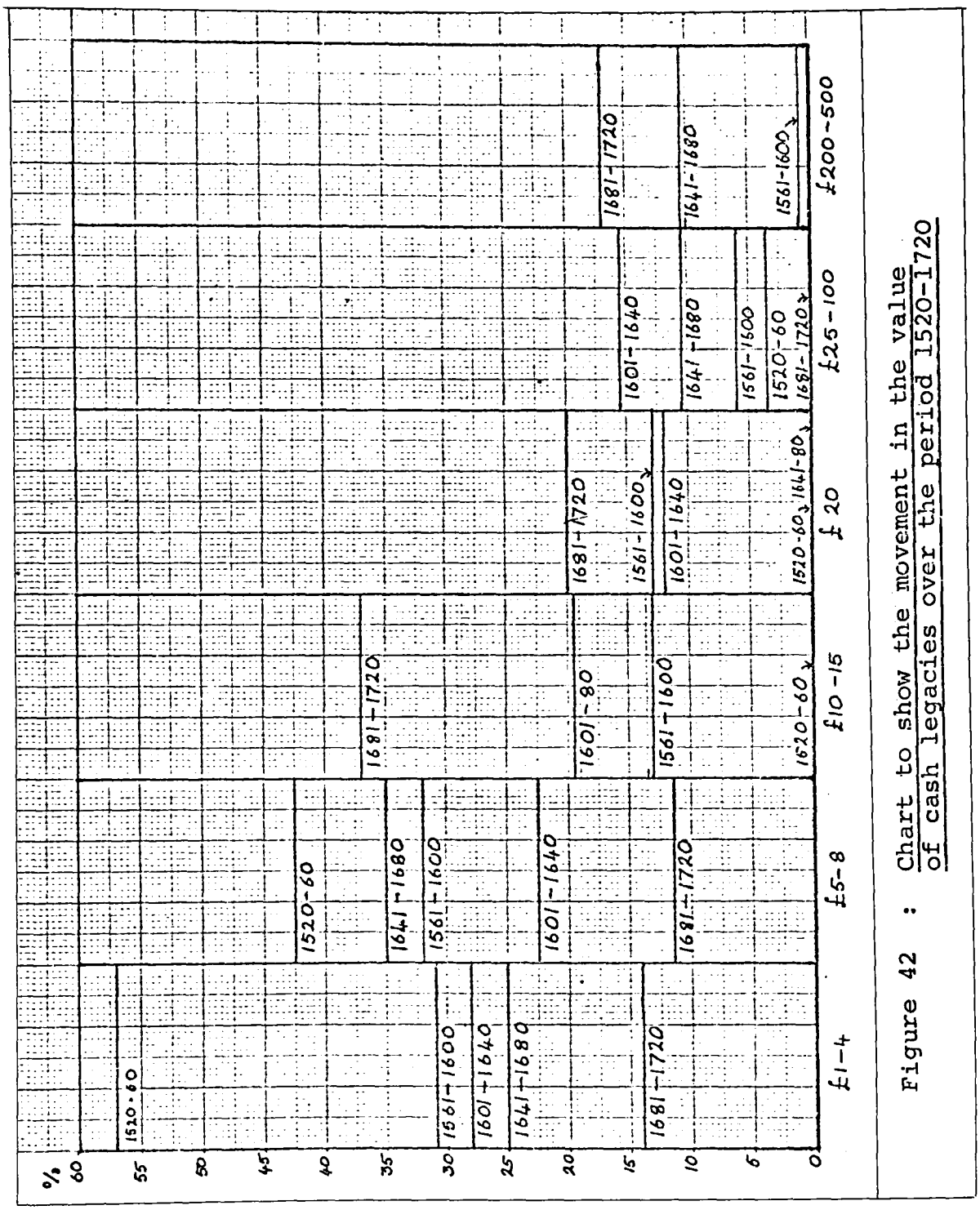


Figure 42 : Chart to show the movement in the value of cash legacies over the period 1520-1720

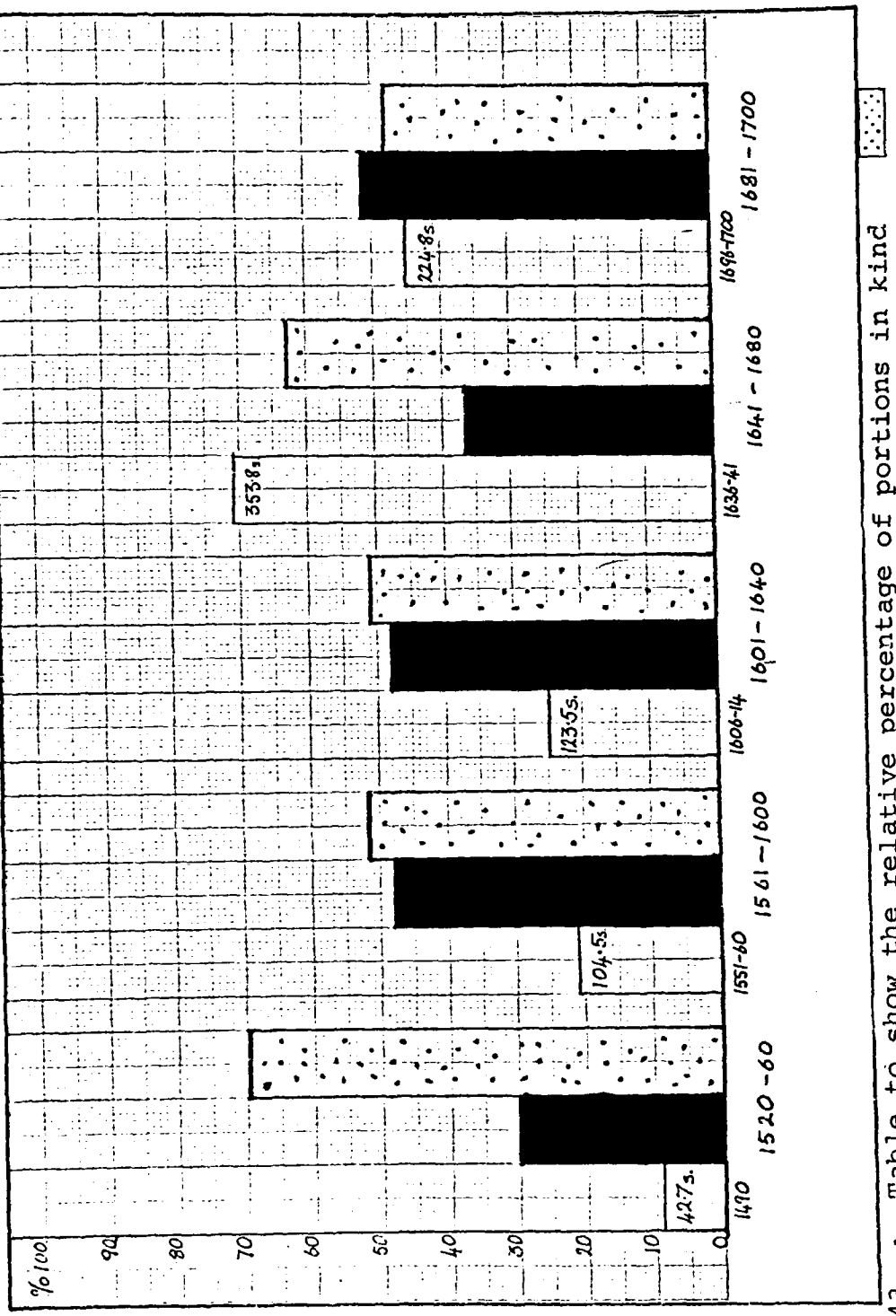


Figure 43 : Table to show the relative percentage of portions in kind to portions in cash.

Cash surplus per virgate per annum (showing the savings potential at each period, in shillings) is shown in the left hand column.

plateau until the close of the century.[1] But cash legacies kept ahead. When a cow was worth 45s.0d only 16% of legacies were worth less than £5 and 31.5% were worth between £10-£20. In other words, when a father left his son a cash legacy, he was not leaving him the equivalent in cash for a cow and a cart, he was leaving him much more, and moreover the cow and the cart remained on the holding to the benefit of the heir. Therefore, a large number of legacies purely in cash indicates a period of profitable farming for the husbandman and yeoman. A large number of mixed legacies, of kind supplemented by cash, indicates more uncertain conditions. For example, the number of portions in kind was high before 1560, dropped to 50% in the period 1560-1640, rose during the interregnum and fell to below 50% by 1700. Those who continued to make legacies in kind represented the hard core of smallholders who could never hope to save as much as £10 to endow two sons. As prices rose, the number of legacies in kind rose among the very small holders, as prices fell so the value of cash legacies increased.

Thus the hard core of small property holders is conveniently clearly revealed during the period of high agricultural prices after 1636. They persist in leaving legacies in kind and are joined by those who had latterly been leaving £10 -£20 to their children. By contrast, the larger property holders can be seen leaving truly handsome sums to their offspring, from £25-£500 in the parish of Kibworth. The parting of the way between husbandman and yeoman can be seen taking place,

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1 Prices taken from the Leicestershire inventories.

the one to remain the humble villager, the other to become the local squire. Thus Parker, the half-virgater of the fourteenth century, the 'good nebur' and appraiser of wills of the sixteenth, became the 'gentleman' at the Old House by 1679. Robert Lount, whose father's goods were worth £22 in 1627 was worth £274 in 1709 and left £300 to one grand-daughter, £200 each to his other two grand-daughters and £400 to the fourth. He still ran the farm personally, but his sons-in-law did not.

Younger sons left home with up to £20 apiece; trade, the professions, the universities, lay open to them. If the matriculation lists of Brasenose College, Oxford, or, the school for Puritans, St. John's College, Cambridge, are reliable indicators, then these sons of yeomen, farmers and men of '_mediocris fortunae_' were not slow to take advantage of the opportunities thus opened to them.[1] Kibworth boys went to Kibworth Grammar School, founded in the fifteenth century, and then to St. John's, Cambridge.[2] There was always an educated curate resident in the parish, even in the fourteenth century, and by the seventeenth century they had a 'schoolmaster' and, in addition, a nonconformist school, presided over in the eighteenth century by Philip Doddridge and by Dr. John Aiken, the friend and biographer of John Howard. Other sons went into trade and commerce, and the village had strong links with

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1 L. Stone, 'The Educational Revolution in England 1560-1640', _P & P. 28 (1964)_, 41-81.
J. Simon, 'The Social Origins of Cambridge Students 1603-1640' _P & P. 26 (1963)_, 58-67, 73.
L. Stone and A. Everitt, 'Social Mobility in England 1500-1700' _P & P. 33 (1966)_, 16-55.
M. Spufford, 'The Schooling of the Peasantry in Cambrdigeshire' _Land, Church and People_, J. Thirsk ed. (Reading 1970), pp. 112-149.

2 B. Elliott, _A History of Kibworth Grammar School_ (Market Harborough 1957).

Market Harborough, Leicester, Northampton and London. It was spawning a middle class, and itself became a comfortable closed village ruled over by the Rays and the Parkers, who had made their way in the legal profession, and Haymes and Fox, who owed their prosperity to successful farming. Some of the other old families were less well off, but their sons inherited the skilled crafts of their fathers, and when they left home they took with them these skills. They were willing recruits for industry but they were not 'raw' recruits.

The effect of this shift from legacies in kind to legacies in cash, not only ensured the continuance of large farms but stimulated long-term improvements in agricultural practices, and provided the motivation for commercial, rather than subsistence, farming. Grassland management was brought to a fine art in south-east Leicestershire, so that it became one of the best fatting pastures in England, without, incidentally, finding it necessary to abandon open field farming.[1]

It affected the quality of the migrants who left this area of impartible inheritance once in every generation. They were not recruits for the industrial proletariat, they swelled the ranks of the emerging English middle class.[2] This is an importnnt qualification of the formula; primogeniture generates long distance migrants who will provide the raw recruits for industry. Very small holdings will send out penniless and unskilled sons,

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1 R. M. Auty, Part 57: Leicestershire, in The Land of Britain. D. Stamp ed. (London 1937), pp.254-7.

2 Habbakuk op. cit. Jl.Ec.H. 1955.
A. Redford, Labour Migration in England (Manchester 1927).

but large holdings and small craft businesses will send out educated or skilled sons to join the professional and managerial sector. From the wills we can learn the average size of money portion received by younger sons in a particular region, and this will probably give us a more reliable indicator to the pattern and quality of migration than the type of inheritance custom alone. So long as sons received equal portions in kind, the difference between partible and impartible inheritance was not very great, but once the shift had been made to cash portions, areas of primogeniture tended to become associated with large farms and large portions, areas of partible inheritance with dual economies, smaller or poorer farms and small portions. The migrants from the former joined the middle class, those from the latter joined the vagabond class of the pre-industrial era, for whom there was seldom sufficient employment, and the labour reserve for industry, once the industrial revolution had got under way.

To sum up: so long as land remained the sole source of family income, it was regarded as family property and was expected to support all adult members, either by supplying each with a share of land, or by supporting one nuclear family and a number of celibate adults. This led to accepted minimum-size holdings and the characteristic medieval pattern of uniform holdings in any given region; in one parish all the standard half virgate holdings will be 12 acres, in another they will all be 24, the agreed minimum which younger sons would not challenge. The sudden drop in population after the plagues made possible an increase in the size of holdings and provided the opportunity to generate cash savings. Cash savings enabled the new large holdings to be preserved, and furthermore rendered it

unnecessary for adult kinsmen to be maintained on the holding. They took their portion and left, thus initiating a landless, migratory sector in society, which had not existed, on an appreciable scale, in the middle ages. Since they had received their portion they did not return, and the kin-group shrank to the three generation nuclear family. This is true of England, it is not true of France, or of any area where child portions continued in kind, bringing children back at regular intervals to collect their sack of potatoes or to claim maintenance. The nature and value of child portions is, I would suggest, as vital to our understanding of rural society and economy as the type of inheritance custom governing the distribution of land among heirs.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapters the effect of the fourteenth century plagues and sixteenth century inflation upon the social and economic equilibrium of a village in S. E. Leicestershire has been studied in some detail, and has led to certain observations which, if valid for a wider region, would go far towards explaining aspects of social and economic development which characterised the whole of rural England. For example, at Kibworth the plagues made possible the expansion in the size of peasant holdings and a reduction in the size of peasant households; peasant savings became possible and from this followed a significant rise in the standard of living and in the expectations of younger sons which was not reversed in the sixteenth century. The result was the disappearance of the standard medieval subsistence tenement and the emergence of the market-orientated freehold or leasehold farm. Was this development peculiar to S. E. Leicestershire or did it extend to the Midlands generally and to other areas dependant exclusively upon agricultural output alone? Without some attempt at comparative analysis it is not possible to give a fully satisfactory evaluation of the Kibworth material.

If the new style Victoria County Histories were anywhere near completion, such a comparative study would not present too great a problem and no doubt several regional studies would have already been made. In the absence of such material, however, it is not possible within the scope of this present thesis to make a thorough comparison and the best that could be

attempted in the time allotted was to take soundings, as it were, in two Midland counties which might be expected to share many features such as soil type, accessibility to markets, and seigneurial estate policy with Kibworth Harcourt while being known to differ in population density and in the degree of Danish influence. The two studies which follow below, namely, of Ploughley Hundred in North Oxfordshire and of the Gloucestershire estates of the Abbey of St. Peter, Gloucester, are not the result of careful selection from a wide range of possibilities, quite the reverse, they are the first two feasible studies which emerged from many fruitless hours of search. They have, however, yielded useful results.

Ploughley Hundred, centred upon Bicester in North Oxfordshire, reaches northwards from the gravelly clays of Islip and Launton up over the cornbrash to the limestone uplands of Middleton Stoney and Stoke Lyne.[1] Thus it shares with Kibworth the relatively dense population and small tenements of its clay belt, and with Gloucestershire the sparse population and larger holdings of its limestone belt. Like Kibworth, and indeed most of the Gloucester Abbey estates, it was served by road transport rather than by water, but it enjoyed a potentially better grain outlet than Kibworth had it wished to take advantage of this.

In addition to being topographically suitable for comparative purposes, Ploughley was chosen because the editors of the Victoria County History, Volume Six, made a point of

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1 V.C.H. Oxon VI Ploughley Hundred ed. M.D. Lobel (C.U.P. 1959).

noting the size of the virgate for a number of parishes, a detail to which attention is seldom given, but is in fact vital. In addition, the Hundred Rolls describe the holdings of villeins and cottagers in these parishes in considerable detail. Villein tenants of the meaner sort were for the most part omitted from those Leicestershire Rolls which have survived and the attempts of the compilers to list mesne tenants and their lands were widely inaccurate for Kibworth Harcourt. The Hundred Rolls were not used, therefore, for Kibworth Harcourt but they do provide a useful and, I think, reliable source for Ploughley Hundred, in so far as villein tenants are concerned, though with regard to mesne tenants Miss Barbara Harvey, commenting on Launton parish, describes the Rolls as 'manifestly inaccurate when compared with contemporary minister's accounts',[1] a verdict which is confirmed by other scholars working on the Hundred. I have, therefore, accepted as tolerably accurate the total number of virgaters, half-virgaters and cottars per parish in Ploughley Hundred while disregarding the attempts made by the compilers of the rolls to allocate occupiers and their holdings to particular mesne tenants, many of whom, to judge by the Leicestershire Rolls, had been long since deceased or were but temporary receivers of rents.

Finally, by taking an area for which the basic research had already been done, it was possible to follow through the development of each parish from 1279 to enclosure, giving particular attention to the size of holdings, the adaptation to commercial farming and the general rise in prosperity of the

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1 V.C.H. Oxon VI op. cit. p.237.

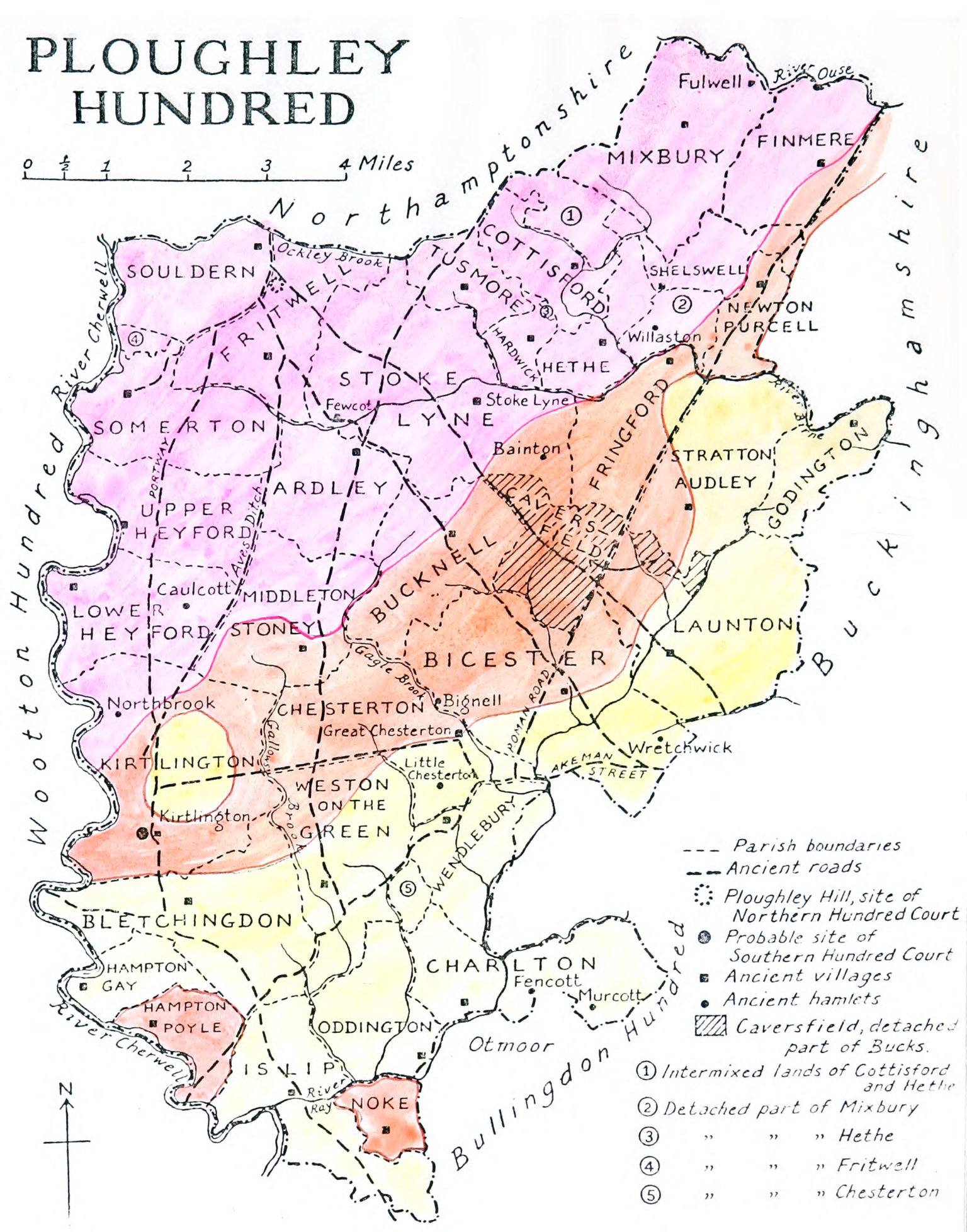
region. Unfortunately, the number of surviving inventories per parish is too small to allow the close analysis of upwardly mobile families such as was possible for Kibworth; there were rarely two inventories for the same family. Nor can the excellent edition and analysis of Oxfordshire wills made by Micahel Havinden be used, since Ploughley was relatively so much poorer than the Thames parishes.[1]

The accompanying maps and tables (Figures 44 and 45), show the division of Ploughley Hundred into two well-defined areas in 1279. On the limestone the full virgate was the normal holding, ranging from 20 to 40 field acres. These parishes were large, endowed with uncultivated areas of woodland or heath, and associated with standard eight-virgate demesnes, though on some there was only a four-virgate demesne or none at all, there being in the latter case a correspondingly larger number of free tenants. The eight-virgate demesnes tended to specialise in sheep and to employ cottars holding six to eleven acres each as demesne labourers. New tenements created out of waste land were full virgate holdings.

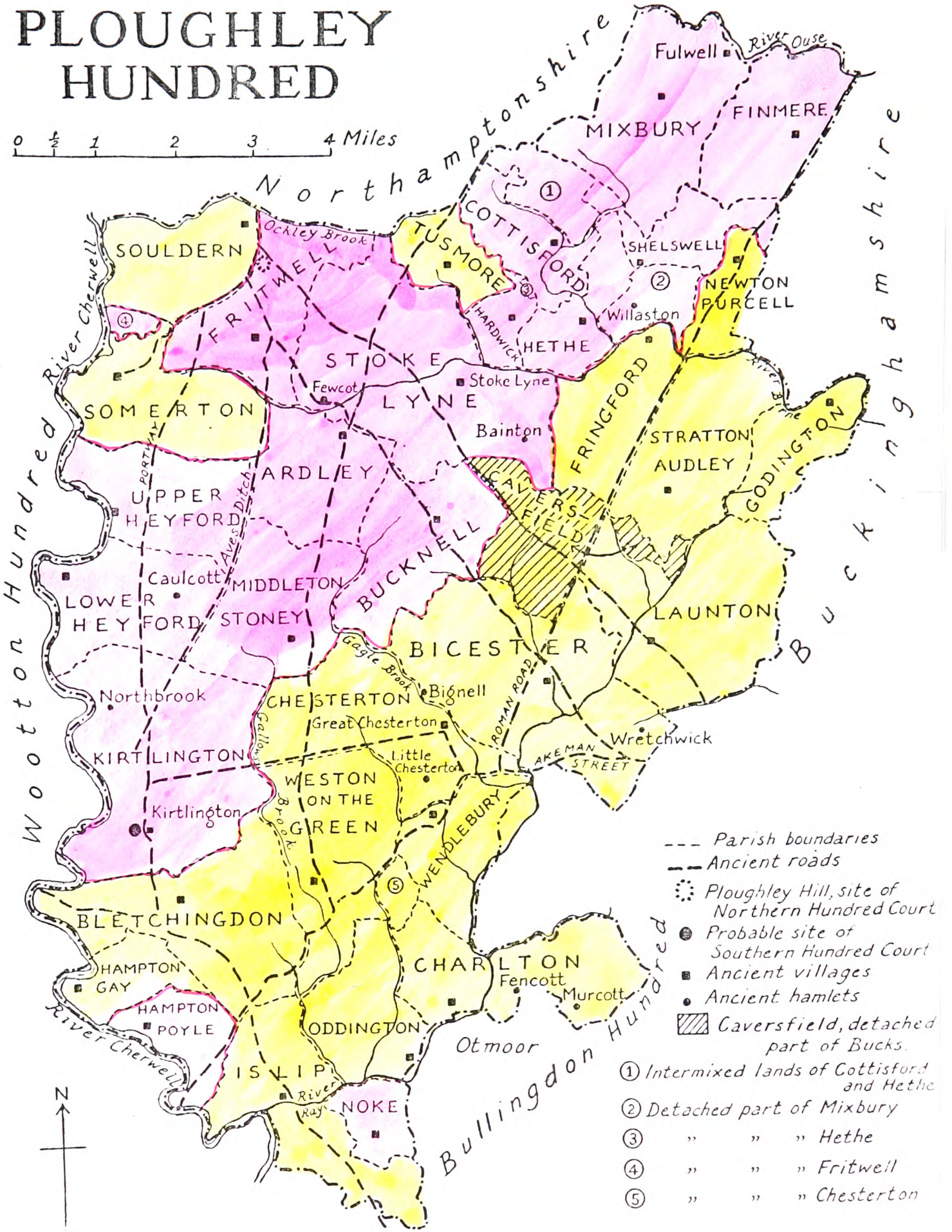
By contrast, the clay belt was characterised by half-virgate holdings, and the parishes, though equally well endowed with woodland and moor, were frequently associated with exceptionally large demesnes of 12 to 20 virgates, and with the religious houses of Westminster, Oseney and Ware which tended to favour labour services and an income in kind rather than in cash. The late colonies of Charlton, Fencott, Murcott, Noke and Oddington, on islands of cornbrash surrounded by uninviting

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1 M.A. Havinden, 'The Rural Economy of Oxfordshire 1580-1730' (Oxford B.Litt. thesis 1961). Also Household and Farm Inventories in Oxfordshire 1550-1590. Oxfordshire Record Society. xliv (1965).



Map 44 : To illustrate the pronounced division of the Hundred between limestone and Oxford clay , separated by a narrow belt of cornbrash



Map 45 : Parishes in which half-virgates were rare

Parishes in which half-virgates were common

Figure 44 : Ploughley Hundred, Oxfordshire, in 1279
Parishes in which half-virgates were rare

Parish	Virgates	Half-virgates	Cottages	Demesne	Tenant of Manor	Natural Resources
Bucknell	13	0	4	8v.	D'amory	Wooded
Saxenton	9	0	0	4v.	D'amory	Wooded
Mixbury	37	0	11)	12v.	D'amory + Oseney?	
Willaston	16	2	1)			
Stoke Lyne	6	1	6	0v.	De Lisle	Large, well wooded
" "	2	2	11	0v.	De Cokeville	12c. Fewcot assarted
" "	8	0	0	13v.	Bainton manor	12c. Fewcot assarted
Fritwell	14	0	3	8v.	De Lisle	Very large and no ham-
"	14	0	2	8v.	Ormonde	lets
Newton Purcell	4	0	0	3v.	FitzNiel	Moorland
Shelswell	13	0	0	8v.	Purcel	Demesne leased to ten-
Noke	4+2 free	1 free	6+1free	3v.	Westminster	ants Wooded
Caulcott	33	0	0	12v.	De la Mare	Assart
(Lower Heyford) Upper Heyford	31	0	0	20v.	Redvers	12c. Assarting.
Kirtlington	14	9	1	small park	Basset	Wooded. Assarting
Ardley	9	0	0	4v.	Fitz Wyth	Heath and Moor
Cottisford	13	2	5	0v.	Bec.	Heath and Fen.
Finmere	29	0	0	0v.	De Turi & De Broke	Underdeveloped 1086, Shrinking 1338.
Hampton Poyle	15	0	7	8v.	De la Poyle	Mainly sheep.
Hardwick	8+2	0	0	8v.	D'Aundeley	Pasture.1086 underdev.
Hethe	27	0	2-7	12v.	Verdun	1086. Underdeveloped
Middleton Stoney	27	0	0	0v.	Camvill.	Well wooded.
Little Chesterton	8	0	0	0v.	de Chesterton.	

Size of virgates : Lower Heyford 20 field acres, Cottisford 20 field acres, Middleton Stoney 40 field acres

Figure 45 : Ploughley Hundred, Oxfordshire in 1279
Parishes in which half-virgates were common

Parish	Virgates	Half-virgates	Cottages	Demesne	Tenant of Manor	Natural Resources
Islip	1	32	0	20v.	Westminster	Wooded, 13c. Assarting
" 1391	9 leaseholders	12	15 (+ other land)	Ov.	Westminster	
Launton	?	?14	?	12v.	Westminster (Total 64 Nativi).	
Fencott	1 (free)	27+3	5	?	Westminster	Wood & Marsh
Charlton	0	26	2	8v.	Ware Priory	Wood & pasture
" 1086	15 villani	11 bord'	2 servi	16v.	Roger d'Ivry	
Murcott, 1390	1	18	5	?	Westminster	13c. Newbreche
Weston on Green	19	16	10 (½v each)	20+park	Oseney	
Stratton Audley	6 (+4 w. ¾v ea)	28	8	12v.	Redvers	
" "	6 (¾v. each)	0	0	4½v.	Bicester Priory	
Somerton	15 (free)	26	0	16v.	Grey & Gardiner	Market Town
Souldern 1086	10 (+10 free)	15	0	12v.	de Arderne	Quarrying
" early 14c.	25 (+ 7 free)	0	16			
" 1613	5 (+ 9 free)	8	12		John Weedon	
Bletchingdon	3 + 5	2+10	0	Ov.	Damory	Wood and heath
Fringford	6	4	4	4v.	Grey	
"	6	3	4	4v.	Gardiner	
Godington	2	23	2	6v.	Camville	
Hampton Gay	6 (free ¾v. ea)	2	0	26v.	de Gay	
Tusmore	7	2	2	2v.	d'Aundely	
"	1	2	4	2v.	Fitz Guy	
Newton Purcell	0	8	7	18v.	Purcel	Moorland
Noke	2+1 free	9+3free	0	4v.	Lisle	Wooded
Oddington	3 (¾v. ea. + 1 free)	10	0	12v.	le Poure	
Wendlebury	5	8	0	17v.	St Fey & Fitz Aumary	
Great Chesterton	24	0	28	12v.	de Chesterton	Wooded, ill drained

Size of virgates: Charlton 30 acres
Fringford 15-17 acre, 24 acres in 18c.
Hampton Gay 26.5 field acres
(1 ridge = ½ acre)
Stratton Audley 29 acres
Souldern 30-40 acres
Somerton 37 acres
Chesterton 22 statute acres/39 field acres, i.e. 5/6 of stat. ac. as at Islip.

clay, owed their existence in the first three instances to the activity of Westminster Abbey and Ware Priory. Unlike their northern counterparts, newly assarted tenements were ten to twelve acre holdings, called half-virgates by their monastic lords but which would have been considered to be cottage tenements on the limestone uplands and on the monastic estates of Gloucestershire.

The characteristic half-virgate of south Ploughley closely resembled the south Leicestershire scene and one might attribute it to the heavy clay soil which both areas have in common; a soil which is heavy to work and so requires more labour but which yields a better crop than the limestone, and can therefore support a higher population level. However, one cannot also but be struck by the apparent influence of estate policy and surveillance. Hence the choice of the Gloucestershire estates of the Abbey of St. Peter, Gloucester, as a control.[1] These for the most part occupied limestone soils and should either be characterised by numerous half-virgate holdings running counter to surrounding practice, or by virgate holdings in conformity with topographical conditions but contrary to current estate policy. It was found that although the Abbey demesnes were on average larger than the Ploughley demesnes, ranging from eight to sixteen virgates, the proportion of customary land was not only correspondingly larger but the standard tenement was the virgate of 48 to 60, sometimes 80 acres, the virgate being three times as numerous as the half-

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1 Historia et Cartularium Monasterii Sancti Petri Gloucestriae III ed. W. H. Hart (Rolls series 1867) pp.37-203.

virgate. The abbey set much store by labour services and grain deliveries yet it had not created a tenemental structure at variance with surrounding practice. In other words, it was soil rather than estate policy which had determined regional differences in the size of the virgate and the standard tenement in the Saxon and Norman periods.[1] However, large acreages of cultivated land were locked up in these demesnes, and as high farming drew to a close the manner in which lords relinquished direct control over this land could exercise a decisive influence upon the future of the customary tenants. If the demesne was merely leased to a '_firmarius_' or, after the Dissolution, sold to a resident layman, the old pattern was continued; but if the demesne was leased out in virgates or fractions of a virgate among the customary tenants the effect before the Plagues was the same as that achieved by assarting, and after the plagues the double effect was to place yet more land at the disposal of the local smallholders and to create a large category of leasehold tenements which, by the Tudor period, exposed many a smallholder to rack renting and economic ruin.

With its reserve of woodland and moor, Ploughley was not as hard pressed by population growth as was Kibworth Harcourt. In taxable capacity Oxfordshire ranked second among the counties in 1334 as against Leicestershire which ranked twenty-first and Gloucestershire eighth.[2] The effect of the plagues upon the

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1 The publication of the Westminster Abbey muniments will facilitate further study on this point.

2 R.H. Schofield, 'The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England 1334-1649' _Ec.H.R. 2nd ser. xviii_ (1965), p.504.

standard of living was therefore less spectacular than at Kibworth but nevertheless the plagues caused deep disruption of the old structure. On the limestone five hamlets were abandoned and their arable was put down to pasture and shared by the surrounding parishes. Customary virgate holdings everywhere fell vacant and were either added to the customary holdings of the survivors, together with parcels of abandoned demesne land, or were incorporated into the demesne and converted to pasture for sheep. The result was a landscape of multi-virgate holdings with the occasional large demesne and a heavy concentration on sheep. These multi-virgate holdings were not subsequently sub-divided among heirs, and one can assume that their holders adopted the same principles as their Leicestershire peers and left their offspring legacies in cash rather than in land or stock. The readjustment on the clay belt took longer and was more complex. Like Merton, the religious institutions found it difficult to adapt to new conditions; they tried to continue demesne farming and when finally driven to alter their policy they tried to keep rents high. The result was much land in hand, both customary and demesne, and the eventual emergence of single rather than multi-virgate units. Many of the new tenements were composite in legal character, that is to say, they were made up of part customary and part demesne land, so that it was not clear whether they were held by hereditary tenure or by leasehold.[1] When leasehold for three lives only became obligatory on institutional properties in 1571, many of these composite holdings became assimilated to leasehold tenure and were thus

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1 V.C.H. Oxon VI pp.214, 238, 200 et passim.

rendered vulnerable to the possibility of rack-renting and eviction. At Kibworth, by contrast, only those tenements made up exclusively of demesne land became subject to limited tenure, the customary tenements, though held by twenty-one year leases in accordance with the statute, remained hereditary copyhold tenements in practice. At Bletchingdon, a D'Amory estate where there had been no demesne in 1279, the tenants continued to hold numerous small holdings but at an early date were able to enclose the parish by private agreement. At Hampton Gay and Tusmore the demesne was extended to incorporate the entire parish which was subsequently enclosed. Much land in both regions of the Hundred was enclosed by 1623.

The inventories for the Hundred do not allow firm claims to be made of increased prosperity; too few survive, nor does the vernacular architecture lend itself to precise dating. However, the tables compiled by M. Havinden, based on Oxfordshire Estate papers, reveal a median of around forty statute acres in the seventeenth century, which, in the opinion of that astute seventeenth-century estate owner and manager, Lord Brudenell, was a 'substantial' holding in a grazing area, capable of yielding a 'profitable rent'. Brudenell deliberately created thirty and fifty acre holdings on his own Leicestershire estates as is shown in Figure 47.

In short, the evidence for Ploughley Hundred, though less abundant than for Kibworth, supports the general hypothesis based on the Kibworth material, namely, that the numerous 12 and 24 to 30 acre holdings of the fourteenth-century gave way to multi-virgate holdings in the early fifteenth century, which holdings were not subsequently subdivided among children in accordance with earlier inheritance custom but were maintained

at their new level and extended when possible so that younger children could be provided with cash portions which would fit them for trade or the professions. The result was a rise in the standard of living of the husbandman and yeoman farmer and a corresponding rise in his social status. Ploughley, like Kibworth, exported much of its wealth to the towns and surrounding counties in the form of training, skill and also simple man-power. Gloucestershire, by contrast, tended to concentrate its wealth within the county.

The Gloucester Abbey estates were selected because they provide a large number of samples for the same area and for a date, 1266-67, reasonably close to the date of the Hundred Rolls which formed the basis for the study of Ploughley Hundred. The area is not, unfortunately, covered by the Victoria County History for Gloucestershire, and though much manuscript material exists for the area, time does not permit a thorough regional study. My objective has, therefore, had to be restricted to a comparison of villein wealth in Gloucestershire in 1266 compared with Kibworth Harcourt, in order to be able to indicate whether or not the sharp rise in the standard of living of the Leicestershire smallholder in the early modern period was equally striking in Gloucestershire. The rise of the cloth industry in Gloucestershire introduces an interesting variable into the development of the economy of the county, and the careful seigneurial control exercised by the Abbey provides a useful insight into the degree of influence estate policy could exercise upon the tenemental structure of a region.

Only those estates which were held by the Abbey both in 1086 and in 1266-67 were selected.[1] A comparison was then made

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1 Cartularium Sancti Petri, op. cit. p.37-203.

Figure 46 : The size of holdings on some manors in the limestone uplands of Oxon 1591-1743[1]

Manor	Date	acres 1 - 4.9	5 - 19	20- 80	Over 80	Median Farm
Ascot Doyley	1591	2	1	15	3	40 acres
Kirtlington	1591	0	1	13	4	49 & 52.5a.
Lower Heyford and Newbreach in Caldicote	1607-8	4	2	2	8	41.5 & 101.5a.
Coombe	1607-8	9	15	11	2	15.5a.
Stonesfield	1607-8	10	9	7	0	10.5a.
Wootton	1607-8	1	4	6	4	42.5a.
Shipton-u-Wychwood	1617	5	3	5	1	13.5 & 16.5a.
Spelsbury, Taston and Fulwell	1626	1	0	32	3	40a.
"	1705	0	0	25	4	40a.
Upper Heyford	1628 & 1667	0	1	2	11	120a.
Kingham	1629	0	2	16	1	40a.
Enstone	1634	5	1	9	17	100 & 120a.
"	1718	8	2	14	17	60a.
Finmere	1667	0	2	7	5	62.5 & 65a.
Souldern	1676	4	7	8	6	26a.
Ardley	1700	0	0	4	2	54 & 56.5a.
Middleton Stoney	1710	4	1	3	6	30.5 & 72.5a.
Dean	1743	1	7	8	2	35.5 & 38a.

Figure 47 : The size of holdings on the Brudenell estates in S.E. Leicestershire 1635-37[2]

	0-5	5-14	15-29	30-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	Over 70 acres
Glooston	5	4	0	1	0	1	1	1(95a.)
Slawston	2	1	1	1	0	4	2	2(81,88a.)
Othorpe	3	1	0	2	2	0	1	0
Stonton	2	0	0	3	1	2	1	1(91a.)
Cranoe	3	2	2	1	0	0	3	0
TOTALS	10	8	3	8	3	7	8	4

1 M. A. Havinden, 'The Rural Economy of Oxfordshire 1580-1730.' (Oxf. Univ. B. Litt. thesis 1961)

2 Brudenell MSS. Northants Rec. Office. ASR. 142.

Table 48 : Salient social and economic features on some Gloucester Abbey Estates 1086-1266

Manor	1086					1266				
	Demesne	Villani	Bordarii	Servi	Cust. land	Demesne	Virgates	Half-virg.	Others	Acres per virgate
Barton (Wooded)	36v.	42	21	12	80v.	King's Barton Ov. Abbot's Barton ?	0 1	6 + 3* 14 +28	4 46+18+37	44 & 64
Frocester (Wooded)	16v.	8	7	3	28v.	16v.	9	14 + 1*	29	48
Boxwell	8v.	12 (1 Radknight)	0	8	48v.	0 ?	7 + 2*	3 + 2	17	48
Coln St. Aylwin	12v.	11	7	4	48v.	in hand	7 + 5*	1	4 with 1-5a.	80
Aldesworth	12v.	21 (+2 francigenera)	5	6	60v.	20v.	26 + 1* (+3 in lords hand)	0	6	48
Buckland	12v.	22	6	8	48v.	16v.	30 + 7*	0	21	36
Hinton	8v.	30 (+1 francigenus)	7	2	56v.	12v.	30 + 6*	1	13	40
Ledene (Wooded)	8v.	8	1	4	32v.	in hand	1 + 4*	0	48	50
Duntisbourne	12v.	8	0	16	20v.	in hand	14 (+4 in lords hand)	4	3	44 or 88
Ampney	8v.	5	0	4	12v.	small	11 + 4*	1	11	48
Clifford	12v.	14 (+ 1 priest)	0	13	20v.	12v.	16	0	11	36
(Wimcote)	?	3	0	0	2v.	2v. ?	1	0	0	36
						TOTAL VIRGATES	189	32		
TOTAL PERSONS		189	54	80			211	82	277	
			134				293			
		323					570			

* held jointly

between the size of the demesne in 1086 and in 1266; the number of villani and customary tenants; the number of bordarii and servi with the various groups of cottager and twelve acre holders; and lastly the amount of villein land in 1086 and in 1266. Freeholders were omitted, but it should be noted that they were numerous by 1266 and allowance must be made for their presence when estimating population growth and the size of holdings. Table 48 shows definite growth in the villein population especially among those groups with less than 12 acres. A detailed study was then made of the 1266 extents in order to discover how these extra persons were provided with a means of livelihood. This work was facilitated by the Abbey practice of noting the number of acres in the virgate on each of its manors.

Many of the parishes were well wooded and new land for both lord and tenant was cleared and brought under cultivation during this two-hundred year period, notably at Abbot's Barton, Frocester and Ledene. But this simple solution was not always possible. By 1266 the 189 villani of 1086 had increased to 211 virgaters and 82 half-virgaters, many holding jointly. The full virgate was still the most common holding. (There were indeed some half-virgates in 1086, at Abbot's Barton for example, just as there were half-virgates at Souldern in Ploughley Hundred, another small township, but they were rare.) How were 64 half-virgates provided out of customary land without reducing the number of full virgates? The information on acreages supplied by the extents provides a possible answer. First, let it be noted that no half-virgater held less than

24 acres, therefore, there can be no confusion between the half-virgater and the cottager as is possible in Ploughley where a 12 acre holder is called a half-virgater on some manors, a cottager on others.[1] The acreage of the Abbey virgate was reckoned in multiples of twelve, some were 60 acres, others 48 and occasionally 36, the last being found, when it occurred, on manors where most virgates were of 48 acres. At Hinton, and Duntisbourne, the figures suggest that the 60 acre virgate was reduced to 48 acres, and in Buckland to 36 acres. On these and other manors such as Ledene, Coln, Buckland, Hinton and Ampney a number of virgates were held jointly by two tenants in 1266 but there were still no half-virgates, and finally, as at Frocester and Boxwell, virgates were divided to form 24 acre tenements. It is easy to understand how 12 acres could be added to every virgate through the process of assarting new land or leasing parcels of the demesne, but the process by which each virgate could be reduced by 12 acres in order to create more customary tenements equal in size to old tenements raises intriguing questions. Did the reorganisation take place at the fiat of the Abbey, or through agreement in a village assembly, or by arrangement between members of the same kinship? Since the process of conversion was not complete for every manor and involved considerable complexity of redistribution, I am disinclined to think that the initiative came from the abbey or from the village assembly, supposing such an institution existed, but rather from the kin-group which was already provided with traditional procedures for the reallocation of

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1 E.g. Weston on the Green, where holders of twelve acres were called 'cottagers' in 1279.

shares. If the kin was indeed responsible, then we have a late survival in England of the practice of equal distribution of shares among heirs where land was sufficiently abundant to make this feasible. The practice had long since been abandoned in Leicestershire and was undergoing modification even in Wales by this date.[1]

The Gloucestershire material is particularly interesting in that it illustrates so clearly the process of transition from large holdings, much of the land being wood-pasture, to smaller holdings capable of supporting two households provided cultivation was extended, and finally to subdivision to form single household tenements intensively cultivated. The inroads of the Black Death and subsequent plagues were severe in Gloucestershire and no doubt eliminated many customary families on the Abbey estates as in Oxfordshire and at Kibworth. The elimination of the old families would have extinguished the old grouping of tenements and destroyed the mechanism of partition by which virgates would have been enlarged in the Yorkist period and reduced again in the sixteenth century. Tenements were enlarged in the fifteenth century and remained large, taking advantage of the flourishing cloth industry in the county to provide a market on a truly commercial scale for wool and grain.[2]

The sharp demarcation between the self-sufficient family farm of the Domesday *villanus* and the wage-dependant *bordarius*

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1 T. Charles-Edwards, *op. cit.*

2 E. M. Carus-Wilson, 'Evidences of Industrial Growth on some fifteenth-century manors' *Ec. H. R. 2nd ser. XII*, (1959).
J. de la Mann, *The Cloth Industry in the West of England 1640-1880* (Clarendon Press 1971).

and servus remained as distinct in 1266, as in 1086. The cottager shares the same culture as the self-sufficient family farmer, but if one accepts the economic definition of a peasant as one who owns or leases a self-sufficient family farm, then one cannot call a cottager a peasant and one cannot talk about stratification among the peasantry. The medieval manor is characterised by the marked and persistent regularity in the size of its peasant holdings, the notable lack of stratification, due not to economic pressures so much as to social pressures regarding the rights of heirs to land if at all possible. The cottager was not, in economic terms, a peasant, he belonged to an easily recognisable though less homogenous group. And, by contrast to the peasant group, there was marked stratification among the cottagers. A few, like the Browns at Kibworth Harcourt, were merchants, and although they held no more than an acre of land were among the most prosperous men in the parish. Others were artisans practising a dual economy of agriculture with trade or craftsmanship. A hard core were estate workers employed on the demesne as shepherds and ploughmen. In some areas a large number were retired persons, widows or younger sons working on their brother's land, and other dependants of the surrounding peasant holders. Yet others were squatters on the waste land at cross roads and on grass verges. Outsiders are seldom welcome in rural societies, and the appearance of new surnames in a village calls for an explanation. Land assarted from the village pasture or forest reserves went by right to the village land-holders, but it is possible that lords occasionally settled their share on outsiders rather than on their own villagers, especially if land was abundant or an increase in revenue urgent.

The Gloucester Abbey extents throw interesting light upon this cottager group. The service tenements of the bordarii and servi of 1086 are still discernible in 1266. A large group held 12 acre holdings and were known as ferendelli, a smaller group held six acre holdings. Either group could have been the descendants of the bordarii; five acres was the average size for a bordarius holding in 1086, but most holdings in Gloucestershire were above average in size, and the twelve acre holders could equally fit the case. On the other hand, the ferendelli quarter lands were quarters of 48 acre holdings, which would suggest a more recent origin. The lundinarii who held a curtilage only and worked on the demesne at least one day a week are almost certainly the descendants of the servi. By far the largest single group were those holding one acre only, a category very common in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, unknown in Leicestershire. Comparison of the surnames of one acre holders with the names of other landholders in the manor showed that at Abbot's Barton, and Hinton, the one acre holders were all related to other land holders, at Frocester seven were related and, of the remainder, four were women and five were men, one of whom, William Cruche, may have been a cripple. However, at Buckland only 16.6% were related to others in the village, all the rest were complete strangers and their origin and means of subsistence unknown. These one acre holders owed rent or services to the abbey, often at the bailiff's discretion, they must therefore have been occupying separate dwellings from their relatives; indeed, the extents usually specify one messuage and one acre. It would seem then that it was the custom in these parts for dependant relatives to occupy separate cottages with

land appurtenant rather than house-space as was the custom in Leicestershire. Herein lies a trap for the unwary demographer; most of the inhabitants of these holdings were elderly or were celibate and likely to remain so. The few remaining holdings varied from two to ten acres held for rent and the majority were to be found at Hardperry.

Hart's three volume edition of the Cartulary of St. Peter's Abbey, Gloucester, abounds with references to leases of both free and customary land. On some manors there was also customary land in the abbey's hand. Unfortunately, we know next to nothing about the history of disease and famine in the period before the Black Death, but the existence of customary land without heirs would suggest a high death rate in the recent past, sufficient to extinguish a number of family groups.[1] This land could be granted away by the Abbey in various forms; as free land; as rent-paying virgates or fractions of a virgate held for an annual rent; per cartam haereditarie as at Randwick and Clifford or per cartam in perpetuum as at Bloxwell; as leasehold ad terminum vitae suae tantum as at Randwick, Boxwell, Hinton and Clifford, ad terminem vitae abbatis as at Frocester; or simply ad voluntatem domini as at Randwick, Bulley, Hinton, Buckland, Hardperry and Frocester. To grant land per cartam haereditarie apparently recognised the establishment of a new hereditary line as did an ad opus transfer at Kibworth. To grant land by lease

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1 E.g. at Aldsworth and at Duntisbourne.

expressly denied hereditary right, and to grant land ad voluntatem domini safeguarded the character of the holding as customary land rather than free land, although it was not held by hereditary title but had been granted afresh by the lord and would revert to him in the event of a failure of heirs in the family newly established on it. The exact significance of the phrase is not clear, it may have implied a temporary grant subject to certain conditions or terminable if and when a more suitable tenant could be found.

Thus the additional numbers in the villages were supported by reducing the size of virgates, by joint tenancies or by partition of virgates, by woodland clearance and by the leasing of demesne and vacated customary land to village tenants. It has often been asked, how did subsistence farmers raise the money to lease land? It could be that a kin group, unable to provide a member with land from the family reserve undertook as a joint enterprise to lease land for him. Certainly, it was not leased by full virgate holders for themselves; we get no examples of that systemmatic adding of acre to acre which characterised the commercially minded large farmer of the sixteenth century. (This is not to claim that a man never held more than one holding, but that when he did, he used it to endow two or more sons instead of one.)

Unfortunately, in the absence of time or a volume of the V.C.H. covering the region, it has been impossible to carry the study forward to the Black Death and beyond. However, the principal aim of the study has been achieved, namely to discover the typical size of the subsistence holding in Gloucestershire and the degree of influence, if any, of estate policy on this norm.

It was found that the full virgate was still the standard peasant tenement, in spite of ownership by a monastic institution in the hey-day of high farming. Population growth was slowly reducing the size of the virgate and in places forcing the division of virgates into 24 acre half virgates comparable with the Kibworth full virgate. The ethos of family ownership rather than of private ownership was still strong enough to make possible the reduction in the size of a number of family virgates in order to create a holding for a landless member, and possibly to lease land for him. The plagues probably extinguished these kin groups and the territorial groupings that went with them. But the subsequent enlargement of holdings was very much less dramatic than in Leicestershire. There the normal twelve acre holding was replaced by one of 24-36 acres, in Gloucestershire men had not been accustomed to farm less than 24 acres. A suggested model for Gloucestershire in the five centuries spanning the plagues to the collapse of the cottage weaving industry would be one of large sheep farms on the wolds and grain and dairy farms in the vales together with market gardening, supporting a numerous population of cottage wage-workers in the cloth trade and its ancillary industries. The existence of the latter, together with the commercial opportunities offered by Bristol, would, one must assume, provide ample scope for the transference of farming wealth and farm produced talent to the professions and commerce, and employment for the less fortunate in local industry. The model awaits the attention of a Gloucestershire historian to confirm, modify or refute it. If proved sound, it would make an interesting

comparison with Leicestershire whose yeomen and gentlemen farmers exported much of their wealth in the form of trained lawyers, clergymen and merchants to London and other commercial centres. Gloucestershire sons had less far to go!

APPENDIX I : The dispersal of 3½ virgates of customary land among villagers c.1320

Half virgate once held by William de Reynes[1]

R. Swan	4 acres	4 rods	Medow in Kerside	1 placea
W. Heyne	½ acre			
W. Atte Cross	1 acre			
R. Ferour		1½ rods		
W. Osborne		1 rod	1 twodelrod	
A. Heyne		1 rod		
A. Sybile	½ acre		½ rod pratum	
J. Sybile		2½ rods		
S. & R. de Pek			pasture worth 4d	
J. de Reynes	1 acre	½ rod		
A. Heyne		1½ rods		
TOTAL	7 acres	12 rods	1 twodelrod, 1 rod, pasture	

Adam de Kibworth's (Sybile) half virgate once held by William de Laughton[2]

Adam de Kibworth	5½ acres pasture			
R. Peke				1 toft @ 3d
R. Swan		8½ rods +	1 twodelrod @ 5d	
R. Hildesle		1½ rods at Flaxmed' @ ¾d +	1 twodelrod	
N. Polle		1 rod @ ¼d		
A. Heyne		1 rod @ ¼d		
W. Atte Cross			1 twodelrod @ ¼d	
R. Polle			1 twodelrod @ ¼d	
M. Bonde		1¾ rods @ ⅜d		
Dom J. Godwin		¾ rod @ ¼d		
R. de P'ko			1 twodelrod	
R. Swan	½ acre			
A. Heyne		1½ rods		
TOTAL	6 acres	16 rods	5 twodelrods	1 toft

1 M.M. 6373.1 2 M.M. 6373.8, 6374.1.

APPENDIX I : continued

One virgate once held by Hugh de Harcourt @ 13s.3d p.a.[1]

R. Swan	6 acres			3s. 0d
N. Smith	3 acres		1 parva placea	1s.10d
C. Sybile		3 rods	½ messuage	1s. 9d
J. Chapman	1 acre	1 rod		5d
A. Sybile	1 acre	7½ twodelrods @ 8d each		5s. 0d = Xs.
W. Atte Cross		4 rods (= 1 acre) cum prato		5d
R. Polle		¾ rod (= 1 twodelrod)		1d
W. Osborne		¾ rod "		1d
R. Harcourt		¾ rod "		1d
J. Mann		Demesne = meadow		5d
J. Smith		6¾ rods		8d
R. de Hildesle	3 acres		meadow = 1 placea	2s. 0d
J. Harcourt		1 rod	1 parva placea	2s. 0d
TOTAL	14 acres	15¾ rods, 10½ twodelrods, 3 placea, ½ mess, pratum		17s. 9d

One messuage and 1 virgate once held by Robert Holke for 13s.4d p.a.[2]

R. Swan	15 acres		1 messuage	10s. 4d
W. Heyne		6 rods		9¾d
W. Atte Cross		6 rods		9d
R. Polle	1 acre	1 rod		3¾d
N. Polle		2¼ rods		3d
W. Osborne		1¾ rods		2¾d
J. Sybile		1¾ rods		2¼d
N. Harcourt		3 ? (= 1 twodelrod)		1d
R. Hildesle	½ acre		meadow	4d
TOTAL	16½ acres	18½ rods	1 messuage, meadow	13s.3½d

1 M.M. 6374.1 2 Ibid

Observations

1 The average arable is just under 20 acres per virgate

2 The distribution of twodelrods is uneven.

APPENDIX I : continued

In addition, the reeve in 1300 did not know who was responsible for the payment of the rent on the following parcels of land, about 4 acres in all:[1]

A. Sybile	1 rod super Colisbriggehull
R. Swan	1 rod iuxta Robert/um/ Bronn
R. Hilddesle	1 rod ad Flaxmedwe iuxta terra Ad/ame/ Sybile
A. Sybile	½ acre super Litulhull iuxta Johan/nem/ Heyn sone
N. Polle	1 rod ad Martinespoul iuxta Isabell/am/ Polle
*A. Sibile	1½ rod apud Martinespol iuxta Robert/um/ Swan
*R. Heyne	1 rod
*A. Sybile	aliam rod } super Holebrinks iuxta Isabell/am/ Polle
A. Sybile	1 twodelrod iuxta Maymoor iuxta Isabell/am/ Polle
A. Sybile	1 twodelrod subt' Nosthill iuxta Mabill/am/ Heyne
A. Sybile	1 rod inco (sic) Nosthilsike iuxta Will/elmum/ Allot
*A. Sybile	1 twodelrod iuxta Steamfordgat
R. de Reynes	alt/io/ra twodelrod iuxta eund/em/
A. Sybile	1 twodelrod Tr'umlsike iuxta Isabell/am/ Polle
*A. Sybile	1 twodelrod in Barlicroft iuxta Matild/am/ fil/ia/ Rob/erti/ de Westerby
A. Sybile	1 rod ad Carlemedwe iuxta Isabell/am/ Polle

* = William de Langton's land according to M.M. 6374.1.

1 M.M. 6373.2.

APPENDIX II : To show how land made available by the dispersal of 3½ virgates of customary land c. 1320 was reassembled into a viable half virgate holding

A. The composition of Robert Swan's land

1. Held of William de Reynes, tenant of Alan of Portsmouth;
   1 mes. plus 4 acres, 4 rods, 1 placea called Swaepit.
   Meadow in Kerside.
2. Held of William de Langton; ½ acre, 7½ rods, 1 twodelrod.
3. Held of Hugh de Harcourt; 6 acres.
4. Held of Robert Holk; 15 acres, 1 messuage.
5. Held of 'unknown tenant'; 1 rod.
6. 1 virgate quondam John Lerane, held jointly with three others.

TOTAL: 25½ acres, 12½ rods, 1 twodelrod, 2 messuages, 2 placea.

Note: Swan held no land directly of Merton. The parcels he held amount to a full virgate, or two half virgates. The arable proportion is high. In 1333[1] Robert Swan of Kibworth Harcourt was taxed 2s.2d while William Swan of Kibworth Beauchamp paid 4s.0d, the wealthiest man in the village if the tax assessors are to be trusted.

B. The composition of Adam Sybill's land

1. Land held of Hugh de Harcourt; ½ acre, 5½ rods, 5 twodelrods.
2. Land held of William de Langton; 5½ acres of pasture.
3. Land held of Hugh de Harcourt; 1 acre, 7½ twodelrods
   (6 of which were sublet).
4. Land held of William de Reynes; 2 rods, ½ rod meadow.

TOTAL: 7 acres, 7 rods, 12½ twodelrods, ½ rod meadow.

In addition the Sibiles held ¼ virgate freely, and 2 customary virgates.[2] Adam Sybile did not have a share in these customary lands.

1 P.R.O. E.179 133/2.

2 M.M. 6366, 6367, 6371.

APPENDIX III : Explicit references to by-laws at Kibworth Harcourt

(Oblique references are very common but are not included in the following list.)

Date	Roll number	Date	Roll number	Date	Roll number
1430	6421.11	1502	6439.2	1601	6447.6
1432	6421.17	1504	6439.1iii	1611	6447.2ii
1439	6424.10	1504-5	6439.1iv	1679	6448 & 6449.2
1440	6424.11	1509	6439.3 i & ii	1686	6452
1450	6426.3iii	1510	6440		
1484	6434	1511	6440.2 i & ii		
1489	6435	1521	6441		
1492	6437	1525-6	6441-2		
1497	6438.1	1531	6441.3		
1499	6438.2	1539	6442.2		
		1539*	6442.3		
		1542	6442.6-7		
		1545-6	6442.8		
		1552	6444		
		1599	6447.1		

* The first written in English

APPENDIX IV : Land values in the probate inventories

No manual of instructions for appraisors survives so we have no direct means of knowing the criterion by which appraisors put a value on an acre of land, nor do we know when they were referring to standard acres and when to measured acres.

However, the answers to these questions can be obtained indirectly. When the land values are plotted on a graph month by month and compared with the grain prices for the same months a marked correlation becomes apparent. If the land values had been based on rent or purchase value, estimates would not have varied from month to month. The variation in value cannot have been due to a variation in size only because in the first place land sown with barley is given twice the value of land sown with peas, and secondly, appraisors would not always have estimated in standard acres in June and in customary acres in December. Therefore, it is clear that the criterion for evaluating an acre was the value of the crop growing on it.

The question of the size of the acre can be met as follows. Land described as fallow is given a standard value in the inventories: 6s. 6d in the 1570's, 20s.0d in the 1610's and 1630's, and a graduated system by 1700. Land explicitly described as 'land' rather than 'acre' is always given a value very considerably less than the fallow acre. Many so-called 'acres' have the same value as these 'lands' and must in fact have been customary acres i.e. 'lands'. A standard acre once sown was worth more than a fallow standard acre but a customary sown acre was still worth less than a fallow standard acre.

One can, therefore, treat all acres worth less than a fallow acre as customary and those worth more as standard acres.

For the purpose of estimating yields per acre one can ignore the lands and concentrate upon the standard acres. If the price of barley was worth 10s.0d per quarter and the value of a standard acre in the same month was also 10s.0d then its yield must have been estimated as 1 quarter, if it had been 2 quarters its value would have been 20s.0d and so on. If the harvest was very good the price of the quarter fell, as in 1606, and therefore, the value of the acre also fell while remaining two or three times the value of the quarter. If the harvest was bad, as in 1574, the price of the quarter rose and the value of the acre also rose while remaining of less value than the quarter.

Prices per quarter had a tendency to drop sharply before harvest due to the shortage of money. The expected value of the crop is therefore best seen in June before the drop occurs. The accuracy of the appraisor's forecast in June can be checked by the level of grain prices in the following autumn.

Using the graphs prepared from inventory data the following table has been drawn up and from this the figures on pages 184-185 have been prepared.

APPENDIX IV : Some barley prices and yields 1510 - 1700
cont.d

	Price per quarter shillings	Price per acre Barley shillings	Yield per acre Barley bushels	Comment on harvest
June 1570	6	7	5.6	Very poor
May 1571	7.6	8	7.6	Very poor
June 1573	5	10	16	Good
July 1574	15	13.3d	9	Poor
April 1575	6.4	7.5d	9.37	Poor
August 1575	6	8	6.6	Very poor
May 1606	26.7	37	11.08	Very good
June 1606	11	25	18.18	Very good
June 1607	19.2	28 - 31	11.6 - 12.91	Average
June 1608	20	30 - 40	13.3 - 17.7	"
August 1608	16.6	23.3 - 30	11.23 - 14.45	"
June 1612	20	26.7	10.08	Poor
May 1614	15	26.8 - 30	14.3 - 16	Average to good
April 1636	20	28.6	11.4	Very good
August 1636	10.4	32.5	24	" "
July 1638	15.8	52.5	26.58	" "
July 1639	21	42	16	Good
June 1640	18	40	17.7	Excellent
July 1640	16	66	33	"
July 1641	12	40	26.6	Very good
August 1696	18	30.5	18.6	Good
July 1697	21.8	30	15.6	Average to good
July 1698	31	40	10.3	Poor
July 1699	22.6	40	14.14	Average
July 1700	23	47	16.3	Good

Arithmetic mean of yields for barley in:

1570-75. 8.8 bushels = 1.1 qtr
1606-14. 13.6 " = 1.7 qtr
1636-41. 25 " = 3.12 qtrs
1696-1700. 14 bushels = 1.75

} 1.92 qtrs.

APPENDIX V : Sowing rates

I Chalk soils, neutral to alkaline

Date	Area	Seed sown per acre in bushels: Barley	Peas	Authority
1208-1329	N. Wiltshire	2½-4	1½-2¾	N. Gras. Cornmarket. Appendix A
1329-1449	N. Wiltshire	4	2	N. Gras. Cornmarket. Appendix A
1310-1330	Oxfordshire	3-4	-	P. Harvey. 'Cuxham'. p.43
14c.	Wiltshire	3.18-5.11	-	J. Titow. Winchester Yields. Appendix B
1540-1650	Wiltshire	3.83-4.1	4.2	E. Kerridge. thesis p.133.
1665	Dorset	3	2	R. Lennard. Ec.H.R. IV (1932-34)
1665	E. Gloucs.	3	2	R. Lennard. Ec.H.R. IV (1932-34)

II Clay soils, neutral to acid

1299	Worcs.	4-5	2-2½	Red Book of Worcester ed. M. Hollings.
1296-97	Essex	4	2	Earldom of Cornwell Accounts. ed Midgley
1452	Cambs	4.4-5.2	4-5	J. Saltmarsh. Ec. H. III (1936) p.165
1534	Derbyshire	4	2	Fitzherbert. Husbandry. pp.10,11.
1562	Sussex*	8	-	J. Cornwell. thesis. p.118
1600-20	Leicestershire	4	-	P. Bowden. Ag. Hist. IV. p.654
1665	Devon	2½	½-1¼	R. Lennard. Ec.H.R. IV (1932-34)
1665	Cornwall	2½	½-1¼	"
1665	Yorks.	2-4	2	"
1665	Kent	3	3-4	"
1665	W. Gloucs.	3	2	"
1973	Leics.	40	64	Mr. Stops, Paddocks Farm, Kibworth Harcourt

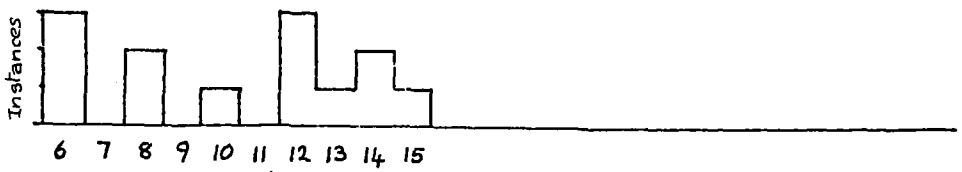
III National estimates

Late 13c.	6	2	The Anonymous Husbandry. Lamond ed. p.67.
1697	1/7 of the produce,		Gregory King ed. Cooper & Thirsk p.796.
	i.e. 2.3	1.4	17th century Ec. Docs.

* Heighton St. Clair, Light soil

Appendix 6

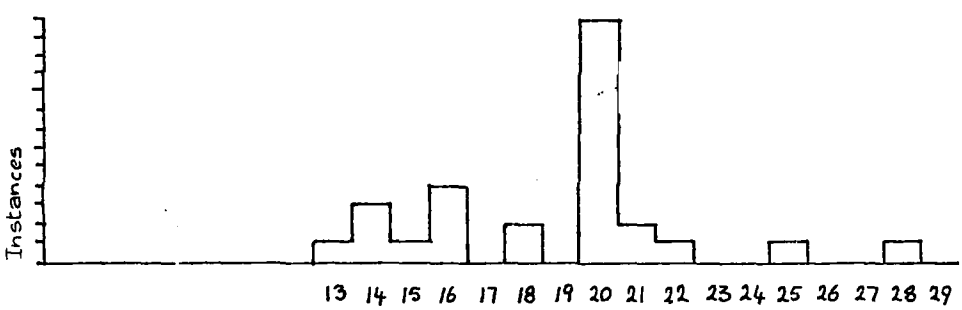
The Price of Wool per tod (28 lbs) in Leicestershire



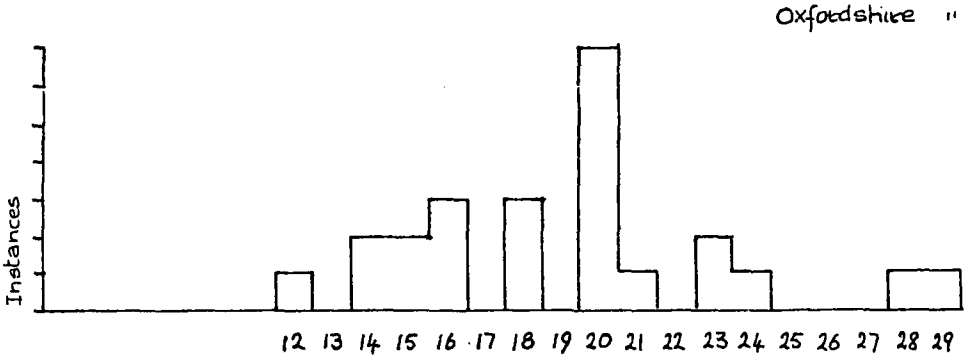
1551–60 Leicestershire average 10·46s. National average 15·8s



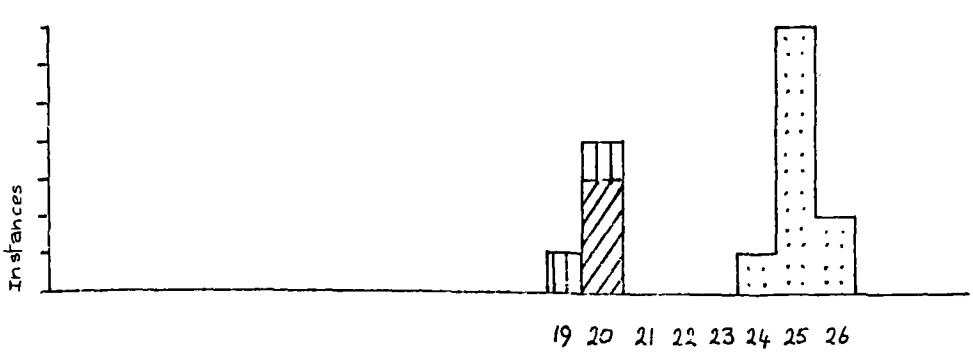
1570–75 Leicestershire average 12·41s National average 18·0s
Bowden's " 9·95s



1606–14 Leicestershire average 18·86s. National average ~
Bowden's " 14·25s.
Oxfordshire " 23·4 s.



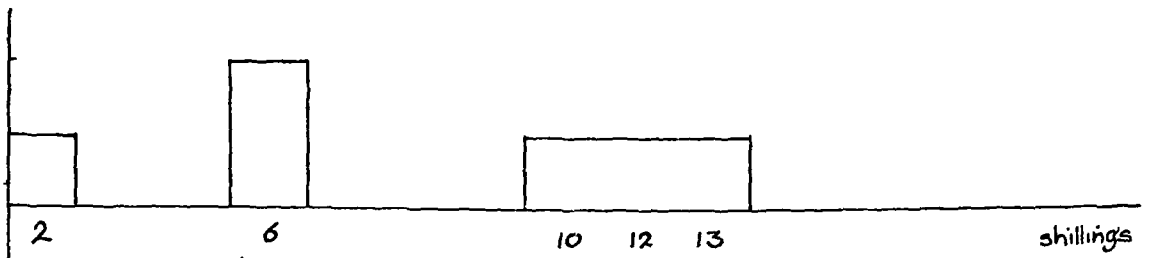
1636–41 Leicestershire average 19·17 s. National average ~
Oxfordshire " c. 24·0s.



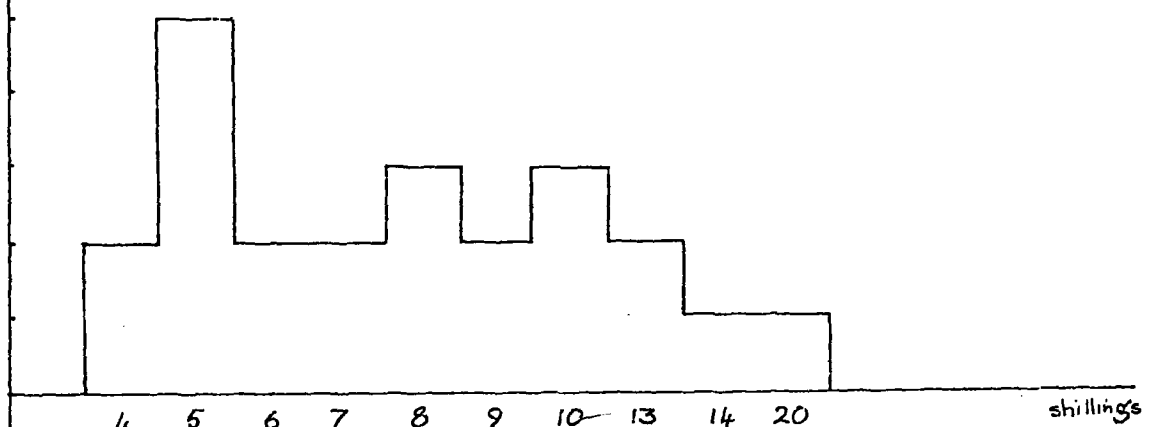
1696–1700 ☑ Leicestershire average 20·00 s. Oxfordshire 17·9s.

Appendix 6

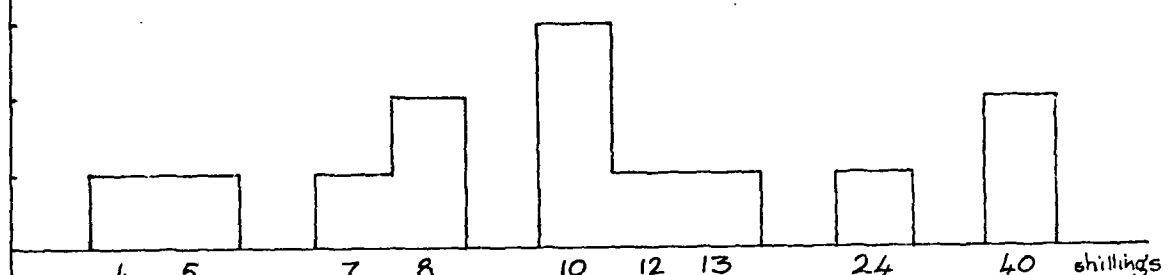
The Price of Peas per Quarter in Leicestershire.



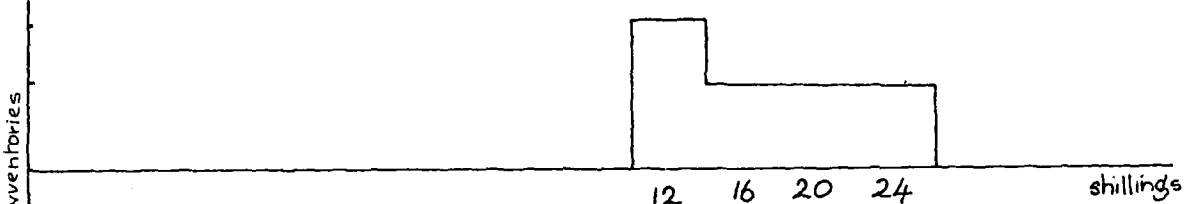
1551-60 Leicestershire average 8·17s. National Average 11·15s.



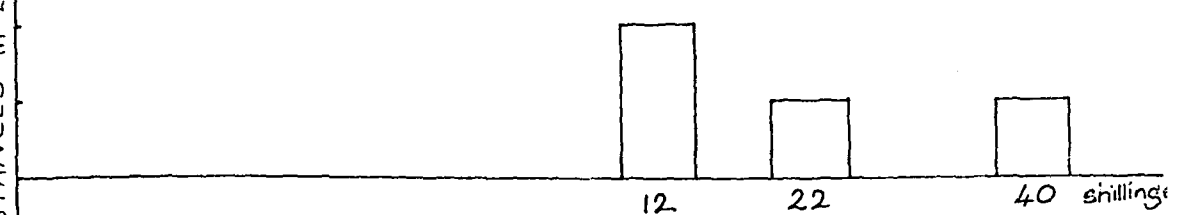
1570-75 Leicestershire average 8·65s. National Average 10·85s.



1606-14 Leicestershire average 13·3s. National Average – NONE.



1636-41 Leicestershire average 16·8s. (Pelham accounts. Average 25·3s.)

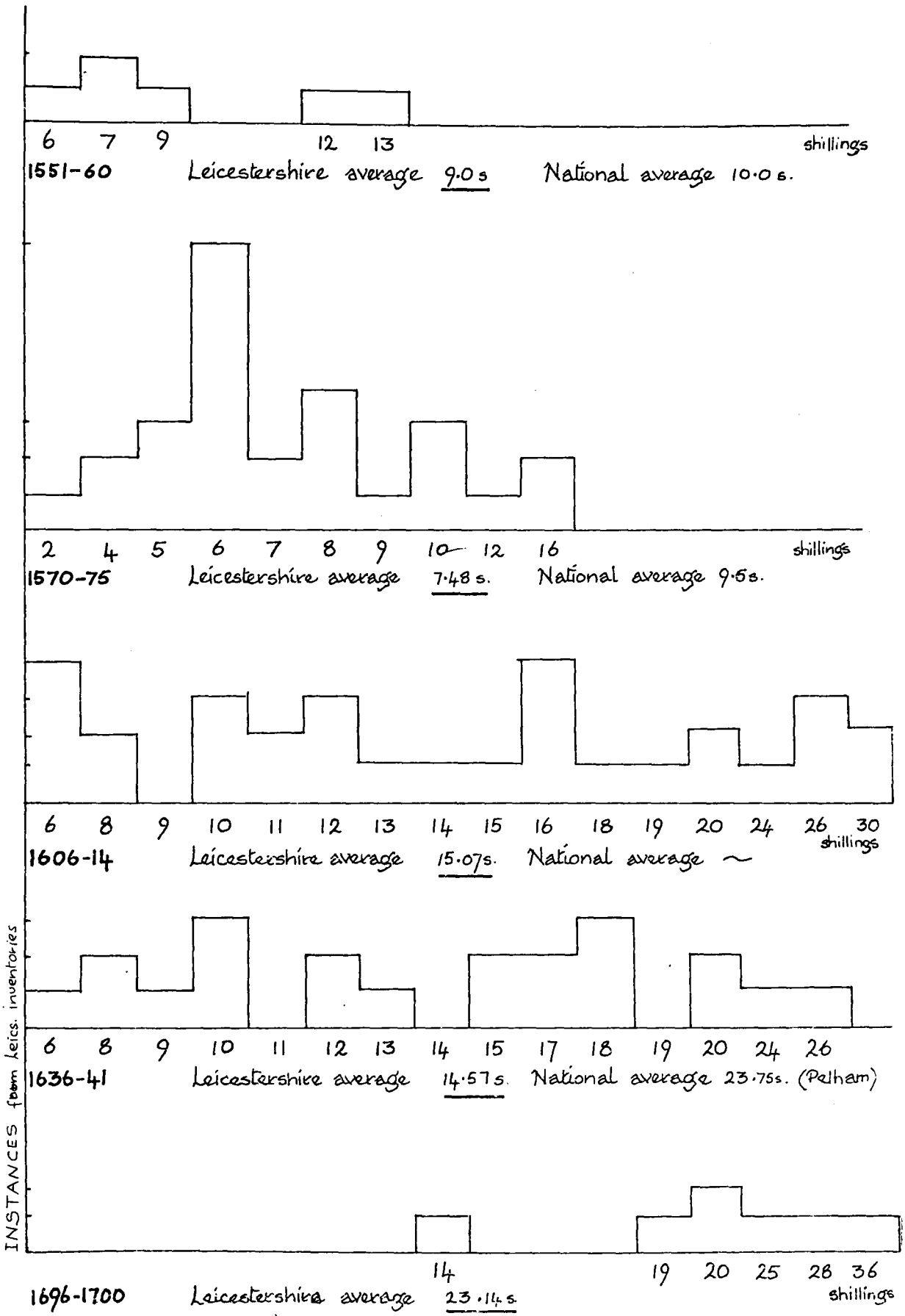


INSTANCES in LEICS. inventories

1696-1700 Leicestershire average 21·5s.
Houghton's for Melton Mowbray 30·8s.
Houghton's for Leics, Rutland and Northants. 28·04s.

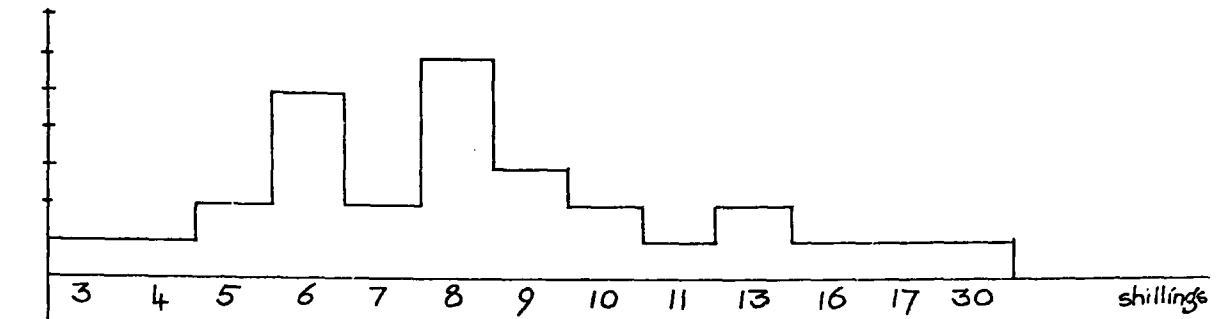
Appendix 6

The Price of Barley per Quarter in Leicestershire



Appendix 6

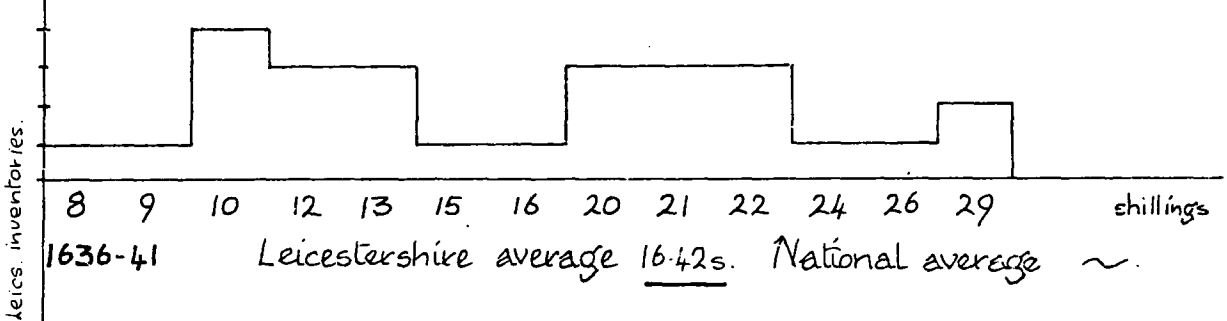
The Price of Malt per Quarter in Leicestershire



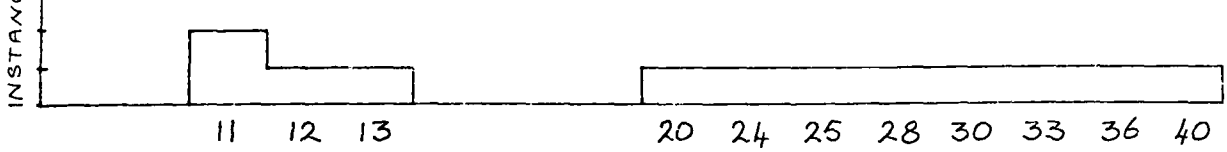
1570-75 Leicestershire average 9·14s. National average 10·4s.



1606-14 Leicestershire average 17·86s. National average ~



1636-41 Leicestershire average 16·42s. National average ~.



1696-1700 Leicestershire average 23·58s.

Houghton's for Leics, Rutland and Northants 28·38s.

APPENDIX VII : Wills and inventories for Kibworth Harcourt

Kibworth lies within the Archdeaconry of Leicester whose records are now housed in Leicestershire County Record Office. The series of Kibworth wills begins in 1516 and continues without interruption to 1649. After the interregnum the series begins again in 1660 and continues to 1700 and beyond. They are usually written and witnessed by the curate and after the usual formula commending the soul to Almighty God and the body to be buried in the church yard, they go on to make an offering to the mother church at Lincoln, and in pre-Reformation days to their parish church and often to other local churches with which they have some special connection - a useful indicator perhaps to short distance migration. Both before and after the Reformation they leave money, malt or bread to the poor in their village, often naming each recipient and giving some indication of their condition, whether widow or servant or single-man. Then, according to temperament, they either run through the list of kin leaving to each a carefully considered portion, or they run through a list of their goods allocating these to members of the family, followed by a list of after-thoughts. Both types have their contribution to make to the modern enquirer. The residual legatee is then named and the witnesses. By the fifteen thirties an inventory of goods often accompanies the will and a supervisor was named and or an executor.

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1 In accordance with 21 Hen. VIII c.5.s.4.

In law, land held in socage tenure could be devised by will (32 Hen. VIII) and before 55 Geo. III copyhold was devisable or not according to the custom of the manor. Leases were chattels and could be devised by will. After the fifteen eighties Kibworth copyholds were held by twenty-one year leases and so could be devised by will though the custom of the manor held that land should pass first to the widow and then to the eldest son. So the only restraint upon a freeholder or copyholder at Kibworth was that of custom, the law offered no opposition or impediment.

An executor's duties were to pay, receive or acquit debts.[1] He (or she) could pay off debts in whatever order found convenient and could pay himself first if he pleased. The executor could sell land to pay debts but not to provide money for legacies, portions and such like.[2] Chattels, including corn growing on the land, could not descend to the heir, those which had not been devised became the residue and were held in trust by the executor for the next of kin. It is not, therefore, surprising to find at Kibworth that the executor was usually the wife or heir.

According to ecclesiastical law, debts owing to the deceased should be included in the inventory, though desperate debts need not be included in the total. Debts owing to others should not be put in the inventory because they do not belong to the testator. However, it was the practice in S.E. Leicestershire to list debts in the will and credits in the inventory which allows one an interesting insight into the credit network of the countryside.

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1 Thomas Wentworth The Office and Duty of Executors (London 1656) pp.43-4.

2 R. Burn The Ecclesiastical Law Vol. IV (London 9th ed. 1842) p.303.

APPENDIX VIII : The parish register

The first volume of the parish register runs from 1574-1725 and covers the three townships in the parish, namely, Kibworth Harcourt, Kibworth Beauchamp and Smeeton Westerby. There are no entries for the years 1582, and 1640-41 inclusive. Entries are incomplete for 1578-80 and for 1642-48, and on average about once in every two and a half years there are no entries for a complete month, the reason for which is not clear. Most of the clerical work was done by the rector's curate who can be identified not only from his signature in the Register but also in the penmanship of the wills and his presence as witness to these wills. William Sawson was curate in 1574 and kept a perfunctory list of births, deaths and marriages on paper. Peter Sargiant succeeded him in 1581 and copied Sawson's lists into a handsome leather-bound book with parchment leaves. He continued Sawson's practice of merely listing names until in 1604 the new rector, Dr. John Berridge, began to take an active interest in his pastoral duties,[1] from this date the name of a child's father is given and the register becomes more useful to the historian. Sargiant died in 1618 and Samuel Marshall kept the register for a few years until succeeded by Jacob Weston, curate, in 1625, who continued to keep the register in the same manner as his predecessors though rather less neatly. The rector, John Berridge, was succeeded by Dr. William Berridge, B.D. in February 1639[2] but in 1640 William Hunt B.D. replaced him until ejected in 1654,[3] with James Weston continuing as his

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1 F.P. Woodford History of Kibworth and Personal Reminiscences (London 1868). List of rectors and curates.

2 Parish Register fo.32b. According to Nichols he was also lord of the manor of Kibworth Beauchamp.

3 Woodford's list.

curate. In 1634 the practice was begun of entering the names of both parents at a child's christening, which practice was kept up until 1660, and from 1648 onwards a note was made of the township to which the subject of the entry belonged, Beauchamp, Harcourt or Smeeton Westerby. It becomes possible at this point to reconstitute most Harcourt families and to give dates of baptisms and burial, though the date of marriage in many cases has to be inferred from the date of the birth of the first child. From the wills we can often discover the wife's maiden name. In 1654 John Yaxley, M.A. was appointed minister and in December 1653 one of the leading men in Kibworth Beauchamp, William Coleman was chosen as parish 'Register' in accordance with the Ordinance of 24 August 1653.[1] Apart from entering the date of birth rather than of baptism, Coleman continued to keep the register after the manner of his predecessors until September 1654 when he began noting the calling of bans before each marriage. This was a tedious and repetitive task and unfortunately he only kept it up for two years, but from the entries we learn not only the occupation and home town of the groom but also the occupation and home town of the bride's father and whether or not she had been married before. In accordance with the Ordinance of 1655[2] marriages took place before two witnesses in the presence of the local J.P., in this case Thomas Brudenell, esquire, of Stonton Wyville. The experiment was short-lived, however, and by 1656 the ceremony had reverted to its traditional pattern. In April 1658 William Coleman delivered the register into the hands of John Yaxley and the period of secular administration

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1 W.E. Tate The Parish Chest (Cambridge 1969) p.46.

2 Ibid.

was at an end. Yaxley, who was formally inducted into the rectory on March 5, 1659, introduced the practice of grouping all christenings together, followed by all burials, followed by marriages. This implies that he kept a working list of which the register is the fair copy. The heading "Marriages' remained blank until 1665 but otherwise entries remained detailed save in one important respect; the name of a child's mother was not noted. Robert Edwards B.D. became rector in 1662 and remained in this post until he retired in 1701. He signed the register himself and there is no mention of a curate in the wills, so it would seem that he performed the administrative duties of his office himself. The number of church wardens was at the same time reduced from six - two from each township - to three. In 1676 he reported to the commissioners of the Compton census that there were no papists in the parish and no nonconformists in Smeeton Westerby, but that there were eleven nonconformists in Kibworth including five women.[1] Fortunately, therefore, the demographic record provided by the register is not seriously distorted by the non-registration of dissenters.[2] (In fact, the children of nonconformists were probably always recorded, for we have in 1699 two entries to the effect that a child has been privately baptised and later brought to church, but the day and the month of the ceremony are not given.)

In the case of burial entries, the names of both parents

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1 Leics. Museum I D 41/43/48-97.

2 D.E.C. Eversley, 'Population in Worcestershire 1600-1850' p.397. Also J.T. Krause 'The Changing Adequacy of English Registration 1690-1837' p.379-393 in Glass and Eversley eds. Population in History (London 1965).

were given from 1625 onwards, and in the case of married women, the name of her husband if still living. Widows are noted as such and the name of their late husband not given, bachelors are noted as such and unmarried women as 'singlewoman' or occasionally 'spinster', but spinster could also be used of a spinner, usually a widow. A man's name alone implies that he was or had been married and occasionally a guess is made at his age, for example 'about a hundred years old'.[1] Occupation is only consistently noted for the years 1636-37 and 1699 though the nature of a man's trade is mentioned in the odd case throughout the period.

From this description of the register it will be apparent that family reconstitution was only possible from 1604 until the thirties and for the fifties until the nineties. Every family which for any period of time, however short, was noted in the register as coming from Kibworth Harcourt was reconstituted and checked against the wills. Some men, buried in the parish, turned out to have had no family, other men, married in the village, left before their children were grown up, but for the majority an uninterrupted family tree can be recovered for the period 1604-1700. Fifty families were found in the last category, and most if not all of them left a will in one or more generations.

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1 Parish register fo.48a. Richard West of Kibworth Harcourt, March 26, 1660.

APPENDIX IX : The Polle family 1280-1602

The movements described in Chapter Seven on inheritance customs and the conclusions reached can be usefully illustrated by the accompanying chart outlining the descent of land within the Polle family during the period 1280-1700.

In 1280 there were four landholding branches in the village. The chances of the family becoming extinct were therefore rather remote. Nevertheless, the plagues struck hard. Robert, Hugh and Nicholas died in 1349, two Williams and another Nicholas in 1361-63, and another William in 1376. Two branches were thereby eliminated and the land went to outsiders. Robert's line came to an end when Nicholas died without heirs. His land was leased to the Saundurs family from 1399-1417 and then passed to William Polle, a member of the Nicholas Polle branch. Of this branch only William survived by 1380, his two brothers and his cousin having died without heirs. Unfortunately, since no rental survives for the early fifteenth century, we have no complete list of his lands or those of his son, we have only a list of their acquisitions. By 1484, William Polle held three virgates. By 1527 John Polle held eight or nine, three of which were held by virtue of his position as reeve. By 1660 there were only two survivors in the male line, and no Polle children were born in the village after 1602. A yeoman branch flourished throughout the seventeenth century in Glen Magna and a leather trading branch in Market Harborough. So we see the effect of plague upon a family, the lack of interest in land until after the settlement in 1439 and the subsequent policy of steady accumulation. John and

Amicia lived in some style in the 1520's, but their decision to partition the land among four sons reduced their successors to the degree of husbandmen. This is the type of traditional action, which, had it been practised on a large scale among peasant proprietors in the formative years of the fifteenth century, would have precluded the accumulation of cash and returned the countryside within a generation or two of the plagues to the patchwork of half-virgate subsistence holdings which characterised the pre-plague economy.

The chart also illustrates the amount of information that can be gained for each holder from the court rolls alone; when he was sworn into tithing, when he inherited, what acquisitions he made, when he died, to whom he left his land. It also includes the sole example of a purchase in the Kibworth records. The Russell family, who were resident in Harcourt in 1377 and in Beauchamp in 1555, were granted 'one house between the Greathallyard and the horsemill, and a garden and close adjoining called the Littlehallyard' in 1432 by Thomas FitzEustace of Kibworth Harcourt. William Polle purchased this two virgate freeholding from John Russell in 1484 or thereabouts. Part of this freeland passed by marriage to the Clerke family and can be seen as Tenement 10A on the 1609 map, while the other remained in Polle hands as Tenement 10B.

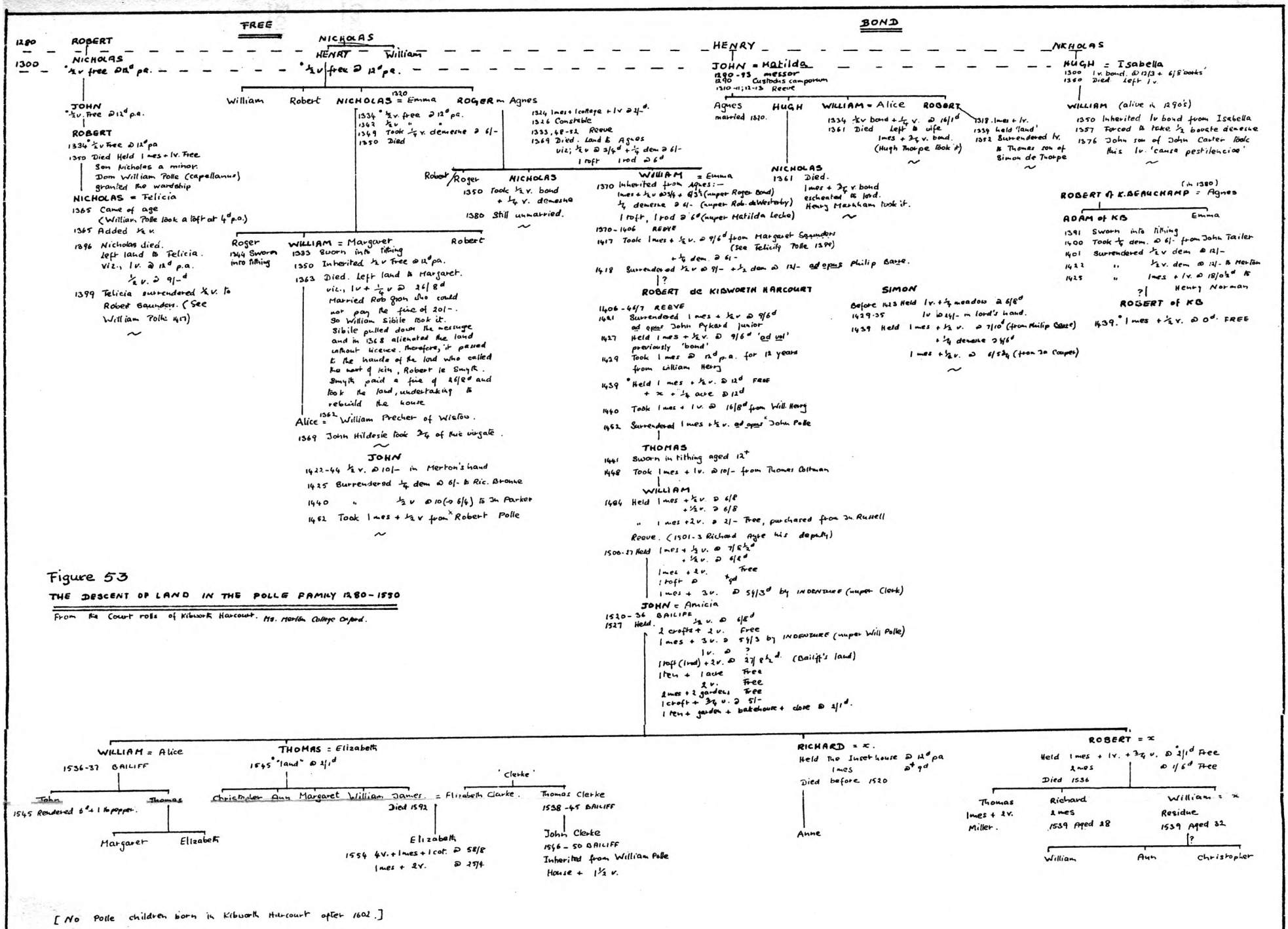


Figure 53

THE DESCENT OF LAND IN THE POLLE FAMILY 1280–1550

From the Court rolls of Kibworth Harcourt. MS. Merton College Oxford.

[No Polle children born in Kibworth Harcourt after 1602.]

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Apetoft 2959, 3094
Ingwardby and Fodringeye 2868,2916, 2919, 2935, 2984 and
Tayllard 2871, 2911. duplicates
Clive 2857, 2900.
Ewelle 2861, 2902-2906.
Portsmouth 2901.
Worting 2860, 2909, 2967.
Wytside 2867, 2893, 2895, 3017.
Boton 2897.
Parson 2869, 2896.
Harcourt 2989.
Caumpe 2915.
Clerke 3355, 3319.
Polle 3323, 6464.
Brown 2929, 2930, 2934, 2939, 2941, 3000, 3010.
Sibile 2923, 2925, 2926, 2943, 2945, 2983, 6373.5.
Russell 2946, 2958.
Pychard 3344.
Carter 2979.

Free Chapel: 2931, 2932, 2937, 2942, 2953, 2954, 2956, 2957, 2960, 2970, 2986, 2987, 3009, 3011, 3012.

Gumley: 2945, 3015.

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Dixie Papers, payment of the Harcourt Noble: 3 D 42/23/1.

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Sacheverall: 11 D 53 VIII/6/1.
Bryan: 73'30/12, 46'28/169-176.
Standon, Goodman, Freeman, Hodge: 46' 28/166-175.

Set of aerial reconnaissance photographs of Leicestershire.

Leicestershire, privately owned

Archaeological plans of the Mount, the windmill site, a section across Banwell Furlong. Also a photographic survey of every house in the parish and alterations thereto. Mr. F.B. Aggas, 5 Springfield Close, Kibworth Beauchamp.

Haymes Deeds (1894). Mrs. Leslie-Miller, Crossbank House, Kibworth Beauchamp.

My thanks are also due to Mr. O.G. Yates, and Mr. M. Stops of Kibworth and Mrs. Swannock of Turlangton for their very valuable assistance.

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THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
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Abstract
of
The Economic and Social Condition of the Peasantry in South East Leicestershire A.D. 1300 - 1700

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ABSTRACT

The object of this thesis has been twofold; to bring to bear upon one small area all the tools now available to the historian - anthropological, legal, archaeological, documentary, sociological and agricultural - in order to delineate as clearly as possible a village community which actually existed, as against the sociologist's model or the anthology of information drawn from different villages and different regions and labelled, misleadingly, 'The English Village'. Secondly, to trace social and economic change within the community and in particular to trace the causal changes by which the adjustment was made from subsistence to commercial farming.

The documentary and material remains relating to Kibworth Harcourt are exceptionally good, and even if I have misinterpreted what they reveal I shall at least have indicated a source from which a wealth of important information can be extracted. Much of the work has been descriptive and needs no summary; the social structure of the community in 1300, its lay-out, field system, buildings, family pattern; the course of the plagues in the late fourteenth century; the dislocation which ensued and the reorganization in tenurial units, followed by a new stability characterised by a very different social hierarchy, a different style in building, different life style and different land use.

The rest of the work has been analytical and the conclusions based upon this hypothetical. I have attempted to explain what happened in Kibworth, and why it happened,

by appealing to a model of what the social and economic structure of the region may have been at a much earlier date for which no direct evidence remains. This is the area, therefore, which needs to be summarised.

Analysis of the tithing list, Poll Tax list and court rolls of the period 1280-1381 revealed large households containing adult and teen-age dependants in the 1280's, gross under-employment and the predominance of 12-acre agricultural units which, according to the budgets estimated for this period, could rarely avoid debt and never encourage saving. By the 1370's household size had dropped sharply due to the improved prospects for employment of younger brothers and sons as agricultural wage labourers. But the 12 acre unit remained the norm in 1370 and low prices made it difficult to raise money for the rent.

Analysis of the probate documents and the Parish register for the sixteenth and seventeenth century showed a continuance of the small household, kept deliberately small by late marriage, which, in association with the very sharp increase in the size of holdings by 1500 made possible considerable cash savings. Analysis of the inventories for the latter period made it possible to estimate Leicestershire grain yields and grain prices on a year to year basis and so to draw up a budget for the 12 acre unit and the 24 acre unit over a number of consecutive years at intervals during these two centuries. It was thus possible to take into account series of good years and of bad ones. These budgets were then projected back into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries using national figures for grain yields and prices. The resulting figures, though less accurate, allowed one to measure the possibility of

accumulating cash savings on a 12-acre or a 24-acre holding at these earlier dates. The answer was simple; it was not possible to save cash on a 12-acre holding in the medieval period and rarely in the early modern. If a man wanted to pass on a living to his sons, he must preserve what he had himself received; land, skill, stock and equipment, and pass these on intact.

This led to two last areas of detailed analysis; the descent of land from father to son which could be traced in the court rolls, rentals and wills; and the content of the wills with special reference to the distribution of movables among all the children and the increasing use of cash legacies among the larger land-holders. It was found that over the period 1280-1370 no family lost land or left the village and no family gained land or entered the village, although there was much subletting for a period of years. In other words, there was a one hundred percent success rate in preserving land within the village and within the family. Land went from father to widow to son or, in the absence of male heirs, to a son-in-law usually 'of the blood of the village'. The content of the wills revealed a strong bias towards equality among children. If there was only enough land for one son, then he alone inherited, but his brothers and sisters received the stock, the gear and the household goods which were divided equally between them. It followed that the heir either had to support them on the holding or buy them out. Such a system ensured that savings in cash or in capital improvements could not be carried over from one generation to the next; once in each generation the movable

wealth was dispersed or tied up in life annuities. Sixteenth-century inflation, however, made it possible for the small landholder to save, and to divide the savings among his younger children in lieu of shares in the stock and equipment of the holding. This made it possible for successive heirs to improve the stock, equipment and productive capacity of the land, and for younger sons to move out of agriculture and into trade or the professions. The latter became independent of the land thus leaving the heir as the sole and virtually the absolute possessor of the family land. The implications of this, especially in the area of debt, mortgage and terms of tenure have not been followed through in this thesis but must of course be borne in mind.

These findings led to the formulation of two hypotheses. The first, that customary land was hereditary land, family land, and could not be alienated from the family. The holder at any given date was the steward, not the absolute owner. The second follows from the first. Every member of the family could claim support from the family land, and if possible, every member should receive an equal share. Evidence to support these two hypotheses abounds for the sixteenth century and in the early legal codes of Wales, Ireland, Scandinavia and the continent, but has to be extracted with some care from the English sources of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The exercise was considered worth attempting because if correct, the claim that customary land was held by hereditary title and that all the members of the family had a claim to support from it goes far towards explaining the typical social structure of the English mid-land village.

Why, for example, did the pre-Conquest villages in England,

whatever their origin, arrive at uniformity of holdings by 1086 and still retain this uniformity in 1349? And why, by 1400, was this uniformity rapidly disappearing? Demographic shifts offer only a partial explanation. The acreage of the virgate varied from one region to another, thus reflecting differences in soil and in the density of population, and within the same village the size of the virgate was increased if new land was assarted and was decreased if the level of population rose, but the virgate, the standard share, nevertheless remained the same for all villagers. It has been argued that lords enforced regular holdings to correspond with the regular amounts of labour service exacted from tenants. However, on many manors there was no demesne and no demand for labour, yet the tenements remained regular. From the point of view of collecting rents it would have been simpler to have had fewer tenements and larger rents as the new style sixteenth century landowners were quick to discover. The limited amount of comparative work that I have undertaken would seem to suggest that landlords fell in with local custom, they accepted the standard holding of the district as the local tax unit and the local labour or rent unit. Planned economy was something discovered in the sixteenth century, and why then, because from the fifteenth century onwards, landlords actually owned large tracts of land which were not held by customary tenants. They had a free hand to do what they liked with this land, including its subdivision into profitable farms according to the rationale of commercial agriculture.

The standard holding of a region was determined, I would suggest, not by seigneurial control but by the hereditary character of customary land, which discouraged the development of a peasant land market and thereby produced a stability broken only by exceptionally severe famine, war or plague. The size of the local virgate was determined by the nature of the soil and the population density. The nature of the soil would determine the amount of land required to support one household, the density of the population would determine whether holdings were large, supporting only a married man and younger dependants with some degree of comfort, or small, supporting a three generation, laterally extended household with difficulty. The former type could, if necessary, be reduced in size, as on the estates of St. Peter's Abbey, Gloucester. The latter type could not be reduced. Nor could they be increased for more than one or two generations because if there was more than enough land to support one household, the younger sons could claim an equal share with the eldest and the double or treble holding would be reduced once more to standard units.

Finally, the history of Kibworth Harcourt raises a difficulty over definition. It used to be accepted among English historians that the medieval villein of the pre-plague period was a 'peasant', while the owner or occupier of a small farm in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was not a peasant but a 'smallholder'. However, much excellent work has been carried out recently by anthropologists on the definition of the 'peasant', 'peasant society' and

'peasant economy'.[1] Their interest has centred upon the distinction of the peasant from the tribesman on the one hand and from the yeoman farmer on the other. The smallholder of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in England had a relatively short existence as a significant group and a very limited geographical distribution. They are therefore, generally overlooked by anthropologists. Strictly speaking, if one were to apply to them the criteria of say Eric Wolf or Daniel Thorner,[2] they could be classified as peasants, and some historians, writing about the eighteenth-century smallholders in England have been tempted to call them such. However, if we call the respected owner of 30-60 acres, and of a two storied brick house with a tiled roof and a chimney, carved oak furniture, grandfather clock, linen cupboard, pewter and silver ware, whose children attended the village school and hoped to go into trade or even the professions, a 'peasant' we are left with no term for the thirteenth-century owner of twelve acres, a two-roomed mud-walled cottage with a thatched roof, containing a trestle board-cum-bed, a bench, a coffer and one or two cooking pots. He also falls into the category of peasant, yet the difference in cultural terms between these two groups of men is enormous. They cannot both be called peasants and it would be wise to return to the old distinction between peasant and smallholder.

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1 The Biennial Review of Anthropology, ed. B. J. Siegel. (Stanford University Press U.S.A.) 1961, 1963, 1965, 1967. Peasants and Peasant Societies. ed. Theodor Shanin. (Penguin 1971.)

2 E. Wolf. Peasants (U.S.A. 1966), pp.2,4.
D. Thorner. 'Peasant Economy as a Category in Economic Change.' in Peasants and Peasant Societies ed. T. Shanin.

The contrast, in visual terms, between these two groups throws into relief the marked change which had taken place both in economic and in cultural terms. A way of life and a cultural tradition had completely passed away in the mid-land region and been replaced by another which was to endure until the technological revolution of the twentieth century. A subsistence economy had given place to a commercial economy and the peasant had been replaced by the farmer and the landless labourer. The enlargement of holdings in the fifteenth century had opened the way to the assimilation of the commercial ethic in the countryside.[1] Once established it spread rapidly. Farmers farmed for profit in order to set up their younger sons in trade and the professions. Families, therefore, ceased to be dependant entirely upon land and old customs such as standard household units of land and the inalienability of family land passed out of the cultural tradition. With them went the uniform subsistence tenements of the medieval period, to be replaced by the irregular patchwork of small and large farms which characterised the age of the yeoman and the gentleman farmer.

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1 R. H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism. (London 1926).