

CORRESPONDENCE

The Lordless Village

Dear Sir,

The Reverend Patrick Rowley, in describing the social history of Ampleforth, outlines many of the classic features of the lordless village. Fairly extensive work of a similar kind in the East Midlands has led me to suggest a fourfold classification of landownership. This can be summarised very briefly as follows:

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|-----------|-----|---|
| Open or | (1. | Peasant villages - Usually 40 or more proprietors. |
| lordless | (2. | Divided villages - Typically dozen to 20 proprietors. |
| Closed or | (3. | Absentee landlord - Two thirds owned by one or two |
| landlord | (| proprietors. |
| villages | (4. | Estate villages. At least half (and generally |
| | | very much more) owned by resident squire. |

Ampleforth clearly fell in the first category, not only in terms of landownership, but also in relation to the many characteristics that went with a large number of small proprietors. These include its religious life, which ran to a well developed nonconformity, speculative building, slack enforcement of the Settlement Laws ('undesirables' allowed in); and in the wide range of economic activities.

The peasant village will prove to be a very important type in relation to industrial development, as economic historians and historical sociologists gather together many local investigations into the period of industrialisation. For example, the framework knitting villages of the Midlands and the textile villages of the West Riding frequently fell into this category. In agricultural areas, such as the Vale of Evesham, Bedfordshire and the Fens, the present character of farming owes a great deal to this heritage.

Readers may find the following references useful:

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|----------------|---|
| Ashby, M.K. | <u>Joseph Ashby of Tysoe</u> , 1961 (Northants). |
| Chambers, J.D. | <u>Nottinghamshire in the 18th century</u> , 1932,
Frank Cass reprint, 1966. |
| Havinden, M.A. | <u>Estate villages</u> , 1966 (Berkshire). |
| Hoskins, W.G. | <u>The Midland peasant</u> , 1957 (Leicestershire). |

- Mills, D.R. 'The development of rural settlement around Lincoln',
East Midland Geographer, No. 11, June 1959
- 'English villages in the 18th and 19th centuries; a
sociological approach' Amateur Historian (now Local
Historian), VI, 1965 and VII, 1966.
- 'The geographical effects of the laws of Settlement
in Nottinghamshire', East Midland Geographer,
special number, 1970 (in the press).
- Mortimore, M.J. 'Landownership and urban growth in Bradford and its
environs', Trans. Inst. Brit. Geogrs. 46 (1969).
- Rogers, A. (ed.) 'Stability and change: some aspects of North and South
Rauceby in the 19th century', published by University
of Nottingham available from J.W. Brown, Wood Lodge,
South Rauceby, Sleaford, Lincs. 1969. 7/6.
- Sheppard, J.A. 'East Yorkshire's labour force in the mid 19th century;
Agricultural History Review, IX, 1961, 43-54.
- Springall, L.M. 'Labouring life in Norfolk villages 1834-1914, 1936.
- Spufford, M. 'A Cambridgeshire Community: Chippenham from
settlement to enclosure', University of Leicester, 1965.
- Wrigley, E.A.(ed.) 'Rural history and population change, provisional
title, in the press (Weidenfeld and Nicolson expected
1971).

There are, of course, many other marginal but very useful references, but the majority of these are accessible through the titles I have given above.

Yours sincerely,

Dennis Mills,
Ilkley College of Education,
Wells Road,
Ilkley,
Yorkshire

Poll Tax

Dear Sir,

A useful basis upon which family reconstitution can be made would appear to be the Poll Tax of Charles II (1660-61), but while I have seen many references to the Hearth Taxes of this period I have not encountered references to the former. In the Poll Tax returns the names of parents are given as are those of their children over sixteen years of age. Coupled with a study of the parish registers of the period they fill out and help verify confusing relationships.

Dr. Tupling in his Economic History of Rossendale exploits these returns in their economic implications, though in Rossendale the returns give the location of the several families whilst those for North-East Lancashire do not. Was this return suspect, or does it not exist for the whole country? The Public Record Office has located all those for North-East Lancashire which I have requested without any difficulty.

Wilfred Spencer,
130 Keighley Road,
Colne,
Lancs.

R. S. Schofield comments:

The Poll Tax returns certainly deserve to be better known. Poll Taxes were levied frequently between 1660 and 1700. The returns vary in quality, but many specify everyone in a community over the age at which they became liable for the tax (usually 16). The returns for the Poll Tax of 1666 seem to have been compiled particularly carefully. Potentially therefore the Poll Tax returns are of great interest to local population historians, though the absence of children under the age of 16 limits their usefulness as 'censuses', particularly for the purpose of controlling family reconstitution of parish register entries. The snag, however, is that the survival of these splendid documents has been very uneven. The Public Record Office holds a large number of them for the period 1660-1689. Mr. Spencer has been lucky with North-East Lancashire: readers living in other areas may not be so fortunate. Should a search at the Public Record Office prove fruitless, it is often worthwhile enquiring whether copies of the returns have been preserved locally. Indeed this is the only hope of finding returns to the Poll Taxes levied after 1689, because a change in tax accounting procedure at that date meant that detailed returns

were no longer sent to the Exchequer to finish up at the Public Record Office.

Welsh Bookbuyers in the 1760s

Dear Sir,

Through the courtesy of Mr. H. Gordon Tibbutt, who drew my attention to an article in the Bedfordshire Magazine (Vol. 10 No. 76, Spring 1966), I am enabled to add a note to the discussion initiated by Peter Laslett in a recent issue of Local Population Studies on bookbuying in the eighteenth century.

The article in question, "Bunyan's popularity in eighteenth century Wales" by Paul Kaufman, includes a list of subscribers to a 6d edition in Welsh of Bunyan's The doctrine of law and grace unfolded, published by James Ross of Carmarthen in 1767. Leaving aside any consideration of Ross as a printer - his Welsh Bible sold more than eight and a half thousand copies - the subscription list is an interesting one, and suggests strongly that the circulating charity schools of Wales did much to create an increasing literacy and consequent demand for books printed in the Welsh language.

Twenty-six subscribers are listed: eight Ministers take a total of 132 copies, and three bookbinders take 42; a breeches maker takes 50 copies, and four schoolmasters take 37; a shopkeeper has 6, a carpenter 12, and six men of whom no occupations are given are shown as having 66 copies; while two itinerant booksellers take 250 copies altogether - one having 200 and the other 50.

What are we to make of the carpenter? Or the breeches maker? Were they leading lights in local religious communities, selling or giving books to their fellow believers? There is of course no way of telling; but what the list does tell us is that the ability to read Welsh may well have been widespread, and that the distribution of books was a more complex business than might be supposed. At all events it is one more fragment of evidence both for the purchase and for the reading of books in the eighteenth century. The list, too, does throw an interesting, if oblique, light upon the popularity of John Bunyan.

Victor E. Neuburg,
13 Linden Road,
Muswell Hill,
London, N. 10

Dear Sirs,

In connection with Mr. Peter Laslett's suggestion that 18th century book subscription lists might throw light on the reading habits of contemporary craftsmen and "operatives", I wonder if his attention or that of his colleagues in the Cambridge Group has been drawn to the interest shown by English Weavers of the period in Natural History and in Geometrical studies. There might be a parallel line of inquiry into the surviving evidence concerning these men.

A correspondence on the subject took place in Notes and Queries in 1850, prompted (No. 31, p.8) by one of England's leading Geometricians, Prof. Davies, in a letter signed "Pen and Ink". The Professor claimed that Geometry "in its purest form" had been prosecuted "with extraordinary ardour and success" by "operatives of the humblest class, and these chiefly weavers." Although he expects that not one in a thousand of his readers has ever heard of these men, the Professor declares that their labours would have gladdened the hearts of Euclid, Apollonius and Archimedes and would have been thought worthy of record had they worked in Ancient Greece "instead of in modern England, contemporarily with the Hargreaves, the Peels and the Arkwrights."

Remarking that the Weavers both of Spitalfields and Lancashire had shown the same ardent devotion to Natural History, and particularly stressing the "intellectual" nature of the work done by Manchester Weavers on English wildflowers, Professor Davies asks for suggestions as to the means by which such interests had been aroused and propagated among a class of men "placed in a position the most unpropitious that can be conceived for the study."

A reply under the signature of T.T. Wilkinson of Burnley, appeared in No. 34, p. 57. It includes references to a number of geometrical works, some of them translations to which such readers had access in the 18th century; conceivably, one or another of these might contain descriptive subscription lists similar to that discovered by Mr. Laslett. The chief credit for the spread of geometrical knowledge among Weavers, however, is assigned to the foundation of Mathematical Societies, such as that at Oldham, of which the Spitalfields Society was apparently the inspiration, and to a number of mathematical periodicals or mathematical sections of periodicals, which offered prizes for the solution of problems in geometry.

In a later letter (No. 57, p.437), the original inquirer,

Professor Davies, speaking of the effect of emulation in fostering geometrical studies among circles of competitors, says that the prize offered to the winners "half a dozen or a dozen copies of the work itself" was "not less an object of triumph than a Copley or a Royal medal is in our own time amongst the philosophers of the Royal Society."

As to the question why geometrical speculation took root among Weavers, the Professor thought that it was peculiarly suited to their occupation; since the hands were occupied they could not write, and this precluded a preoccupation with algebra, but a diagram could be studied while they worked and the memory trained so that the Weaver, performing mechanically at his loom, acquired the power of seeing mentally the "constituent parts of figures which have never been exhibited to the eye."

Mr. Wilkinson in his letter quoted a speaker at the York Meeting of the British Association in 1831 as saying that, thanks to these ardent inquirers, "subjects confined among the ancients to the very greatest minds (became) familiar to men whose condition in life was, to say the least, most unpropitious for the successful prosecution of such elevated and profound pursuits."

Taken together, the letters suggest another possible line of inquiry into the reading habits of 18th century crafts men and operatives. The correspondence may have continued into 1851, but the relevant volume of Notes and Queries is not available to me here.

As for the surviving evidence, Professor Davies himself admits the difficulty of assembling it. A collection made by him of 18th century mathematical periodicals, gathered, he tells us with "great pains", was not even approximately complete and he doubted whether, in 1850, a complete set existed. It might, however, still be worth a search through surviving copies of some of those he or Mr. Wilkinson mentions, e.g. the Lady's Diary, the Gentleman's Diary, Burrows Diary, the Mathematical Companion, the Mathematical Repository, the Liverpool Student, the Enquirer, the Leeds Correspondent, the York Courant, the Mathematician, the Mathematical Exercises, and Carnan's Diary.

Professor Davies also refers to the records of the Mathematical Society of London (then in the archives of the Royal Astronomical Society) as a list of members and visitors attending meetings was "carefully preserved". These lists might reveal links

between London Weaver-geometricians and their Northern colleagues.

In view of the emphasis placed on Spitalfields as a pioneering centre, one wonders if existing Huguenot records might contain useful clues.

Specific articles in the Philosophical Magazine (September 1850), the Mechanics' Magazine (n.d.) and the address by Harvey to the British Association in 1831 are referred to for confirmation of statements made in Notes and Queries.

A similar investigation into 18th century periodicals and books dealing with botany or natural history might lead to the rediscovery of weavers and other craftsmen whose interests and reading led them in that direction.

Following a somewhat different and more limited trail, there still exists, I believe, a little evidence of the studious habits of certain 18th and early 19th century shepherds, who used their solitude to study astronomy, and even, in the case of keen Bible readers, to teach themselves Greek and Latin. Examples will obviously be rare, but they are on record. Perhaps, specialists in Sussex, Wiltshire, the Pennines and the Cheviots could recover some interesting facts from the fragmentary memoirs in local periodicals or from Ms. material.

The length of this note may not be justified by the rather meagre promise of results, but perhaps Mr. Laslett and his colleagues in the Cambridge Group may think the hint worth a place in the "in tray".

Yours sincerely,

V. Duckworth-Barker
Riant - Lac
Prangins
Vaud
Switzerland

Dear Sir,

Smallpox

It certainly looks as though Mr. Boorman ('Smallpox in Eighteenth Century, Winchester L.P.S. 1) has some interesting material on hand. But explanations based upon a change in virulence of the virus should only be made in the last resort since, as an untestable hypothesis, it is not useful. Apart from the two sorts of virus (Variola major and Variola minor) I don't think there is any good evidence that the virus changes but it is well established that the same virus can give disease of very different severity in different individuals. I should have thought that differing incidences of the disease in different years more likely to be due to:-

- 1 Introduction of a case of smallpox into the district.
- 2 Variation in the population of susceptibles.
- 3 Change in social circumstances leading to closer contact of individuals, although smallpox is so infectious I doubt if this would really be significant.

Presumably from the Winchester records one could look into the second possibility. It does not seem from his figures that the outbreaks came in regular cycles which might correspond to build-up of susceptibles. On balance, I should think variations in smallpox incidence from year to year probably depended on the chance introduction of cases which started an epidemic. The sort of information I would have liked from the Winchester records, for each year, is (a) total births, (b) total deaths (non smallpox) with age at death (c) total smallpox deaths with ages.

I don't think I agree with Mr. Razzell's remark that isolation would result in smallpox deaths at all ages, while inoculation would result in deaths mainly amongst the very young who had not yet been inoculated (L.P.S. 2. p.42 at bottom). Wouldn't one find the majority of smallpox cases in the very young anyway?

Yours sincerely

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Editor's Note:

A large number of letters await publication. We hope that most of them will appear in the next issue.